

# Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report

Montana State Library

September 1, 2023

## Year in Review

A greater state of knowledge begins here. Over the past year the Montana State Library has adopted a new brand and stepped-up efforts to increase Montanans' awareness of the breadth of professional services and information resources available to all Montanans through their State Library.

Exploring a new brand gave us the opportunity for introspection about who we are and how we want to be viewed by those we serve. The result? A clear articulation of our value to the public:

**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.**



*Jennie Stapp, State Librarian*

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

It's one thing for us to believe these values in ourselves. It's quite another to hear it from others. The 2023 Legislative session was one of the most successful sessions for the State Library in recent memory, including the passage of all three agency bills. These outcomes are essential to our work, but it was the reflection on the impact that we are having through our work that was even more meaningful.

*"I think your agency does a great job. I just appreciate it. I use it a lot and it's a great service."*  
Representative Malone, House Bill 343 Hearing, House Natural Resources, February 1, 2023.

*"I just want to say I'm very grateful for the State Library. I've used your services on numerous occasions for research questions and staff have always been phenomenal."* Senator Morigeau, State Library Budget Hearing, February 8, 2023.

Our brand tenets are not just about marketing, they represent what Montanans can expect from the State Library and our fantastic staff of true public servants. It's our honor to serve this great state.

## **Goals & Objectives**

The Montana State Library (MSL) helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services. To achieve this mission, the State Library works to:

1. **Foster partnerships** – Partnerships are necessary to ensure that Montanans thrive. Through partnerships, MSL and those we serve will continue to move Montana forward.
2. **Secure sufficient and sustainable funding** – We have the funds and capacity to meet the expectations of our partners and Montanans. We are an innovative, forward-thinking, and fiscally responsible organization in fulfilling our mandates and meeting the expectations of our partners and Montana citizens.
3. **Create a useful information infrastructure** – Montanans have the information and library services they need to understand and influence change in their community. Others follow Montana's model of open, transparent, cooperative information management practices.

The State Library prioritized projects to achieve these goals through agency plans including:

- [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\) Plan, 2023-27](#)
- [Montana GIS Coordination Strategic Plan, 2023-27](#)
- [Library Development Plan, 2023](#)
- [Land Information Plan, 2023-24](#)
- [Montana Natural Heritage Program Strategic Framework, 2020-25](#)

The library documented progress toward plans using dashboards and reports:

- [Work Plan Dashboards](#)
- [MSL Program Dashboards](#)
- [Objectives, Goals, Strategies, Measures \(OGSM\) Frameworks](#)

# Agency Highlights

## Fostering partnerships

- Partnership with the Secretary of State's Office
  - Talking Book Services restructure

## Partnership with the Secretary of State's Office

Montana State Library is responsible for GIS coordination and maintaining the geospatial data layers of the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure, including the Structures and Addresses framework. The Structures and Addresses Framework is a routinely updated statewide spatial database of primary structures, buildings, and their addresses. Montana has worked toward a single authoritative Addresses dataset that can be used for multiple systems, including dispatch of emergency services and broadband Internet mapping. This same data can now be used in Montana's election management system to better calculate and pinpoint a voter's address.

MSL partnered with the Secretary of State's Office and county election administrations to develop a workflow that facilitates the inclusion of data collected by local governments in the statewide dataset for geo-enabled elections. Over the past year, MSL compiled statewide election boundaries and began geocoding voter addresses against the authoritative GIS data layer. This allows elections administrators to ensure voters are registered in the correct voting districts so that they receive the correct ballot and vote in the right electoral contests. Integrating GIS in elections management also simplifies redistricting and provides greater transparency in the electoral process.



Addresses points in Elections Management

[Montana State Library's Geo-Enabled Elections Information Hub](#)

Following the federal decennial census every ten years, the Districting and Apportionment Commission is responsible for drawing new congressional and legislative districts in a process called redistricting. Redistricting resources from the Montana State Library include data layers, maps, and reports. Patrons can view an [interactive map with the final 2024-2032 Legislative Districts](#) along with 2020 Census, Administrative Boundary, Structure and Addresses data layers.

