



COMMISSION HANDBOOK



1 Swan, Kenneth D. (Kenneth Dupee), 1887-1970, Looking at a map (1920's). Montana History Portal, accessed 10/06/2025, <https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/19284>

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE



This handbook contains information about the Montana State Library Commission (MSLC) and the State Library (MSL). It is offered as a reference to orient Commissioners to their work and as an educational resource for the Commission and State Library staff.

Please direct any questions about the contents to State Librarian Jennie Stapp, jstapp2@mt.gov.

- Created November 2022.
 - 1. Revised December 2022.
 - 2. Revised August 2023.
- Revised January 2025.
- Revised July 2025.

WHAT IS THE MONTANA STATE LIBRARY?

The Montana State Library provides information, resources, and guidance to organizations, communities, and residents of Montana to help them expand their knowledge and empower their decisions. We offer leading-edge data and applications, plus a dedicated staff, to help all people efficiently seek accurate and transparent answers about Montana.

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.





MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

[Visit the MSL Website](#) for up-to-date details about

- Government Information
- Water and Natural Resource Information
- Geographical Information
- Cultural and Historic Information
- Services for Libraries and Our Patrons
- Talking Book Services



ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The State Library Commission is established by Montana statute MCA § 22-1-101.

The role of the State Library Commission is to set 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.

The oath of office for appointed Commission members is

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, protect and defend the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the state of Montana, and that I will discharge the duties of my office with fidelity (so help me God)."

Agency Organization

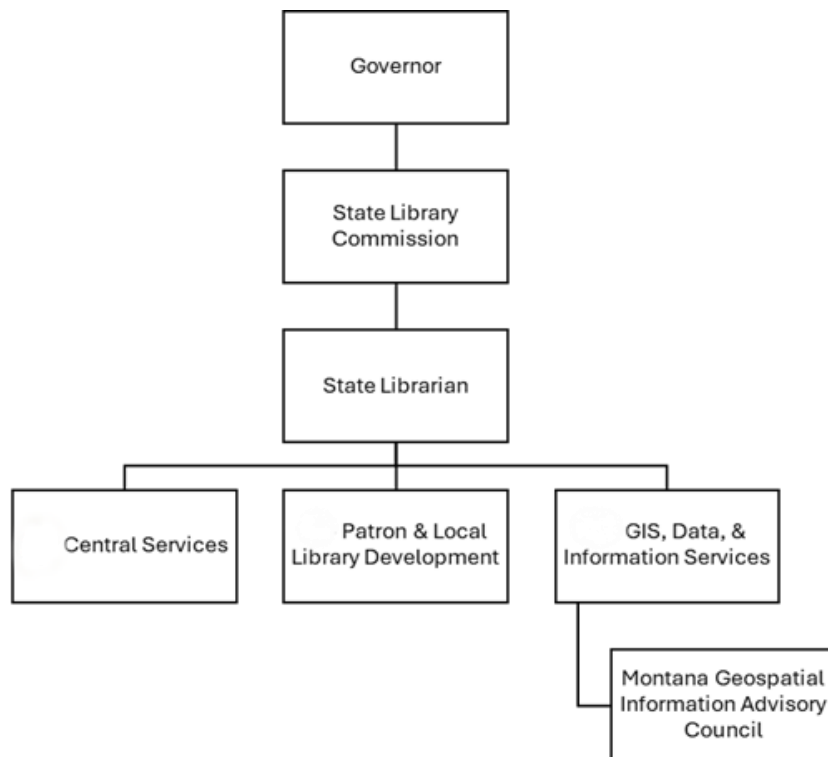
The State Library Commission (MSLC) is a governing body, with fiscal and rulemaking authority, for an agency known as the Montana State Library (MSL).

This authority is described in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) -- see [10.101.101 Agency Organization](#).

1. The State Library Commission consists of five members appointed by the Governor for three-year terms and the state Superintendent of Public Instruction or their designee and a librarian appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education from the Montana university system. The commission annually elects a chair from its membership. It employs as its executive officer a state librarian who is not a member of the commission, and who performs duties assigned by the commission.
2. The State Library provides library service at the state level, serving state government, local libraries, and federations; promotes the development of adequate libraries throughout the state; provides library service to persons with visual and physical disabilities; expends funds available from federal, state, and private sources for the

purpose of fostering library development and for the purpose of fostering geographic information services; administers the Montana State Government Depository Program; and provides for a comprehensive program for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of geospatial data and data related to the natural resources of Montana.

3. Advisory committees are established by the state librarian and in accordance with 90-1-405 and 90-15-201, MCA. They act only in advisory capacity and have no policy-making authority.
4. Inquiries regarding the functions of the State Library shall be addressed to the state librarian.



What is the relationship of the Commission to local libraries?

The State Library Commission has no governing authority over local libraries. However, the State Library Commission serves as a model to library boards. MCA defines the boundaries of the Commission's authority as it relates to Montana's public libraries.

MCA § 22-1-103. State library commission -- authority. The state library commission may:

- (1) 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;
- (5) serve as the agency of the state to accept and administer any state, federal, or private funds or property appropriated for or granted to it for library service or foster libraries in the state and establish regulations under which funds must be disbursed;
- (7) furnish, by contract or otherwise, library assistance and information services to state officials, state departments, and residents of those parts of the state inadequately serviced by libraries;
- (8) act as a state board of professional standards and library examiners, develop standards for public libraries, and adopt rules for the certification of librarians;

Commission and Chair Duties

Chair's Duties

Many of these duties are responsibilities shared by all commissioners. See 'Commissioners' Duties' below.

The board chair:

1. Understands, supports, and is able to clearly explain the mission, goals, and objectives of the Montana State Library.
2. Develops meeting agendas in cooperation with the State Librarian.
3. Leads Commission meetings, following the orderly, fair, and civil parliamentary procedure detailed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order. New chairs are encouraged to study the sections of Robert's Rules detailing the orderly running of meetings.
4. Is entitled to vote as a member of the Commission.
5. Appoints formal or informal subcommittees or work groups to accomplish the work of the Commission.
6. May be called to testify or otherwise represent the State Library to legislators, the Executive, funders, library partners, or Montana's library community.
7. Serves as the primary contact between the Commission and the State Librarian.
8. Is guided by the Commission's bylaws, pertinent sections of the Montana Code Annotated, and Montana's Administrative Rules Manual.
9. Sets a tone of civility, fair-play, respect, and inclusiveness, for all Commission business.
10. Understands that the chair's workload varies.
11. Performs other duties as required.

Vice Chair's Duties

1. The vice chair acts as chair when the chair is unable to do so.

Commissioners' Duties

1. The State Library Commission is established by Montana statute MCA § 22-1-101.
2. The role of the State Library Commission is to set 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.



State Library Commission Group Norms

1. The Commissioners will read and come to meetings prepared to discuss agenda items;
2. Commission meetings follow Roberts Rules of Order;
3. Commissioners are bound by the [State Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct](#)

Adopted by State Library Commission April 11, 2018; Reviewed Annually; Last Review
February 12, 2025

BYLAWS OF THE MSL COMMISSION

Members

- a. The State Library Commission's composition is defined in statute. MCA 22-1-101

Compensation

- b. Members of the Commission shall receive expenses and any compensation as provided by statute. MCA 22-1-101, MCA 2-15-124. All travel for Commission members shall be approved by the Commission.

Officers

- a. The Commission has two officers, a chairperson and a vice-chairperson. Officers must be members of the Commission. MCA 22-1-101 specifies "presiding officer".
- b. The chairperson shall preside at all meetings and shall appoint such committees as may be appropriate.
- c. The vice-chairperson shall serve in the absence of the chairperson.
- d. In the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson the chair will appoint a temporary acting chair.

