

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



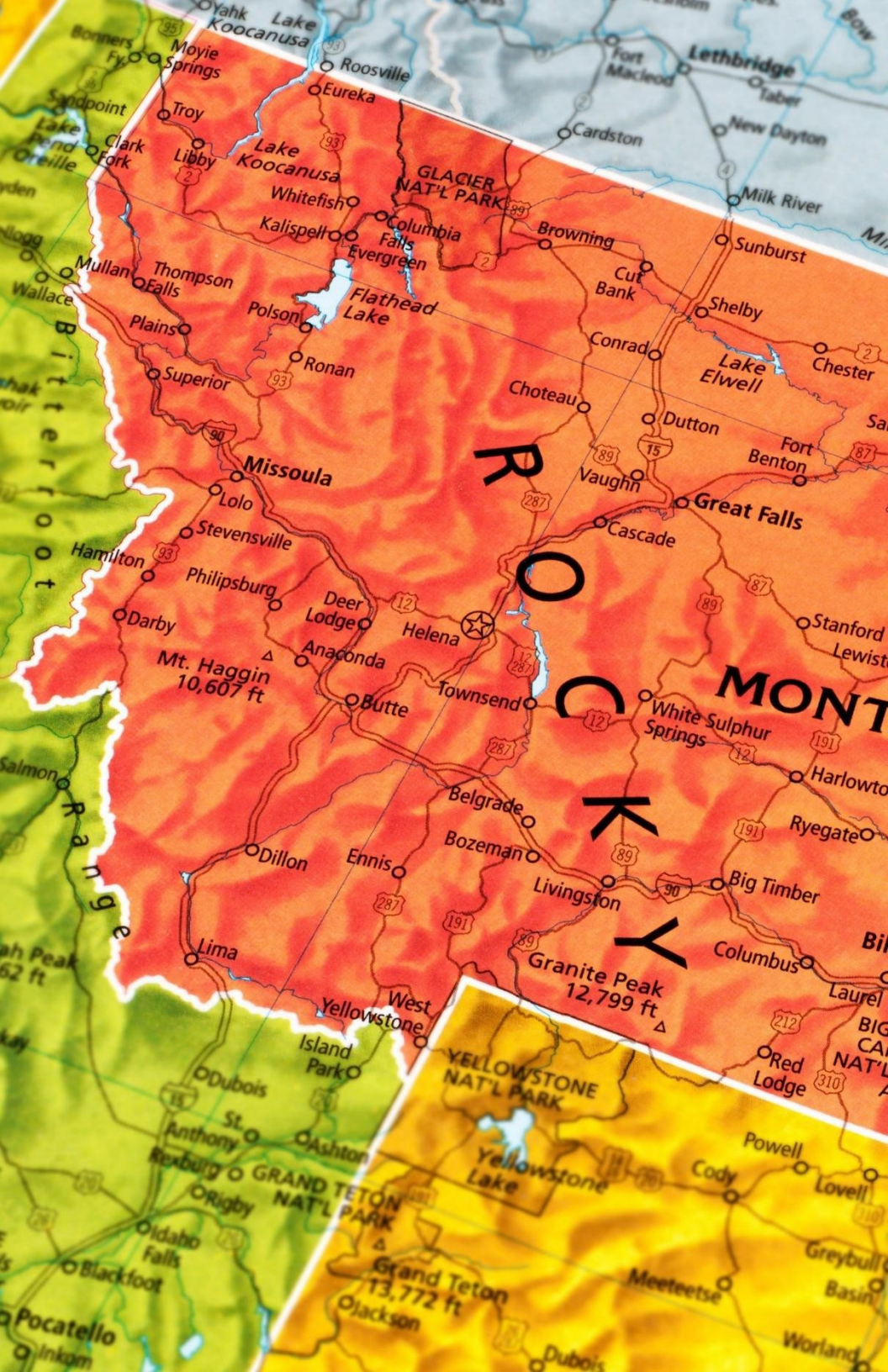


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OUR MISSION

The Montana State Library (MSL) helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services.

ACCESS Our open-data advocacy helps equalize the knowledge base of Montanans.

TRUST We are non-partisan with a reputation for integrity and transparency that fosters strong relationships across the state.

PURPOSE All areas of the State Library contribute to making lives better for Montanans.

EFFICIENCY We promote data-sharing that expedites decisions and leads to better outcomes.

LEADING EDGE We anticipate the information needs of Montanans which results in innovative product and service offerings.



LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

State Library Executive Leadership



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[Troy Blandford](#), Water Info Systems Manager

[Tracy Cook](#), Lead Statewide Consulting Librarian

[Erin Fashoway](#), State GIS Coordinator

[Michael Fashoway](#), GIS Land Information Lead

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[Kenny Ketner](#), Information Products Lead

[Michael Lighthiser](#), IT Manager

[Amy Marchwick](#), MT Shared Catalog Lead System Administrator

[Bryce Maxell](#), Natural Heritage Program Coordinator

[Savanna Sill](#), MT Library Network Director

COMMISSION AND COUNCIL

State Library Commission

The [State Library Commission](#) sets forth policies and funding priorities that empower the State Library to meet its mission and statutory obligations and to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible.