Election of Officers

- a. Nominations and elections of the chairperson and vice-chairperson shall be held the first regularly scheduled meeting on or after June 1 of each year. The chairperson will ask for nominations for chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Commission membership.
- b. Newly elected officers will assume their office at the next regularly scheduled meeting after the election. Officers remain in their elected positions until a replacement is elected.

Meetings: Quorum, Rules, & Attendance

- a. The commission shall meet at least six times during each calendar year (except in cases of financial exigency), and at such other times as may be appropriate. The goal is to have no more than three months between meetings.
- b. Any four members shall constitute a quorum.
- c. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson or at the request of two members.
- d. The rules contained in "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised," shall govern the Commission in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not



- inconsistent with Montana law or Administrative Rules or these bylaws. See Addendum for Summary of Motions.
- e. Meetings will be conducted according to Montana's open meeting laws MCA 2-3-103, 23-111, and 2-3-203. A limited amount of time will be set aside on the agenda for comments from observers and visitors on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission that are not on the agenda. In addition, during the conduct of business, the chairperson will allow public comment on action items on the agenda before the Commission votes. The chair may limit the amount of time available to each speaker as necessary to allow the Commission sufficient time to conduct its business.
 - f. If an appointed or designated member of the State Library Commission does not attend and is not designated as excused by the Commission chairperson for two consecutive meetings, the Commission shall request the appointing authority to make a new appointment.

Meeting Agenda

- a. The chair, with input from the State Librarian, shall draft a preliminary meeting agenda. The preliminary agenda will be emailed the Commission 4 weeks before the scheduled meeting.
- b. Commissioners will have one week to request changes or additions to the agenda after receiving the preliminary agenda.
- c. The chair, with input from the State Librarian, will review the agenda changes submitted and finalize the agenda.
- d. Two weeks before the meeting, the final agenda will be emailed to the Commission.
- e. One week before the meeting, the agenda and meeting materials will be posted publicly, and the meeting publicly noticed.
- f. The order of business on the agenda of the State Library Commission, unless otherwise directed by the chair shall be as follows:
 - 1. Consent Agenda
 - 2. Business Items
 - 3. Discussion and Information Items
 - 4. Standing Reports

Subcommittees and Work Groups

- a. There is a standing finance committee of the State Library Commission. The finance committee coordinates the Commission's financial oversight responsibilities. Members of the finance committee shall be appointed by the chair at the first meeting of each fiscal year. No more than three commissioners shall serve on the finance committee at any one time. The committee may include as non-voting, ex officio members other non-Commissioners whose experience in accounting, finance, or business may assist the committee and Commission to meet their financial management responsibilities.



- b. There is a standing personnel committee of the State Library Commission. The personnel committee coordinates the Commission's responsibility to employ and evaluate the State Librarian. The committee is charged with annually evaluating the State Librarian. The committee shall be made up of the chair, vice-chair, and a third commissioner appointed by the chair. Members of the personnel committee shall be appointed by the chair at the first meeting of each fiscal year. No more than three commissioners shall serve on the personnel committee at any one time. This committee will be staffed by the State Library's human resources specialist. The committee may include as non-voting, ex officio members other non-Commissioners whose experience in human resources or business may assist the committee and Commission to meet their personnel management responsibilities. The Committee will work with the human resources specialist to determine the evaluation process and timeline that is consistent with the State of Montana's evaluation system and informed by the State Librarian's job description. The State Librarian will be evaluated on accomplishment of goals set by the Commission. The committee will conduct the evaluation and prepare a report for the Commission.
- c. Additional standing committees may be formed by the State Library Commission by amending the bylaws.
- D. Ad Hoc work groups may be formed by the chair of the Commission at the request of the Commission or state library staff. Work groups shall be charged by the chair to accomplish specific, timebound, tasks. Members of work groups will be appointed by the chair. No more than three commissioners shall serve on a work group.

State Librarian

- a. In addition to managing the routine affairs of the Commission and attending its meetings, the State Librarian shall:
 5. Present, for Commission approval, quarterly financial reports which accurately portray the financial situation of all funds for which the Commission is responsible.
 6. Present quarterly personnel reports which accurately portray the hiring, resignations, and dismissals of the staff of the Montana State Library.
 7. Present quarterly procurement contract reports which accurately portray Montana State Library's procurement contracts that have been initiated, extended, or have expired.
 8. Carry out policy decisions of the Commission and is responsible for management of the State Library programs. Management information requests by Commission members shall be made to the appropriate staff person with a copy to the State Librarian.
 9. Assist the Commission in preparing an annual report for its submission to the Governor and State Legislature.

Bylaws Amendment & Review

- a. These bylaws may be reconsidered at any commission meeting, the action to amend the bylaws taken at the next regular Commission meeting.
 10. These bylaws shall be placed on the agenda for review, normally at the February meeting each year.

Updated October 11, 2023, reviewed annually

Commission Meetings

The Commission typically meets six times per year. Meetings are generally held in Helena on the second Wednesday in February, June, August, October, and December.

The exception is when the Commission meets in conjunction with the annual Montana Library Association Conference. The meeting date and location depends on the conference schedule.

[Refer to the Commission Calendar webpage](#) for an overview of annual recurring activities.

Meeting materials are available on the [MSL Website](#) prior to each meeting date. Materials include

- ☐ Agenda
- ☐ Minutes
- ☐ Memos
- ☐ Informational Reports
- ☐ Financial Reports

All meeting materials are archived on the [MSL Website](#) and recordings of each meeting are posted to the [MSL YouTube Channel](#).

Meetings are conducted according to Montana's open meeting laws MCA § 2-3-203, and a limited amount of time will be set aside on the agenda for comments from observers and visitors. During the conduct of business, the chairperson may recognize an observer for comment.

Open Meetings

Montana's open meeting and public participation laws are based on two fundamental rights contained in the Montana Constitution. Article II, Section 9 contains a strong right to know provision:

Right to know. No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases in which the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.

Article II, Section 8 guarantees the right of public participation:

Right of participation. The public has the right to expect governmental agencies to afford such reasonable opportunity for citizen participation in the operation of the agencies prior to the final decision as may be provided by law.

In the case of meetings of public agencies and other entities, these constitutional rights are primarily implemented through Montana's open meeting laws, codified at MCA §§ 2-3-201 through 2-3-221. The general provision for open public meetings is contained in MCA § 2-3-203(1), which provides:

Meetings of public agencies and certain associations of public agencies to be open to public -- exceptions. (1) All meetings of public or governmental bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, agencies of the state, or any political subdivision of the state or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds, or expending public funds, including the supreme court, must be open to the public.

. . . (3) The presiding officer of any meeting may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then if and only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open.

See MCA § 2-3-203 for specific language regarding closing a meeting and individual privacy.

What is a meeting?

Under the open meeting laws, a “meeting” is very broadly defined as “. . . the convening of a quorum of the constituent membership of a public agency or association . . . , whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the agency has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.”

MCA § 2-3-202. A “quorum” is defined as “a majority of the entire body” when members are acting as a group, “not merely the action of a particular number of members as individuals.” 42 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 51 at 200-01.

An agency may not appoint any committee or subcommittee for the purpose of conducting business that is within the jurisdiction of the agency in order to avoid the requirements of the open meeting laws. MCA § 2-3-203(6). There is no statutory distinction between a “regular” or “special” meeting for purposes of determining whether it is a “meeting” subject to the open meeting laws. See MCA § 2-3-202.

A “meeting” subject to the open meeting laws occurs regardless of whether it is conducted in person, by telephone conference call, by videoconferencing, or by email. See MCA § 2-3-202 (“whether corporeal or by means of electronic equipment . . .”).

Notice of the Meeting

Notice of a meeting must be given sufficiently in advance of the meeting to permit the public to attend. *Id.*; MCA § 2-3-103. The amount of notice required “should increase with the relative significance of the decision to be made,” with the ultimate goal of encouraging and assisting citizen participation. See 47 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 13 at 6 (1998). In the case of county commission meetings, the Attorney General has suggested that 48 hours advance notice should generally be considered “sufficient to notify the public of contemplated action.” 47 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 13 at 6 (1998). However, each case will be considered based on its own unique facts, and depending on the circumstances less than 48 hours notice may be adequate. See *Jones v. Missoula County*, 330 Mont. 205, 127 P.3d 406 (2006).

Failure to comply with the notice requirements may subject any decision made in violation of the requirement to be voided under MCA § 2-3-213.

Minutes of Meetings

In accordance with MCA § 2-3-212, the State Library Commission makes available recordings and all materials associated with the business conducted during meetings.

- [MSL Website](#)
- [MSL YouTube Channel](#)

Violation of the Open Meeting Laws

A violation of the open meeting laws may subject the agency or public body to injunctive or prospective relief, resulting in voiding the decision made in the illegal meeting.

Any lawsuit seeking to void a decision must be commenced within 30 days of the decision. (see MCA § 2-3-213) A plaintiff who prevails in an action to enforce constitutional access rights under the open meeting laws may be awarded costs and reasonable attorney fees. (see MCA § 2-3-221)

Commission Resolutions

On occasion, the Commission has adopted resolutions to provide direction and guidance in response to significant issues or to recognize individuals for service to Montana.

Archived resolutions are accessible on the [MSL Website](#).

CURRENT ISSUES BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Annual Reports

[The 2024 annual report](#) provides descriptions, data, and accomplishments of the agency.

2025 Legislative Session

The following information summarizes key outcomes for the Montana State Library (MSL) from the 2025 Legislative Session:

Budget

- House Bill 2, the state budget bill, includes fixed costs, inflationary, and pay increases approved by the Governor's office and the Legislature. MSL's budget includes no new proposals.
- HB 13, the state pay plan bill, provides that eligible state employees will receive a pay increase of \$1.00/hour or 2.5%, whichever is greater, on July 1, 2025, and July 1, 2026. The bill also increases in-state travel per diem to match 70% of the Federal Standard Rate. Previously the State determined its own per diem rates. Finally, the bill increases the monthly state health plan employer contributions by 2.5% in January 2026 and January 2027.
 - As a reminder, HB 2 provides General Fund dollars and spending authority for other sources of revenue (State Special, Federal, and Proprietary) to cover the costs of these increases, however these costs not funded by General Fund must be funded by existing dollars, reducing the amount of operational funds available from those sources of revenue.
- HB 192 increased the Montana Geospatial Information Act recordation fee, along with the fees received by Clerks and Recorders. MSL's GIS recordation fee increased by \$.75/page and the County GIS account fee increased by \$.25/page effective October 1, 2025. The legislation also adds an inflationary factor to be calculated by the Department of Revenue to help the fees keep pace with rising costs.

Policy

The Education Budget Subcommittee adopted a revised organizational structure for the State Library. Instead of considering MSL one program, Statewide Library Resources, our budget and financial reporting will now be broken out into three programs, Central Services, Patron and Local Library Development Services, and GIS, Data, and Information Programs.

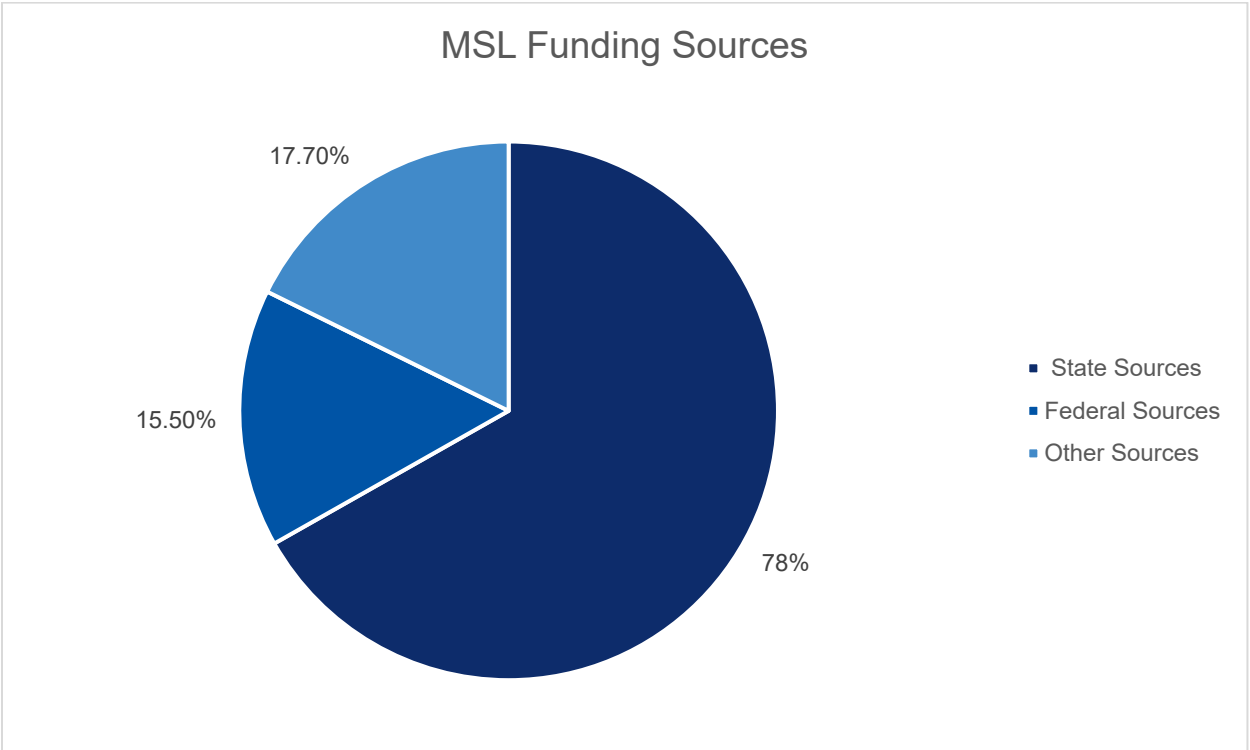
Interim

HB 864, the Section E budget companion bill, includes a requirement for the Education Interim Budget Committee to study statewide interlibrary resource sharing programs.

Funding and Budget Overview

[Review the 2025 Program Budget Deep Dive](#) for more information

Total Operating Budget: \$10.1 million (FY26)



Percent of Total Budget Expenses from State Sources	Percent of Total Budget Expenses from Federal Sources	Percent of Total Budget Expenses from Other or Local Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund: 27.1% MGIA: 23.0% Coal Severance Tax: 4.8% State Aid: 4.0% Digital Library Services: 3.7% Next Gen. 9-1-1: 4.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Services & Technology: 15.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other: 13.8% Montana Shared Catalog: 3.9%

ABOUT MSL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Work Plans

Work plan information is reported by state fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The information is reported monthly by the project leads noted on the dashboard. Current year work plans are presented as an ongoing collection, while previous years are shared as an archive of past work. Work plans document the annual goals and milestones that staff strive to complete each year. Work plans typically do not document ongoing or routine tasks. Work plans may contain “stretch” goals, or goals that may not be achievable in one year but reflect important work staff strive to complete.