Commissioner	First Appointed	Current Term Began	Term Expires
Tom Burnett , Vice-Chair	11/21/2022	6/1/2024	6/1/2027
Carmen Cuthbertson	6/1/2023	6/1/2026	6/1/2029
McKenna Gregg , Superintendent of Public Instruction Designee	1/10/2025	1/10/2025	-
Tammy Hall	3/23/2022	6/13/2025	6/1/2028
Kris Goss , Commissioner of Higher Education Appointee	10/16/2025	10/16/2025	-
Robyn Scribner , Chair	6/15/2021	6/1/2024	6/1/2027
Peggy Taylor	8/1/2021	6/1/2026	6/1/2029

Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council

The [Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council \(MGIAC\)](#), as required by statute, advises the State Librarian and the State Library Commission on issues related to geospatial information, on the priority of geospatial information, on the development and management of the Montana Geospatial Information Act grant process, and on the distribution of funds collected in the Montana Geospatial Information Account.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

During the interim, the Montana State Library advanced updates to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) and participated in a legislative study of statewide resource sharing. Together, these efforts addressed core elements of public library service.

Library Hours

The Montana State Library Commission updated [ARM 10.102.1159, Serving the Community](#), to make the public-library open-hours standard more flexible. The revised rule moves from fixed minimum weekly hours based on service-area population to an average-hours approach, giving libraries more latitude to schedule service in ways that respond to local circumstances while maintaining a focus on convenient public access. The rulemaking process included [public hearings](#) and written-comment opportunities in fall 2025.

Library Director Certification

The Commission adopted revisions to [ARM 10.102.1160, Personnel](#), updating the Montana State Library's director-certification program effective July 1, 2026. The revised rules support directors in building the foundational skills needed to manage libraries that meet Montana's public-library development standards. The updated rules clarify the Commission's role in approving the annual course of study and the course catalog of eligible individual courses. Directors have two years from hire to complete 20 approved credits for initial certification; renewal requires 60 credits during each subsequent five-year period.

Interim Study on Library Resource Sharing

Montana State Library staff provided information and technical support to the Legislative Education Interim Budget Committee for their study of Montana library resource sharing. The study examined how Montana's libraries share physical and digital materials, the services and funding that support this work, and the opportunities and challenges that impact effective statewide resource sharing. Guided by the statewide resource-sharing mandate in [MCA 22-1-328](#), the study gave committee members a fuller understanding of how these services support Montanans and Montana libraries.

DELIVERING MORE WITH A SMARTER COURIER NETWORK

In 2026, the [Montana State Library Courier Program](#) entered a new phase of service through its transition to Western Peaks Logistics (WPL) as the statewide courier contractor. The new partnership adds crate scanning and an online courier portal, giving participating libraries greater visibility into shipments from pickup through delivery. The portal also standardizes label creation, supports order tracking, and provides a clearer process for managing delivery questions and service issues.

These improvements are strengthening how the program balances distribution strategies across Montana's large and geographically diverse service area. With more timely information about crates, routes, and delivery activity, the courier program can make better-informed operational decisions and help books and other shared materials reach libraries, and ultimately patrons, more quickly. This data led to a reduction of over 500 crates at an overloaded hub library, helping to reduce workload and backlog. The improved system also lays the groundwork for expanding access as the network grows.

The scale of this work demonstrates why an efficient statewide courier is essential. In fiscal year 2026, the program moved nearly 500,000 books roundtrip in approximately 19,000 crates, transporting 310 tons of library materials. Fifty-five libraries participated in the service: 19 received direct courier service, while 36 accessed the network through local staff or volunteer delivery connections.

The courier program also delivers significant value for participating libraries. Based on the cost of sending materials through USPS Media Mail compared with the courier's current rates, Montana libraries saved an estimated \$4 million in shipping costs in fiscal year 2026. By enabling libraries to borrow and lend rather than purchase duplicate titles, the program also generated an estimated \$7.9 million in avoided book-purchase costs. These savings allow libraries to focus more of their local resources on the services, materials, and programming their communities need.

This statewide impact was recognized in 2026 when the Montana State Library Courier Program and its staff, Savanna Sill and Guilherme Poelsma, received the Montana Library Association Library Program of the Year Award. The award recognizes the program's contribution to efficient resource sharing and stronger library service throughout Montana.



Pictured above, Missoula Public Library received 42 courier crates in a single day, containing 1,700 books requested by library patrons across Montana. Western Peaks Logistics delivers to the library five days a week, bringing requested materials to Missoula patrons and carrying materials from Missoula to libraries statewide. In FY 2026, Missoula Public Library received 5,270 crates through the courier network, illustrating the scale of this resource-sharing service.

A NEW ROADMAP FOR MONTANA'S GEOSPATIAL FUTURE

The Montana State Library published the first [Montana Geospatial Information Plan](#) after the Legislature revised the Montana Geospatial Information Act in 2023. The FY 2026-28 plan replaces the former annual Montana Land Information Plans as a result of House Bill 343, enacted by the 2023 Montana Legislature. The legislation renamed the Montana Land Information Act (MLIA) as the Montana Geospatial Information Act (MGIA) and revised related provisions for geospatial planning, coordination, and grants. This three-year plan establishes a shared, multi-year roadmap for the state's geospatial work.

Under [MCA 90-1-404\(c\)](#), the State Library is responsible for managing and coordinating geospatial information and for developing the Montana Geospatial Information Plan in consultation with the [Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council \(MGIAC\)](#). Covering fiscal years 2026 through 2028, the plan provides greater continuity for the library, its partners, and the Council by aligning planning, budgeting, data investments, and progress monitoring around shared statewide priorities. MGIAC endorsed the plan, and the Montana State Library Commission adopted it in October 2025.

The plan directs work on the [Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure \(MSDI\)](#), the statewide collection of foundational geographic datasets, services, and tools that support mapping and decision-making. Consistent, publicly available data help organizations avoid duplicating data collection and reduce the time needed to locate and use information. In Custer County, for example, staff used State Library administrative-boundary data to complete redistricting maps in less than one month, a process that had taken more than six months using hand-drawn maps during the prior redistricting cycle.