[Current and Past Workplans](#)

Data Dashboards

Unless otherwise noted, data is reported by state fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Dashboard layouts may change as new programs and metrics are added. Current year data are presented as an ongoing collection.

[Data Dashboards](#)

Central Services

Central Services staff provide accounting, human resources, and information technology assistance across the agency, as well as general administrative support.

GIS, Data, and Information Programs

MSL gathers knowledge about Montana, for Montanans, and makes it available at the click of a button.

Government Information

MSL makes a concerted effort to ensure Montana's right to know by preserving and providing access to state government publications to fulfill MCA § 22-1-212: "The state library shall administer a state publications depository library program to identify, acquire, catalog, preserve, and provide access to state publications."

Digitized publications are available via the Internet Archive and state web pages dating back to 1996 are archived at [MT.GOV Connect](#).

Montana Natural Resource Information System

Established in 1983 by the Montana Legislature, and transferred to MSL in 1985, the Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) is a comprehensive program for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of existing data relating to the natural resources of Montana.

Montana Natural Heritage Program

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) is the state's source for reliable, objective information and expertise to support stewardship of our native species and habitats, emphasizing those of conservation concern. MTNHP strives to provide easy access to information in order for users to save time and money, speed environmental reviews, and inform decision making. The MTNHP manages information on native and non-native species and biological communities which can be accessed on the Montana Field Guide, Natural Heritage Map Viewer, Species Snapshot, and Species of Concern web pages and applications.

Water Information System

Like the MTNHP, the Water Information System (WIS) is a program of NRIS and is designed to collect, manage and provide access to information about Montana's water resources and water supply and drought status. Also similar to MTNHP, WIS staff work closely with local, state, and federal agencies, to complement their work and make this work more efficient. For example, WIS staff have produced county drought status maps since 2002. This work has been done in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and serves as an archive of data about drought and water supply status.

Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure

The Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) is made up of 15 "framework" geographic datasets, mapped at a statewide scale that help people view, explore, understand, and analyze Montana's geography and mapped information. MSDI datasets are generally accepted as the best available, standardized, statewide data that meet the essential, digital geographic information needs of Montana's citizens, its government, commerce, legislature, area researchers, and more.

Land Information

The Land Information program at the Montana State Library is responsible for several MSDI data sets including Mapping Control, Administrative Boundaries, Structures and Addresses, and Cadastral. Cadastral Parcels and Administrative boundaries are tied to points on the ground (a National Geodetic Survey benchmark, a survey corner, or building address). MSL works closely with partners including the Bureau of Land Management, surveyors and local governments, to communicate the importance of good data creation and sharing data so it can be used consistently for multiple purposes.

Information Products

MSL's Information Products team is responsible for maintaining MSL's website and web applications to ensure Montanans have seamless self-service access to the wide variety of online information applications supported by MSL. Over the years, MSL has transitioned from

applications developed in-house to commercial off-the-shelf and semi-custom applications that are easier to maintain and upgrade as technology advances.

Statewide GIS Coordination

To most effectively create, manage and share GIS data, MSL needs local, state, and federal partners that actively invest in GIS. MSL GIS Coordination staff work closely with governments and agencies to create opportunities for standardization and collaboration. MSL also looks for opportunities to coordinate with partners not currently invested in GIS to make sure that those partners do not miss out on opportunities or new requirements like public safety and elections needs. MSL leads a multi-sector advisory council to inform the investment in Geospatial data development, coordination and communication. With input from the advisory council, MSL creates a geospatial information plan to outline internal work priorities and identify priorities for investment through the MGIA grant program. MSL staff also works closely with counterparts in other states and federal partners to make sure that MSL is following national standards, and that Montana maximizes opportunities for federal resources.

Montana Geospatial Information Act Grant program

The MGIA grant program has historically served to support the creation of local GIS data that contributes to the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure. Due to the sharp decline in MGIA revenue no MGIA grants were awarded in FY 25 and FY 26. If revenue rebounds MSL anticipates making grant awards again in FY 27.

Next Generation 9-1-1 Data Services

The State of Montana has actively worked to map structures and addresses as a function of public safety and emergency response since federal funding became available for this purpose following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. MSL's expertise in the data standards necessary to align location information with modern emergency response technology led to updates in Montana's public safety legislation in 2017. Following a study conducted by MSL about Montana's 911 GIS data readiness in 2018, the 2021 Legislature created a statutory appropriation to fund Next Generation 911 data development by local governments. With that funding MSL staff trains local governments to create and update location information that complies with public safety data

standards. MSL also administers software as a service contract that allows local governments to check their location information to make sure it meets the standards for public safety data readiness.

Montana State Reference Network

Montana State Reference Network (MTSRN) is the state-owned real time positioning network (RTN), operated with the cooperation of partners that include tribal nations, the Montana Department of Transportation, Montana State Library, counties, educational institutions and private entities who maintain, operate, or otherwise contribute to its operation. This growing statewide global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) network consists of permanently located global positioning system (GPS) receivers that generate real-time, high-accuracy GPS positioning.

Patron and Local Library Development Services

The Montana State Library provides leadership and guidance to libraries in order to improve programs, services, and facilities.

MSL provides consulting services, continuing education opportunities, and learning programs for library employees across Montana. These resources, training sessions, and professional development opportunities help library staff meet the needs of their patrons and create thriving opportunities for their communities.

Consulting

Our consulting team supports successful libraries by providing guidance and training to library directors and trustees throughout the state. Statewide Consulting Librarians are assigned to individual public libraries within specified consulting territories. These territories are based on the six Library Federations.

Certification and Continuing Education

The Montana Library Certification Program was established to promote continuing education and to recognize librarians and trustees who continue to expand their knowledge and skills to provide improved services for patrons and communities. We provide a variety of opportunities to engage in continuing education for all library staff and trustees.

Lifelong Learning

The Montana State Library provides lifelong learning support to all Montanans through a combination of librarian professional development and training, program development, and meaningful partnerships. Lifelong Learning projects include sustained, long-term efforts in early literacy, virtual programming, and summer reading, as well as other topics such as health information, STEM programming, wildlife education, and civic engagement.

Montana History Portal

The Montana History Portal (formerly the Montana Memory Project) (MHP) supports the creation of, and provides free access to, digital collections of items relating to Montana's cultural heritage and government. Libraries, museums, local government agencies, and historical societies across Montana contribute content to the website.

Montana Shared Catalog

The Montana Shared Catalog (MSC) is a digital card catalog and library management system that is the foundation from which libraries offer increasingly efficient library services. More than 200 public, school, academic, and special libraries and branches across Montana participate in a consortium to fund and utilize the MSC. MSL provides contracting support and system administration for the cloud-based system. By centralizing system administration, any library of any size can offer high quality library services to their patrons which would be beyond the capacity of most Montana libraries. The libraries that enjoy the greatest benefit from MSC membership also participate in sharing groups in which library patrons can seamlessly place holds on items from dozens of libraries around the state and pick up the item soon afterward. This program is made cost-effective through the use of a courier service, in which crates of items are delivered from library to library.

Talking Book Services

Montana State Library Talking Books is a cooperative effort between the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, the Montana State Library, and the Utah State Library to provide Montanans who cannot read standard print with talking books and Braille service.

The program aims to improve patron quality of life and offer ease of access to reading materials so that patrons have opportunity to educate themselves and become informed voters connected to society, make informed and healthy decisions to be productive in the workforce, and contribute to society.

Research Resources

MSL provides research and professional development resources for state employees and contractors as well as for Montana library staff.

Montana Library Network

In the late 1990s MSL became the first state to negotiate a contract for all libraries in Montana to make use of technology provided by the national organization, OCLC, to catalog library collections and to share their collections with other library patrons through interlibrary loan. Then in 2002, MSL created the Montana Shared Catalog. This consortium started with 17 founding members and has grown steadily to serve 210 libraries and branches. To date, Montana remains one of the only states to offer a statewide library catalog system. From there, Montana created a statewide platform for Montanans to download e-books, audiobooks and digital magazines called Montana Library 2 Go. Most Montanans know this service through the popular Libby app. As is the case with the MSC, Montana libraries share a single online platform and digital collection, saving significant staff time and resources.

Federation Grants

Montana's six library federations meet twice yearly for training and to develop plans of service through which they prioritize how to spend their federation grants to support collaborative library services. In particular, federation meetings represent an important opportunity to support library trustees which is a significant area of focus for MSL.

Public Library Standards and State Aid

MSL distributes state funding to MT public libraries that comply with statewide standards set by MSL. Annually public libraries self-report whether they meet public library standards and/or request deferrals if they are unable to meet a standard for a particular reason. To receive a deferral, libraries must state how they intend to meet the standard within a specified period of time. Staff time is administering the reporting system, answering questions about the standards, and reviewing and considering requests for deferrals.

MSL WEBSITE LINKS

AGENCY WEBSITE <https://msl.mt.gov>

ASPeN <https://mslservices.mt.gov/ASPeN>

DASHBOARDS <https://msl.mt.gov/about/publications/statistics>

MSL YOUTUBE CHANNEL <https://youtube.com/@montanastatelibrary>

NEWSLETTERS <https://msl.mt.gov/about/news>

STAFF DIRECTORY <https://directory.mt.gov/govt/state-dir/agency/library>

MCA AND ARM WEBSITE LINKS

Montana Code Annotated (2023) <https://archive.legmt.gov/bills/mca/index.html>

Administrative Rules of Montana <https://rules.mt.gov/>

ADVICE FROM COMMISSION ALUMNI

The following questions were answered through interviews and messages gathered from Commission members who served between 1980 and 2022.

What is one piece of advice you would give to a new commissioner?

- The one piece of advice I would give to a new commissioner is to recognize their blessing in being appointed to the MT Library Commission. They get to work with the excellent staff at the state library and through it to dedicated libraries and staff across the state. It is a blessing to be a commissioner and a platform resulting in the potential of so much good for the people of the state.
- Noses in, fingers out.
- Read the notebook and go prepared to the meetings.
- Read the whole orientation packet a few times.
- Attend a conference or a federation meeting as an active listener.
- For the first year, sit back and listen to learn about the players, listen to what people have to say, learn from the experienced commissioners.
- Trust the staff and the State Librarian.

What is the most important thing the Commission can do to effectively do its work?

- The most important thing I think a Commission can do effectively is to be servant leaders seeking to create a work environment and example where commissioners and the agency thrive by advocating, promoting, and empowering libraries and the people who work in them to the best level of service.
- Understand that libraries are much too important to be left to just the librarians, must have public involvement and support.
- Being there [attending] and listening is the most important! Listen to the presentations from the staff.
- Reading the meeting materials before the meeting begins!
- Make the responsibility of public service and advocacy for MSL your first thought and priority in decision making.

What was the most difficult decision or issue you faced? How did you resolve it?

- Because not a professional librarian, it was hard to overcome resistance to weeding, be thoughtful in public libraries w/ space and time, need to work on the local level to use the numbers to describe how circulation, including circs on table, to show impact on staff and importance of collection management
- A really big staffing cut. The first time I pulled into the State Library parking lot and there was plenty of parking available, I felt sick. The people who were still there felt sad and / or guilty for surviving the cuts. I didn't make that decision - the legislature made that decision, but I felt some responsibility for it because, if the legislature didn't know to value the state library, that's partly because we as a profession and as a commission didn't communicate our value to them in a way that they understood.
- The most difficult issue we faced far too often was when we were informed to prepare for cuts at the MSL. These times were always gut wrenching because the MSL is a small department, and any cut had the potential to result in a loss of a program or people. We tried to resolve it with the common cause of a coalition of library supporters and information access advocates including such groups as legislatures, the K-12 and post-secondary community, the Montana Library Association and most importantly the citizens of Montana. With their help, we were sometimes able to lessen the blow of these cuts and sometimes we were not, and the cuts had to be made. One thing for sure our supporters were always back for the next round advocating for the MSL and its important services.
- The most difficult was when decisions had to be made to cut services when it was so evident how much libraries depended on and were relying on the State Library for support and advice.

What was your favorite thing or memory of being an MSL Commissioner?

- I enjoyed sensing progress and see the fact that Montanans take it seriously, moving from 15 libraries without phones to online resources, look at processes for efficiency and automate what you can to save staff capacity and time for the important stuff. Go visit other places and amazing libraries to help see what is possible and how to progress from where you are.
- My best memory and favorite part of being a commissioner was working as a team in common cause with excellent people in Helena and across the state to advocate for the enhancement of library and information services at the MSL and the state. We saw the positive impact of increased information resources, services and facilities that enriched the lives of the citizens of the state and were able to join in celebrating the many successes that resulted from everyone's efforts!
- When we visited the libraries and saw what was going on, met the staff at the libraries, and really got to know them.

HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION AND THE MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

Introduction from [*Montana State Library Commission: History and Services, January 1964*](#)

The State Library Commission exists today because of the perseverance of a small but valiant group of dedicated librarians and friends who worked diligently and patiently to achieve favorable legislation for its establishment.

As early as 1895, a law was passed providing for a traveling library but no funds were appropriated by the legislature. Lay groups proposed that the State Library Association support and finance such a library but it is understandable that this was not feasible since the Association had a yearly budget of approximately \$35.00.

It was not until 1929 that the legislature passed the law which established the State Library Commission. Again, as in 1895, no funds were appropriated. Then, in 1945, a Governor's Committee on Reorganization recommended that since no budget had ever been provided, the State Library Commission be removed from the statutes. Every effort to keep the Commission was made by the Montana Library Association and with success. The Legislative Assembly appropriated funds, and while the amount was modest, it was sufficient to permit the Board to engage a librarian as its executive officer and to make a small start toward fulfilling its duties as set forth in the Montana statutes.

Rent-free quarters were provided at the Montana State University Library [University of Montana] and it is for this reason that this state agency has been located in Missoula. When larger quarters were essential and when funds to pay rent were available under the Library Services Act, efforts were made to find suitable space in Helena. This was not possible at that time and so Headquarters continue to be in Missoula. It is now located at South Avenue and Middlesex.

The State Library Commission has offered assistance to the libraries in the state since its establishment. With the passage of the Library Services Act in 1956, services could be expanded to a significant degree and the present dynamic program initiated.

History and Services Overview

The early years of the State Library Commission were focused on developing services and resources to provide access to libraries for all Montanans—particularly those whose communities did not already have that access. As needs and technology have changed, the services supported by the Commission have also evolved. State and federal funding have supported services at varying levels throughout the history of the Commission and State Library.