The plan also establishes priorities for statewide geospatial coordination. Through MGIAC and partnerships with organizations that collect, maintain, and use geographic information, the State Library can align work on shared data needs, standards, governance, and outreach. This coordination helps partners make better use of existing resources, avoid duplicating effort, and maintain the statewide information needed to support planning, analysis, and public services.

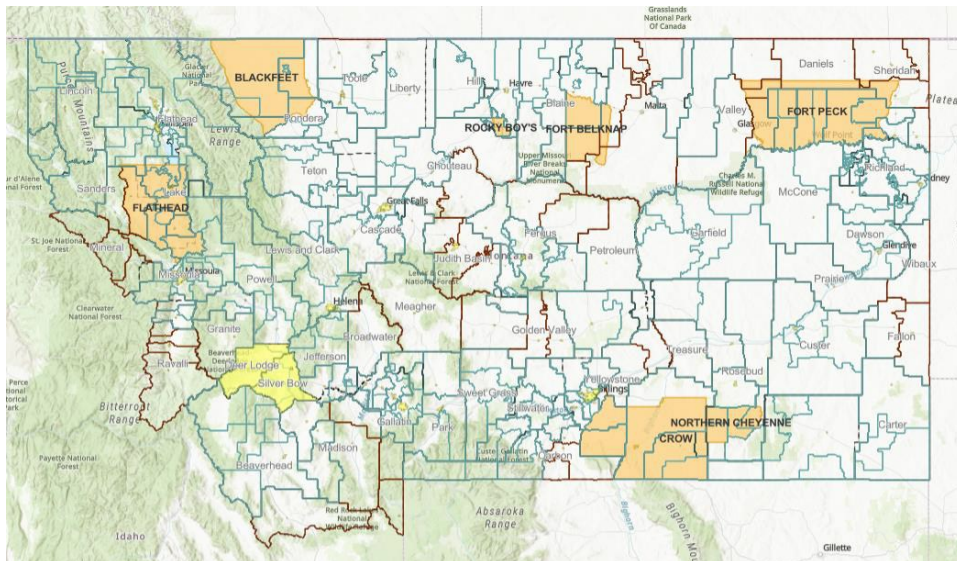
The FY 2026-2028 plan prioritizes standardized data collection and maintenance, improved data quality and value, stronger coordination and data governance, and continued development of the MGIA Grant Program. More information about the status of the MGIA Grant Program appears in the [MGIA Grants Resume](#) section of this report.

Developed with input from MGIAC and the public, the plan provides a longer planning horizon for maintaining essential statewide data, coordinating partner efforts, and making purposeful investments in Montana's geospatial infrastructure.



The most current Montana Geospatial Information Plan (featured above), along with historical plans, can be accessed on the [Montana Geospatial Information Plans](#) page.

MODERNIZING MONTANA'S GEOSPATIAL ARCHITECTURE



The MSDI Administrative Boundaries framework and other MSDI Themes can now be accessed through the new cloud-hosted web services environment. A high-level list of impacted services can be accessed on the [GIS Web Service Changes](#) page, part of the State Library's communication strategy for this major change.

The Montana State Library is implementing a major modernization of its [GIS web-service architecture](#). The library transitioned from the former ESRI Cloud Managed Services (ECMS) environment to a new cloud-hosted platform provided by ROK Technologies, moving services to gisservice.mt.gov. This work established a modern technical foundation for delivering Montana's authoritative geospatial data, maps, and applications to the public and government partners. Changes to public-facing web services were effective July 31, 2026.

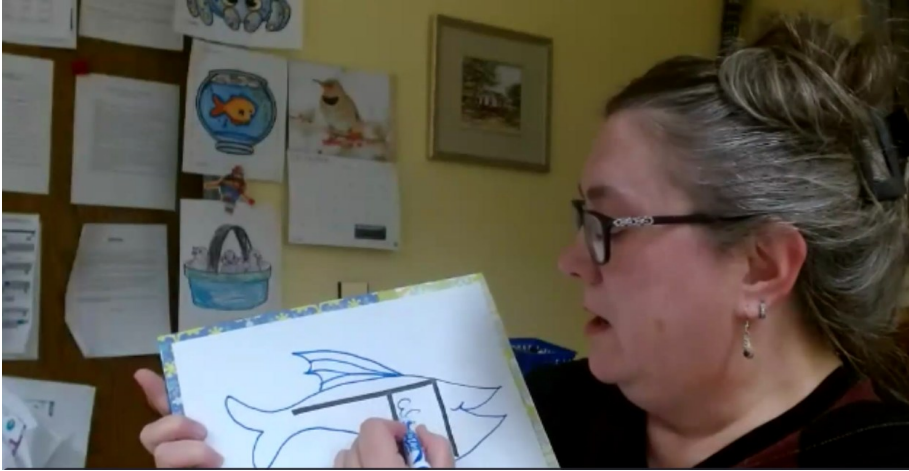
The transition modernized the behind-the-scenes infrastructure that connects current map layers and data to public-facing map applications, local-government tools, ArcGIS Online maps, story maps, geocoding services, and desktop GIS projects. Moving these services to the ROK cloud environment strengthened the delivery system behind the [Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure \(MSDI\)](#) and its 15 statewide framework data themes. These data themes provide shared reference information for mapping, planning, analysis, and decision-making across Montana.

Cloud hosting gives the library a more resilient and flexible foundation for GIS services. The ROK environment can scale computing resources as demand changes, helping map applications and data services remain responsive during periods of heavy use. It also reduces the need for the library to maintain underlying servers and infrastructure. These operational improvements allow GIS staff to focus more of their time on maintaining authoritative data and improving the public's ability to discover and use Montana geospatial information.