The earliest services supported by the MSLEC/MSLC were traveling book collections. When Library Services Act funds arrived in the mid-1950s, bookmobiles helped deliver the collections and the professional librarians to remote communities. A highlight in the 1960s was the installation of telephone service in each county library. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, public library standards and librarian certification were on the agenda. Resource sharing—catalogs of materials and traveling collections—were a focus through the 1980s and into the 1990s when the Internet enabled connected library systems. By the end of the 1990s, internet access was available in all of Montana’s public libraries. Shared online library systems and digital collections grew in the early 2000s. Awareness of a need to provide digital access to natural, geographical, historical, and government information brought support from the Legislature to consolidate staff and systems at the State Library. The Natural Heritage Program, Geographic Information Systems, and Digital Library are integral services of the State Library.

State Librarians

In the years from 1929 to 1965, one Commission Chair and three State Librarians served. 10 individuals have served as State Librarian since 1970, including Alma Smith Jacobs—one of Montana’s most honored librarians.

Years	Last Name	First Name	Details
1929-31	Buckhous	M. Gertrude	Secretary/Chair of MSLEC
1931-1939	Keeney	Philip	UM Librarian/Secretary of MSLEC
1939-1945	Campbell	Kathleen	UM Librarian/Secretary of MSLEC
1946-1957	Torgrimson	Ellen	Secretary
1957-1970	Longworth	Ruth O.	State Librarian
1970-1973	Hoffman	David R.	State Librarian
1973	Peel	Richard	State Librarian (acting, May-July)
1973-1982	Jacobs	Alma S.	State Librarian
1982	Cooper	Alene	State Librarian (acting, January-May)
1982-1988	Parker	Sara	State Librarian

MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Years	Last Name	First Name	Details
1988	Schlesinger	Deborah	State Librarian (acting, August-December)
1989-1996	Miller	Richard T.	State Librarian
1996	Staffeldt	Darlene	State Librarian (acting, May-July)
1996-2004	Strege	Karen	State Librarian
2004-2011	Staffeldt	Darlene	State Librarian
2012-	Stapp	Jennie	State Librarian



2 M. Gertrude Buckhous

Commissioners

107 individuals have served on the MSLC since 1929. By law, the Librarian at the University of Montana was designated as the Secretary and Chair of the MSLEC/MSLC. In the early 1960s, the Commission Chair requirement changed to allow for election of the chair from the members of the Commission. In 1964, Kathleen Campbell retired after having served as both UM Librarian and Commission Chair for more than 20 years.

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1929-31	Buckhous	M. Gertrude	Chair and Secretary Missoula
1931-1939	Keeney	Philip	Librarian Montana State University Missoula
1929-1932	Main	Clara M.	Lewistown
1932-1934	Powell	Elizabeth B.	Appointed by Governor Erickson Missoula
1934	Speer	Lucille	Bonner
1939-64	Campbell	Kathleen	Chair, Librarian Montana State University Missoula
1945	Ackley	Corrine B	Lewistown
1945-50	Dillavou	Mrs. R.C.	Billings
1945-48	Perham	Mrs. Wallace.T	Glendive



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1929-49	Ireland	Elizabeth	Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ex-officio Helena
1945-52	Fulmer	Margaret	Great Falls
1948-51	Warren	Mrs. D.C.	Glendive
1950-53	Fraser	Mrs. John B.	Billings
1951-54	Sattler	Mrs. Peter	Glendive
1952-55	Graybill	Mrs. Leo C	Great Falls
1949-57	Condon	Mary M.	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1957-69	Miller	Harriet	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1953-62	Ewing	Mrs. R.L. (Helen)	Bozeman
1954-63	Mast	Mrs. J.B.	Bozeman
1955-56	Fulton	Mrs. Frank	Plevna
1957-61	Little	Dr. Amos R	Helena



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1961-64	King	Mrs. Marjorie	Winnett
1962-65	Houchen	Mrs. Walter	Fairview
1963-66	Baillie	Mr. William L.	Chair (1965-66) Great Falls
1964	Pemberton	Mrs. A.O. (Velma)	Chair (1967), Vice Chair (1969) Broadus
1964-82	Thompson	Earle C.	Dean of Library Services, Montana State University/University of Montana Missoula
1967-73	Traynor	Mike	Vice Chair (1967), Chair (1969) Scobey
1969-77	Colburg	Dolores	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1969-81	Conklin	William P.	Vice Chair (1969) Great Falls
1970-73	Davies	Doris	Chair (1972) Billings
1971-77	Gibson	Don	Lindsay
1973-76	Warden	Margaret	Great Falls
1975-78	Watt	Mrs. Mabel	Missoula



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1977-1980	Sullivan	Mildred	Glendive
1977-81	Rice	Georgia Ruth	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1979– 1982	Fitzpatrick	Natalie S.	Anaconda
1982-83	Oelz	Erling	Interim Director, University of Montana Missoula
1980 – 1983	Evans	Joan M.	Billings
1981 – 1982	Argenbright	Ed	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1981 – 1990	McClerman	Dr. Henry	Butte
1983 – 1984	Cates	Sheila	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1983 – 1989	Davis	Martha B.	Dillon
1983 – 1990	Alldredge	Noreen	Director of Libraries, MSU Bozeman
1983 – 1991	Abramson	C.E. (Abe)	Missoula
1982 – 1991	Hudspeth	Mary	Libby/Glendive/Bozeman



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1984 – 1984	Huenekens	Herbert	Billings
1985 – 1987	Everett	Karen	Billings
1985 – 1989	Braaten	Victoria	Big Timber
1988 – 1990	Thompson	Marie	Billings
1990 – 1990	Patrick	Dr. Ruth	Dean of Libraries, University of Montana Missoula
1990 – 2000	Doggett	Mary	White Sulphur Springs
1991 – 2001	Keenan	Nancy	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1991 – 1993	Wallin	Lloyd	Deer Lodge
1991 – 1996	Hauptman	Anne	Billings
1991 – 2000	Schulz	Michael	Library Director, Western Montana College Dillon
1992 – 1994	Taylor	Vada	Glendive
1992 – 1996	Guthrie	Peggy	Choteau



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1993 – 1993	Monprode-Holt	Lorrie	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1993 – 1996	Lundy	Myrna	Helena
1994 – 1995	Boom	Diana	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1994 – 1997	Gray	Eleanor	Miles City
1995 – 1999	Stearns	Harold (Hal)	Helena
1996 – 2002	Laird	Dorothy	Whitefish
1996 – 2008	Bergeron	Cheri	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1997 – 2003	Garvey	Rosemary	Ramsay
1997 – 2003	Johnson	David	Billings
1999 – 2005	Randall	Al	Troy
2001 – 2004	Atchley	Ralph	Malta



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
2001 – 2007	Morton	Bruce	Dean of Libraries Bozeman
2001 – 2008	McCulloch	Linda	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2002 – 2005	Staffanson	Gail	Sidney
2003 – 2004	Broadbent	Toni	Helena
2003 – 2007	Bitz	Caroline	Box Elder
2003 – 2012	Allen	Donald	Billings
2004 – 2009	Moody	Ron	Lewistown
2005 – 2008	Carrywater	Cindy	Hays-Lodgepole
2005 – 2009	Smith	Nora	Bozeman
2007 – 2011	Allen	Bonnie	Dean of Libraries, UM Missoula
2007 – 2013	Hinch	Marsha	Choteau
2008 – 2010	Funda	Joyce	Kalispell



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
2009 – 2014	Quillin	Richard	Whitefish
2009–2015	Scheetz	Anita	Sidney
2009–2017	Bartow	Colet	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2009–2017	Juneau	Denise	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2010–2014	Miller	Lee (Phillips)	Butte
2012–2015	Gransbery	Jim	Billings
2012–2016	Roberts	Brent	Library Director, MSU-Billings
2013–2014	Hunter	Fredricka	Missoula
2014–2022	Newell	Bruce	Helena
2014–2020	Kish	Anne	Twin Bridges
2014–2020	LaFromboise	Aaron	Browning
2015–2018	Eissinger	Connie	Brockway



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
2015–2021	Wall	Ken	Missoula
2016–2022	Arlitsch	Kenning	Dean of Libraries, MSU Bozeman
2017–2025	Arntzen	Elsie	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2018–2021	Doggett	Jamie	White Sulphur Springs
2020–2021	Behe	Connie	Kalispell
2020–2023	Johnson	Dalton	Missoula
2021-2022	Kerr	Kristin	Helena
2021-	Scribner	Robyn	Geraldine
2021-	Taylor	Peggy	Whitefish
2022-	Hall	Tammy	Bozeman
2022-	Burnett	Tom	Bozeman
2022-2023	Dubosky	Patricia	Library Director, MSU Northern Havre

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
2023-	Rossman	Brian	Dean of Libraries, MSU Bozeman
2023-	Cuthbertson	Carmen	Kalispell
2025-	Hedalen	Susie	Superintendent of Public Instruction
2025-	Gregg	McKenna	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena

History Videos

For more information on the history of the Commission and MSL you can view videos in the [MSL History playlist](#).

MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

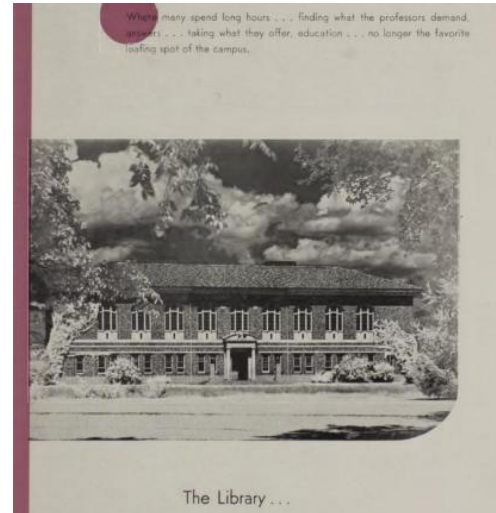
Locations

The MSLC and State Library were housed at the University of Montana in Missoula from 1929 to the late 1950s. Rent-free locations on campus included Main Hall, Rankin Hall, Social Sciences Building, and a World War I barrack. A leased office on South Avenue was the last location in Missoula.



3 1515 E. 6th Avenue, Helena, Montana

In 1965, through the support of Governor Babcock, the MSLC moved to a converted warehouse at 930 East Lyndale Avenue in Helena. The next move was to 1515 East 6th Avenue in



4 UM Library 1937 - Sentinel Yearbook

1982 when the Joe Mazurek Building was completed.

A flood in July 2022 prompted the agency to move again to 1201 11th Avenue in November 2022. The lease on the building expires December 31, 2025.



5 1201 11th Avenue, Helena, Montana

TIMELINE: 1895 TO PRESENT

Year	Milestones
1895	Law passed to create a traveling library collection with no appropriation to fund the service
1906	Montana Library Association established
1915	Montana Legislature authorizes the establishment of county libraries
1929	Revised Codes of Montana (RCM) 1575.1 State library extension commission created by an act of the 1929 Legislative Assembly, no appropriation made to support operations, first meeting of the Montana State Library Extension Commission (MSLEC) in August
1931	Gertrude Buckhouse, University of Montana Librarian and Commission Chair, dies unexpectedly
1939	Kathleen Campbell, University of Montana Librarian, becomes Chair/Secretary of the MSLEC
1945	Legislative Assembly appropriates \$20,000 for biennium, Ellen Torgrimson hired as State Librarian
1946	First Annual Report of the Commission published, Commission Headquartered in Missoula at the University of Montana.

Year	Milestones
1956	Passage of Library Service Act by U.S. Congress, Northwest Federation of Libraries formed
1957	Ruth Longworth hired as Secretary to the MSLEC and Headquarters Librarian
1958	Great Falls Library Federation formed
1959	Sagebrush Library Federation formed, <i>Library Laws of Montana</i> published
1961	Name changed to State Library Commission from MSLEC, and State Librarian from Secretary
1962	Montana State Library Commission <i>Statement of Policy</i> published
1964	Big Sky Federation formed, Montana State Library <i>Commission History and Services</i> published, Library Services Act expanded to Library Service and Construction Act
1965	State Library moves to 930 East Lyndale Avenue, Helena
1966	South Central Federation formed, University of Montana Librarian Kathleen “Casey” Campbell retires after serving as Commission Chair from 1939 until 1964

Year	Milestones
1967	Montana Library Advisory Council established to meet requirements for the Library Services and Construction Act.
1968	State Library became a regional library for the blind and physically handicapped and a state publications library distribution center
1969	Institutional library services established, Public Library Standards adopted by the Commission
1970	Ruth Longworth retires as State Librarian, David Hoffman hired as State Librarian
1971	Governor's Conference on Libraries convened
1972	Golden Plain Library Federation formed
1973	David Hoffman resigns, Richard Peel serves as Acting State Librarian, Alma Smith Jacobs hired as State Librarian
1975	Passage of HB 55 providing for a state referendum for one state mil for funding public library federations. In the November 1976 general election the Referendum was defeated.
1976	Tamarack and Broad Valleys Federations formed

Year	Milestones
1977	First edition of the Union List of Montana Serials(ULMS) produced by Minitex
1978	Parmly Billings Library is first Montana library to join Western Library Network (WLN), Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services convened
1979	Passage of legislation providing 1% of coal severance tax to provide basic service through federations
1980	State Librarian Alma Smith Jacobs attends groundbreaking for the Montana Justice Building at 1515 East 6 th Avenue
1981	Montana Legislature provides funding for WLN membership for six university system libraries and the Montana State Library, Resource Sharing in Montana: A Study of Interlibrary Loan and Alternatives for a Montana Union Catalog was completed by J. Matthews and Associates, Montana State Library closes fiction collection - most of collection given to Last Copy Fiction Pool, Parmly Billings, remaining distributed among appropriate libraries
1982	Montana Governor's Council on Management, recognizing the growing amounts of natural resource data and the growing need for quick access to the data, identified (in its final report) the need for greater coordination and information sharing among natural resource agencies, State Library moves to 1515 East 6 th Avenue in Helena, Alma Smith Jacobs retires, Acting State Librarian is Alene Cooper, Sara Parker hired as State Librarian.

Year	Milestones
1983	Montana Legislature created the Natural Resource Information System and the Natural Heritage Program with the chief objective: to be a comprehensive program for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of existing data relating to the natural resources of Montana, Action by Legislature expanded commission from 5 to 7 members, MonCat Pilot initiated with WLN resource directories distributed to 30 Montana public, school, academic and special libraries
1985	The Heritage Program began operations in October with David Genter as Director and zoologist; Steve Shelly as botanist, Nancy Grulke as community ecologist, and Lisa Shepard as the data manager. Natural Resources Information System (NRIS) established at the Montana State Library by act of the Montana Legislature, first director of NRIS was Larry Thompson. Montana State Library Commission issues the Blacktail Mission Statement
1987	Bear Creek Mission Statement issued by Montana State Library Commission, Legislature reinforces the importance of NRIS/Heritage, Montana Water Information System and Geographic Information Systems established
1988	Deborah Schlesinger was Acting State Librarian
1989	Richard T. Miller, Jr hired as State Librarian, State aid monies to libraries passed by the Montana Legislature (1) Per capita, per square mile and (2) interlibrary loan reimbursement, Commission's Pine Butte Mission Statement encouraged all libraries "... to forge partnerships which will allow them to meet the challenges facing them in the 1990s."