The transition required substantial coordination because the previous environment supported a wide range of existing workflows, web maps, and applications. Library GIS staff inventoried services, documented updated service locations and layer references, coordinated migration needs, and notified users under the library's 30-day service-change policy.

The change also strengthened the long-term sustainability of the State Library's GIS services. By maintaining and delivering authoritative statewide information through a modern, managed platform, the library can continue to serve as a central source for reliable Montana geospatial data while adapting services as technology and public needs evolve. Technical assistance remains available through the library's [GeoSupport service](#), helping users navigate the transition and make effective use of these resources.

BUILDING EARLY LITERACY CONNECTIONS



Pictured above, Cathy Friel, the children's librarian at Butte-Silver Bow Public Library, was the featured Books Before Bedtime reader in December. Families described the program as a meaningful way to build reading and early literacy skills into daily life. One participant shared: "I think this was a great way to get involved in my child's reading and start a nightly routine of reading. It really sparked his desire to read every night!"

Through a partnership with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), supported by Montana's federally funded [Bright Futures Birth to Five \(BFB5\)](#) program, the Montana State Library expanded early-literacy resources for young children and their families.

A centerpiece of the partnership was [Books Before Bedtime](#), a free monthly virtual story-time program for Montana families with children under age five. The program was designed to reach families in rural Montana and encourage regular reading at home. By participating virtually, families could join from home regardless of their distance from a library or early-learning program. During each session, families heard a story read aloud by library and community partners, learned simple ways to talk and interact around books, and practiced ideas for building a calming bedtime reading routine. Each participating family received a mailed book box containing the featured title and activities that extended learning beyond the online session.

Books Before Bedtime distributed more than 1,600 books to families in 88 communities and featured readers from public libraries and early-learning partners across Montana. By pairing virtual story times with mailed books, the program helped families establish reading routines with books they could keep and enjoy together.

The partnership with DPHHS further expanded the availability of children's books through community food-distribution networks. In collaboration with the Montana Food Bank Network, the program supplied 5,408 books for children ages 0-5 to food banks, clinics, and laundromats across the state using books from [Dolly Parton Imagination Library](#). Placing books in locations families already visit for essential services created additional opportunities for families to bring reading materials home.

Alongside Books Before Bedtime and book distribution through community partners, the Parent Powered Texting Program gave caregivers another simple way to support early learning at home. Families with children ages 0-4 received age-appropriate literacy tips, activities, and encouragement by text, helping make reading, conversation, and play part of everyday routines. Together, these connected services brought books, ideas, and practical support to Montana families, particularly those in communities where in-person early-learning opportunities may be limited.

EXPLORING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LIBRARIES

The Montana State Library Commission began a focused exploration of how artificial intelligence may affect library services, public access to information, and the work of the Montana State Library. In 2026, the Commission identified expanding its understanding of AI tools and applications as a [formal goal](#). This work reflects the Commission's recognition that AI tools are becoming part of everyday work, learning, and information seeking, and that libraries can help Montanans develop informed, responsible approaches to using them.

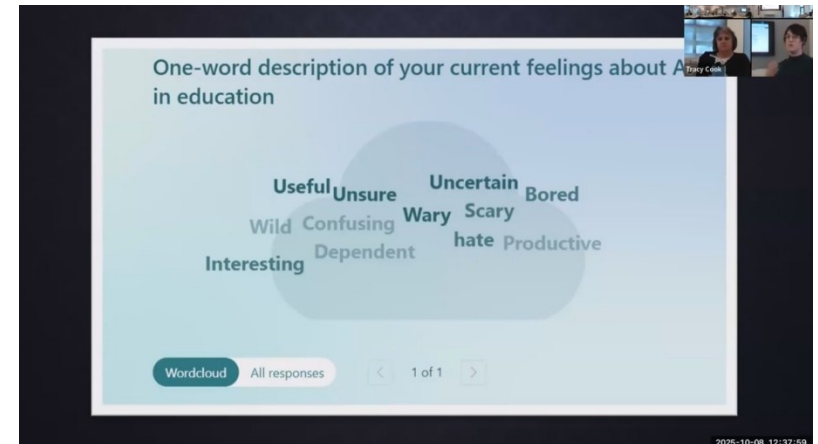
The Commission invited several speakers to provide different perspectives on this emerging topic. Taylor Moorman of Montana State University introduced the Commission to AI literacy and the role libraries can play in helping patrons understand how generative AI systems work and how to use these tools responsibly. Her presentation helped frame AI as an information-literacy topic well suited to libraries' educational role.

In February, the Commission heard from Chris Tarabochia, Montana's Chief AI Officer, about the state government's approach to artificial intelligence. His presentation addressed the state's vision for AI, potential uses for improving productivity and service delivery, and the importance of considering governance and responsible implementation as agencies explore new tools.

The Commission also welcomed Matt Sheehan for a presentation on AI and GIS. He demonstrated how AI can work with geographic information systems to help analyze complex spatial datasets, support mapping and decision-making, and make geographic information more accessible through natural-language tools and other emerging interfaces.

State Library staff also began developing learning opportunities for Montana library staff to ask questions and explore practical uses in their own settings. AI learning was included in the draft State Library Certification Course Catalog through "[AI and Public Libraries: Panel and Discussion](#)," and the State Library shared opportunities such as the [Presidential AI Challenge](#). These activities helped library staff better understand the opportunities, risks, and questions AI presents for libraries and the communities they serve.