Year	Milestones
1990	Montana State Library Commission approved Voluntary Certification Task Force Manual as presented
1991	Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services. NRIS expands staff, data sets, and reporting
1992	Blue Bear Group, Inc. conducted the study of the library federation system in Montana
1993	NRIS initiates development of internet-based services that includes an on-line natural resource information clearinghouse and is the first state in the nation to develop an automated search and retrieval of digital map information service as part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure
1994	Library Futures Task Force Meeting
1996	Acting State Librarian Darlene Staffeldt, Karen Strege hired as State Librarian, MSL "book" logo adopted by Commission
1997	Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) of the Museum and Libraries Act of 1997 funds approved by the Commission to connect 51 libraries to the Internet, hire two technology consultants to assist libraries, Commission adopts rules to reduce the Library Services Advisory council membership from 14 to nine members appointed by the Governor and a policy statement on school libraries

Year	Milestones
1998	Remodel project initiated and completed at 1515 East 6 th Avenue with recommendations to request adding a third floor to MSL, Sue Crispin is Director of the Natural Heritage Program, ILL reimbursement rules adopted by the Commission, Talking Book Library celebrates 30 years with an event in the Capitol Rotunda, Law Revision Task Force recommendations related to District Library Law, Amendments to Multi-jurisdiction Law, and housekeeping were approved by the Commission
1999	Legislature appropriates \$400,000 for electronic databases and Gale-Infotrac is selected, MSL receives Gates Foundation Grant, Heritage Program starts <i>Optimolocus</i> newsletter, New Public Library Standards Adopted, Certification Manual published and mailed to libraries, Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) funds expire, OCLC Cost Sharing formula implemented
2000	First Summer Public Library Directors' Institute held at MSU-Billings, NRIS receives \$238,000 IMLS National Leadership Grant
2001	Institutional Library services discontinued, Montana Library Directory moves online, The Big Bill (HB 124) makes significant changes to state and local government finance, "Western Montana Shared Catalog" changes to Montana Shared Catalog, NRIS worked with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to deploy access to water rights data, MSL celebrates 20 years of the TBL volunteers program,

Year	Milestones
2002	Online collection of library statistics initiated, In response to the “Big Bill” of 2001, an AG opinion confirms that library boards remain in control of their own budgets, Montana Shared Catalog administered by the State Library with the participation and financial commitment from 17 initial, multi-type libraries
2003	Digital Library is organized to merge Library Information Services and Natural Resource Information System departments, Field Guide to Montana Animal Species launched, Professional Education and Employment for Librarians (PEEL) grant received from Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)
2004	Gates Foundation Staying Connected grant awarded for equipment and connectivity upgrades, Telephone Pioneer Group Moves to the Talking Book Library, Montana Shared Catalog grows to 43 libraries with addition of BridgerNet, MLNCAT (http://mlncat.org) replaced the Montana Library Network (MLN) Gateway, Darlene Staffeldt hired as State Librarian, Natural Heritage Program website launched, Partners group forms within the MSC to virtually share collections,
2005	Montana Legislature passed the Montana Land Information Act (MLIA), 90-1-401, MCA
2006	Award-winning “What’s Your Story” marketing campaign launched
2007	Online databases fully funded by Legislature through 2009

Year	Milestones
2009	Certification Program updated, SWIM Grant awarded by IMLS
2010	25 th anniversary of NRIS and Natural Heritage Program (NHP), Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) Grant awarded to MSL,
2011	State general fund monies that had previously been allocated to individual reimbursements to libraries for interlibrary loan costs were repurposed through an administrative rules hearing process and designated as “resource sharing funds,”
2012	Jennie Stapp hired as State Librarian
2013	Montana Land Information Act reviewed by the Legislature and changed so that the Montana State Library assumed responsibility for the Act from the State Department of Administration
2014	MSL completed a patron outreach project to reach more Montanans to qualify for Talking Book services
2015	MSL receives permanent legislative funding for the Water Information System
2016	MSL adopted a new strategic framework that prioritizes fostering partnerships, securing sufficient and sustainable funding, and creating a useful information infrastructure

Year	Milestones
2017	MSL closes public access computers and vacates lower level at 1515 East 6 th Avenue due to budget cuts and completion of collection digitization. ASPeN launched,
2018	MSL celebrates completing going “fully digital” with the completion of a 10-year project to scan its print publications collection and to convert its analog Talking Book Library collection to digital format.
2019	Broadband in Montana Libraries Study
2020	Commission confirms role of MSL as Montana Natural Heritage Program administrator, COVID-19 Pandemic sends all employees to remote work from home.
2021	Commission approves MSL rebranding project budget and revised public library standards
2022	Revised Public Library Standards go into effect, State Library of Utah contracted to provide Talking Book Library services, Offices at 1515 East 6 th Avenue flooded and MSL moves to 1201 11 th Avenue, Commission approves new branding

Year	Milestones
2023	<p>Law passed adding tribal libraries to the definition of public library and increased per resident state aid revenue, Commission approves updated administrative rules for funding and public library standards, Montana Code Annotated digitization project completed with the State Law Library.</p> <p>Law passed to authorize MSL to operate a state reference network and to charge a subscription fee to fund its operation.</p>
2024	<p>The 2023 Montana Legislature expanded the definition of public libraries to include tribal college libraries, making them eligible for state aid funding. Additionally, MSL transitioned the Montana State Reference Network (MTSRN) to a subscription-funded service from a pilot project. The Montana State Library also launched significant upgrades to the Montana Cadastral application, enhancing data service, mobile access, and map performance, while introducing new tools like the basemap swipe feature for comparing historical property changes.</p> <p>MSL formed a bargaining unit of the Montana Federation of Public Employees. Staff, Management, and the Commission signed the first collective bargaining agreement.</p>
2025	<p>The Education Budget Subcommittee adopted a revised organizational structure for the State Library. Instead of considering MSL one program, Statewide Library Resources, our budget and financial reporting was broken out into three programs, Central Services, Patron and Local Library Development Services, and GIS, Data, and Information Programs.</p>

ACRONYMS

See [“ACRONYMS”](#) for additional terms and descriptions on the MSL Website.

Abbreviation	Full Title
ARM	Administrative Rules of Montana
ASPeN	Access to Services, Programs, and eNetworks
BARD	Braille and Audio Reading Download
CST	Coal Severance Tax
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
GF	General Funds
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ILL	Interlibrary Loan
IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Abbreviation	Full Title
HB	House Bill
SB	Senate Bill
LC	Bill Draft
LD	Library Development
LIDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LL	Lifelong Learning
LSTA	Library Services Technology Act
MAGIP	Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals
MBARS	Montana Budget Analysis and Reporting System
MCA	Montana Codes Annotated
MGIAC	Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council
MLA	Montana Library Association

Abbreviation	Full Title
MLN	Montana Library Network
MLIS	Master of Library and Information Science
MLS	Master of Library Science
MHP	Montana History Portal
MSC	Montana Shared Catalog
MSDI	Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure
MSL	Montana State Library
MTNHP/NHP	Montana Natural Heritage Program
MTSRN	Montana State Reference Network
NG9-1-1	Next Generation 9-1-1
NRIS	Natural Resources Information Systems
NSGIC	National States Geographic Information Council



MSL COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Abbreviation	Full Title
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalog
OTO	One Time Only
PLSS	Public Land Survey System
RFP	Request for Proposal
RTN	Real Time Network
SABHRS	State Accounting, Budget, and Human Resource System
TBL	Talking Book Library