The State Library will build on this work through a newly awarded, three-year National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. In partnership with the New Jersey State Library, the Hawai'i State Public Library System, and InnovateUS, a project of The Governance Lab, the Montana State Library will implement a project called "Engaging Communities with Artificial Intelligence." The project will develop a replicable, scalable model for helping members of the public understand artificial intelligence and explore its potential role in civic engagement. Designed for people with no prior technical experience, the project will equip libraries with accessible training tools that demystify AI and help residents use AI to improve their lives and communities.



The slide shown above from [Taylor Moorman's presentation](#) features a word cloud reflecting the range of emotions and perspectives surrounding AI in education.

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

Public Library Development

Give assistance and advice to all tax-supported or public libraries in the state and to all counties, cities, towns, or regions in the state that propose to establish libraries, as to the best means of establishing and improving those libraries. (MCA 22-1-103)

Measure: total library consultations

Five-year average (2022-2026): 722 consultations/year

Librarian Certification

Act as a state board of professional standards and library examiners, develop standards for public libraries, and adopt rules for the certification of librarians. (MCA 22-1-103)

Measure: total certifications awarded

Five-year average (2022-2026): 93 certifications/year

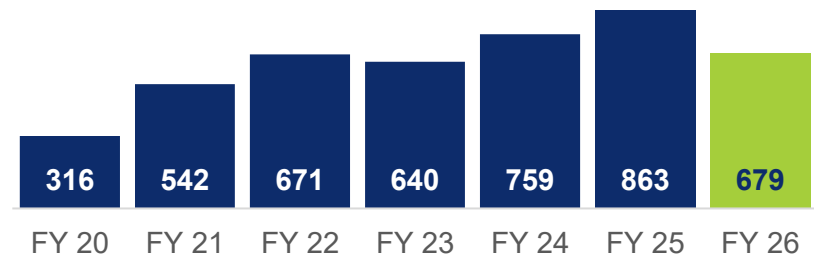
Services for the Blind

Provide library services for the blind and for individuals with physical disabilities. (MCA 22-1-103)

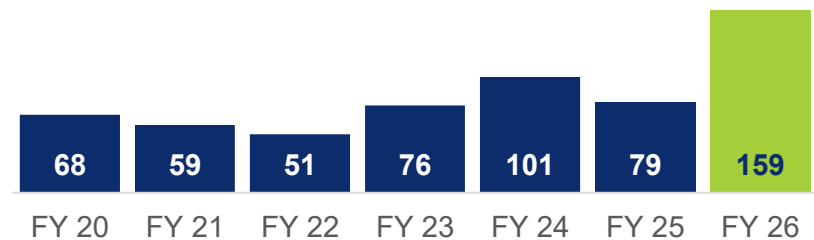
Measure: materials loaned to Talking Book patrons

Five-year average (2022-2026): 131,975 materials loaned/year

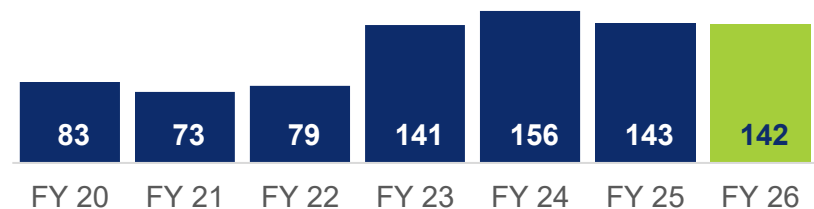
Total Library Consultations



Total Certifications Awarded



Materials Loaned to Talking Book Patrons
(in thousands)



MONTANA STATE LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

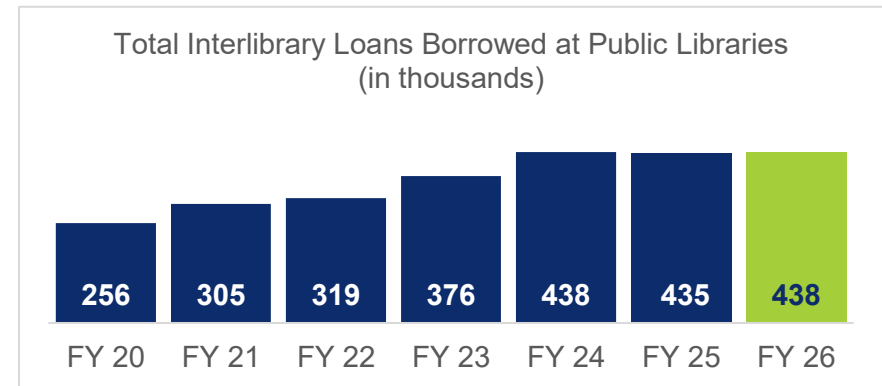
Statewide Resource Sharing

Support and facilitate resource-sharing among libraries in Montana, including but not limited to public libraries. (MCA 22-1-328)

Measure: total interlibrary loans borrowed at public libraries*

Five-year average (2022-2026): 401,193 loans borrowed/year

*FY 2026 data are preliminary.

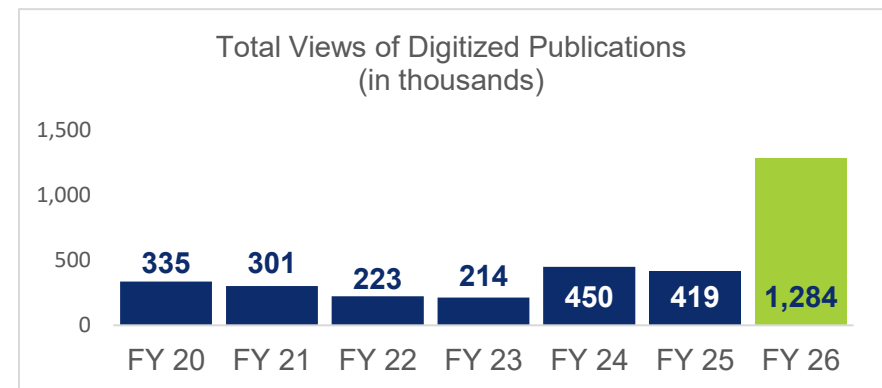


State Publications

Administer a state publications depository library program to identify, acquire, catalog, preserve, and provide access to state publications. (MCA 22-1-212)

Measure: total views of digitized publications

Five-year average (2022-2026): 518,101 views/year

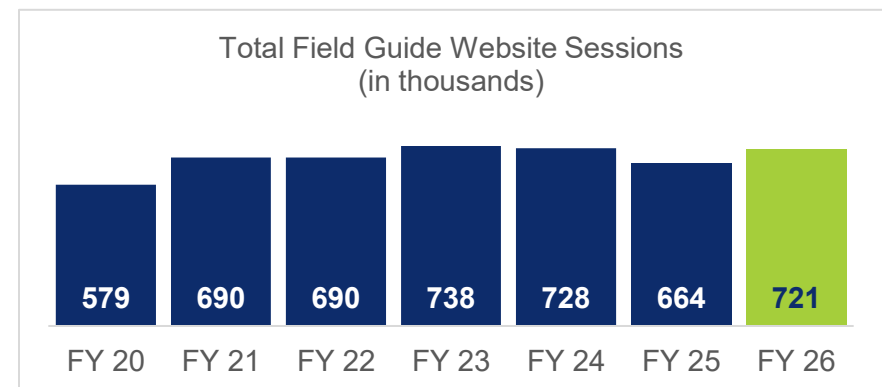


Montana Natural Heritage Program

Integrate Montana Natural Heritage data as a part of the natural resource information system. (MCA 90-15-302)

Measure: total field guide website sessions

Five-year average (2022-2026): 708,088 website sessions/year



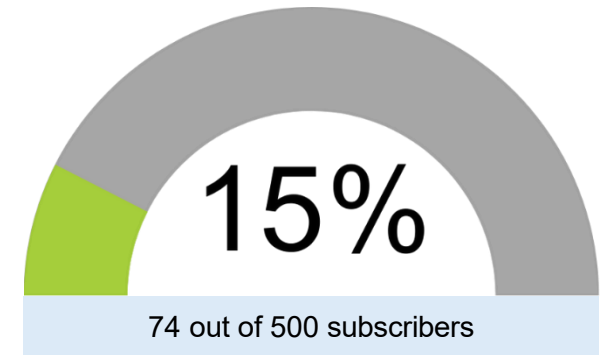
MONTANA STATE LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

Montana State Reference Network

Administer a state reference network to provide real-time geospatial location data from any location within the network. (MCA 22-1-230)

Measure: % of necessary subscriptions acquired for a self-sustaining network (minimum of 500 by 2029)

Baseline: MTSRN acquired first paid subscribers in April 2024

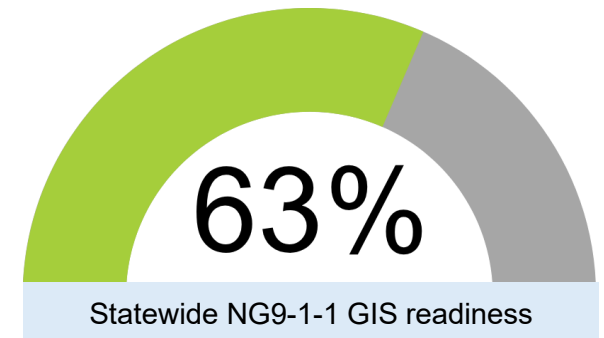


Next Generation 9-1-1

Support public safety answering points on the assessment and improvement of next-generation 9-1-1 GIS data. (MCA 10-4-310)

Measure: Statewide NG9-1-1 GIS readiness, based on each Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) data provisioner's progress in validating and aggregating GIS data

Baseline: Assessment software released to PSAPs December 2022

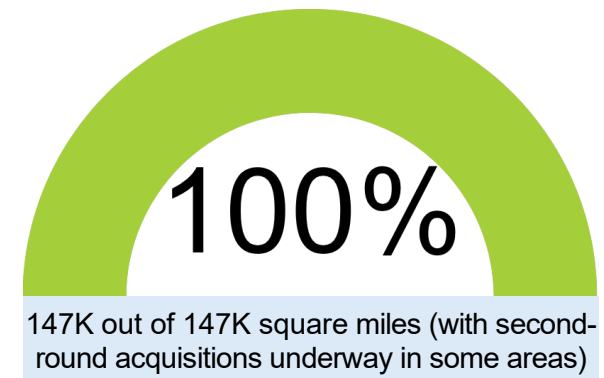


Montana Lidar Inventory

Collect, maintain, and disseminate information about the natural and artificial land characteristics of Montana. (MCA 90-1-402)

Measure: % of total collected and available within the state boundary and meeting USGS 3DEP specifications (total of 147K square miles)

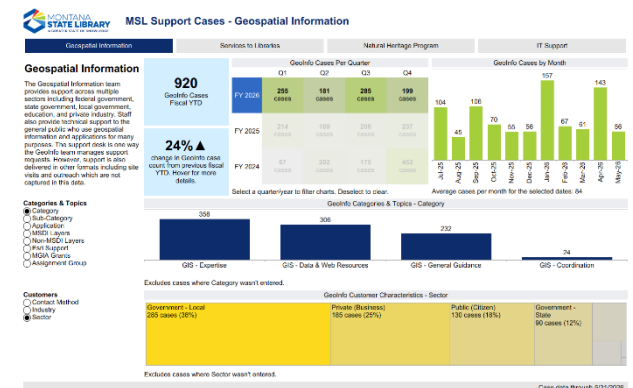
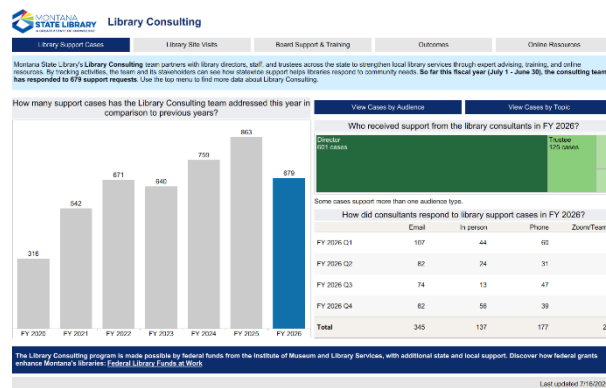
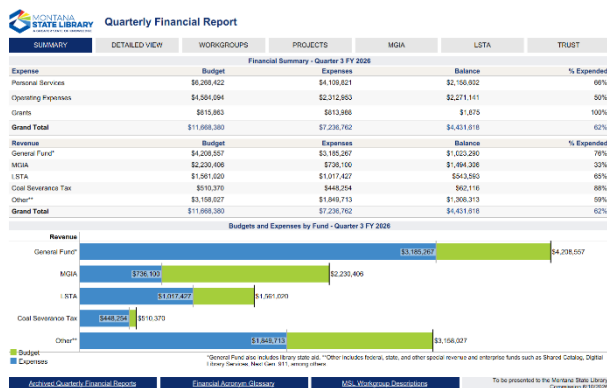
Baseline: Montana Lidar Plan published June 2019 with 42,000 square miles (28%) meeting USGS baseline specifications



MONTANA STATE LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

Interactive Dashboards

The Montana State Library maintains a series of dashboards throughout the year, with most updated quarterly to track progress on key initiatives. These interactive tools are publicly available and provide up-to-date information on the State Library's work and statewide impact. This page links to a selection of dashboards, with many more available anytime on the [Montana State Library's website](#). Montana State Library also collects data on Montana's public and tribal college libraries which can be viewed via the [Public Library Statistics dashboard](#).



FINANCIALS

A report of financial data from the most recent quarter

PROGRAMS

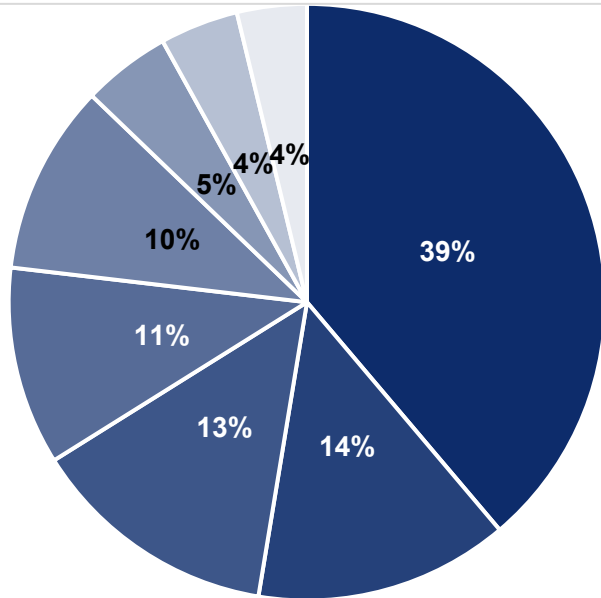
Data highlights from select programs at Montana State Library

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Data on customer support delivered through MSL's ServiceNow help desk

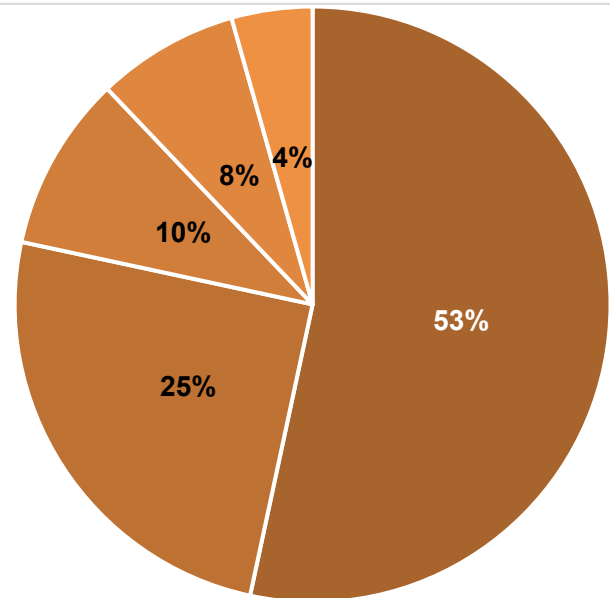
FINANCIALS

Funding Source



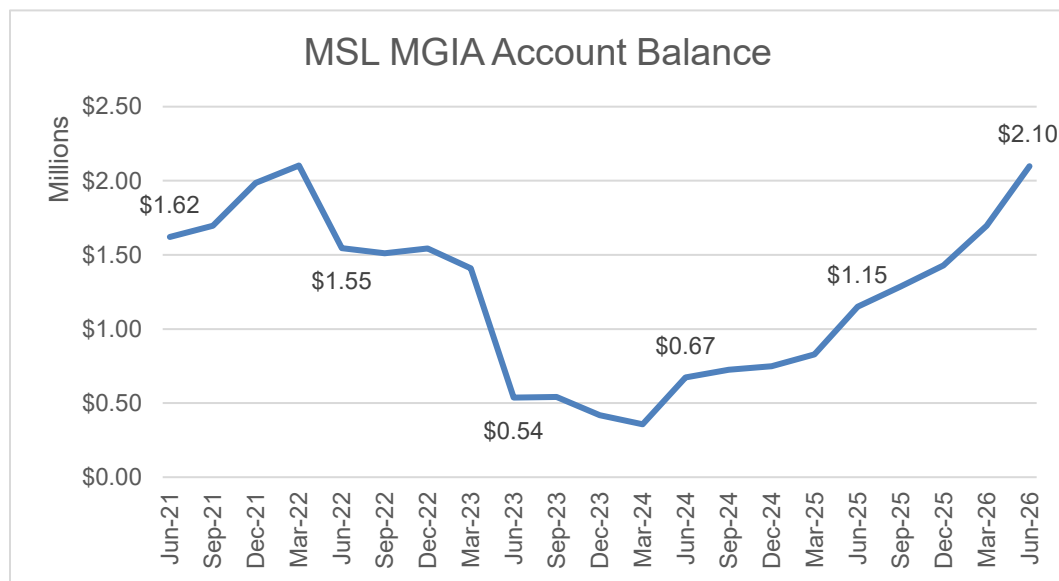
- General Fund: \$4,094,441 (39%)
- Next Generation 9-1-1: \$1,454,287 (14%)
- Library Services and Technology Act: \$1,424,093 (14%)
- Other: \$1,134,165 (11%)
- Montana Geospatial Information: \$1,087,719 (10%)
- Coal Severance Tax: \$504,959 (5%)
- Digital Library Services: \$448,803 (4%)
- MT Shared Catalog: \$399,187 (4%)

Expenses



- Personal Services: \$5,629,071 (53%)
- Operating Expenses: \$2,636,906 (25%)
- Equipment & Intangible Assets: \$1,004,362.67 (10%)
- Grants: \$813,988 (8%)

MGIA GRANTS RESUME



The Montana State Library's MGIA account balance reached a low in FY 2024, prompting a pause in the grant program. By the close of FY 2026, the account balance had increased to \$2.1 million. The improved outlook reflects time to rebuild the reserve, revenue from document-recording activity, and increased deposits to the account following [2025 legislation](#) that raised the amount deposited in the MGIA account to \$2.25 per recorded page. Beginning in July 2027, that amount will be adjusted biennially for inflation.

The [Montana Geospatial Information Act \(MGIA\) Grant Program](#) is returning after financial shortfalls in the MGIA account prevented awards in FY 2025 and FY 2026. During the pause, the Montana State Library conducted a [comprehensive internal review](#) to strengthen the program before its next funding cycle. The review examined grant priorities, financial planning, administrative processes, grant management practices, and feedback from past grantees.

The review confirmed that MGIA grants remain an important tool for helping state agencies, local governments, Tribal governments, and other partners develop and maintain the geospatial data and services Montana communities rely on. It also identified opportunities to improve the program by focusing awards on priorities within the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure and supporting projects with clear, achievable scopes of work.

Renewed stability in the MGIA account supports the program's return. A revised biennial funding model will better align grant budgets with revenue trends and the state budget cycle. Because MGIA revenue comes from recording fees, annual collections can vary. Awarding grants every two years will allow the Montana State Library and the [Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council \(MGIAC\)](#) to make funding decisions

using more current revenue information and maintain a manageable portfolio of active projects.

Montana State Library Commission approved [FY 2027–FY 2028 MGIA grant awards](#) in two rounds, on February 11 and May 6, 2026. The awards provide \$500,000 for 12 projects led by counties, municipalities, and state agencies. Funded work will advance NG9-1-1 geospatial data development and strengthen Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure frameworks for cadastral, hydrography, and transportation. In keeping with the redesigned program's priorities, the FY 2027-FY 2028 cycle gave priority consideration to FY 2025 projects that had been approved but remained unfunded during the financial shortfall, when those projects continued to align with the current [Montana Geospatial Information Plan](#).

YEAR IN REVIEW

Fiscal Year 2026 was a year of purposeful modernization, service expansion, and strong collaboration across Montana's library and geospatial communities.

- We updated key administrative rules to give libraries greater flexibility in serving their communities and strengthened our library director certification pathway.
- We also supported the Legislature's interim study on statewide resource sharing, deepening the Legislature's understanding of how libraries work together to deliver physical and digital materials across the state.
- Our statewide courier network entered a new phase with the transition to Western Peaks Logistics bringing modern tools to improve the efficiency of this foundational resource sharing program.
- Our Montana Geospatial Information Plan (FY 2026-28) sets a multi-year roadmap for data quality, coordination, and investment in the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI).
- In parallel, we modernized our GIS web-service architecture, migrating to a cloud-hosted environment provided by ROK Technologies, delivering more resilient, scalable services at gisservice.mt.gov and strengthening how authoritative statewide data reach the public, local governments, and research partners.
- In a partnership with the Department of Public Health and Human Services and Bright Futures Birth to Five, we piloted new early literacy services to understand how we and Montana libraries can improve reading scores in Montana.

This work, and more, demonstrates our commitment to our partners, to providing future-focused information services, and to being an exceptional steward of public funding and the public's trust. Thank you to our staff, the State Library Commission, the Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council and library professionals and partners throughout Montana. Together, we will continue to expand access, build trust, and deliver purposeful, efficient, leading-edge services that help all Montanans thrive.



Jennie Stapp
State Librarian



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