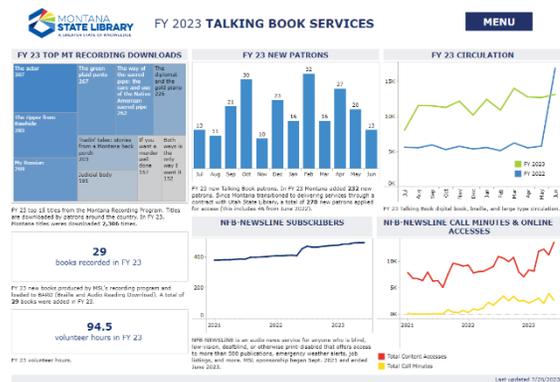
Once redistricting is complete, voting precincts in each county need to be reviewed to ensure that they conform to the new legislative district boundaries. Counties have 90 days to change their precinct boundaries following the adoption of the legislative districts. Through a preliminary analysis, MSL identified 27 counties needing review based on the new House and Senate district boundaries intersecting the current voting precincts. Counties should attempt to equalize the number of registered voters as nearly as possible. Also, a new law (SB 86) was passed this year limiting the number of registered voters to 2,500 or fewer in each precinct.

Additionally, all 56 counties needed to review County Commissioner districts to ensure that the total population and area for each is as even as possible based on the new 2020 decennial census numbers. Once voting precincts are approved by the county and submitted to the Secretary of State's Office, counties send new legal descriptions, maps, and data layers to Montana State Library to create new county precinct splits maps. As of August 2023, 91% of voting precincts (51 counties) have been received. Precinct splits for twenty-one counties (37.5%) had no boundary change, and those counties have sent the Secretary of State's Office new House, Senate, and Public Service Commission districts assignments. MSL continues to assist remaining counties in identifying precincts splits with maps.

*"I wanted to express my appreciation of the Library's outstanding work on Elections and especially the work done for redistricting...I have received multiple compliments from County Election Administrators about how helpful the Library has been."* Stuart Fuller, Elections & Voter Services Manager, Secretary of State's Office

## Talking Book Services restructure

Montana State Library restructured Talking Book Services to leverage contracted resources available through the Utah State Library (USL). USL has managed a robust Talking Book program for over 50 years, providing service to the residents of Utah, Wyoming, Alaska, and now Montana. The new contract with USL includes book cartridge and Braille circulation, titles available through download on demand services, reader's advisory, and some book recording. By partnering with USL, Montana State Library can increase the number of Talking Book patrons, spread awareness of services, and provide more stability to the program. Since initiating the contract, circulation has nearly doubled, and 278 new patrons established service.



Talking Book Services dashboard

The partnership has also increased program resiliency. In July 2022, MSL experienced a major flood. Water damage rendered the Talking Book processing area unusable, forcing building rehabilitation workers to box and move circulation equipment and the entire cartridge collection to an offsite location. Thanks to the contract with USL, Montana met its patrons' needs without interruption. Since that time, MSL has relocated to its current building at 1201 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This move included a reduction in square footage, and the space could no longer accommodate the recording studio. Thanks to our partners at Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), the studio has a new home. Its location at MDT allows MSL and other State agencies to access professional recording equipment and opens the way for new products like podcasts.

The opportunity to reimagine recording services also brought MSL staff outside of the building to work on an innovative project with Utah State Library and the National Library Service (NLS). Montana authors M.L. Smoker and Natalie Peeterse met with a narrative script author from NLS to adapt their graphic novel *Thunderous* for blind and print-disabled patrons. This unique script captured both the illustrations and dialog from the novel which is about Aiyana, a Lakota teenager. MSL staff and the authors worked with Utah's recording studio to record most of the novel. The authors plan to record the remainder of the novel with Native voices using the studio on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in

Browning. This exciting production of a Montana graphic novel is an excellent example of how partnership helps MSL deliver the very best resources to its patrons.

*"My aunt was so blessed to have received this machine and endless books. She had a few strokes and wasn't able to hold a book to read. She had been a librarian for a few decades and couldn't live without being able to read books. It was such a blessing. I just wanted to thank you for the incredible generosity of this gift to her."* Talking Book patron, letter to MSL, June 2022

## Securing sufficient and sustainable funding

- 2023 Legislative Session
- American Rescue Plan Act

### 2023 Legislative Session

The Montana State Library Commission requested two bills during the 2023 Legislative Session, both of which became law under the 68th Legislature. Additionally, the State Library served as a proponent for House Bill 343, under the governor's red-tape relief efforts. These laws, paired with one-time-only appropriations for hot spots and the real-time network, continue the library's work toward building capacity to meet the expectations of our partners and Montanans while remaining fiscally responsible.

#### House Bill 91 Revise laws related to public library state aid

Public library state aid is the only source of state funds that can be used at the discretion of local libraries to best meet the needs of local communities. State aid helps broaden access across Montana, strengthening libraries of all sizes. The revisions passed by the legislature include adding certain accredited tribal college libraries in the definition of public library as eligible libraries to receive state aid, increase the per resident revenue amount from 40 cents to 50 cents, and extends the termination date for the per capita state aid statutory appropriation to July 1, 2029. In the coming fiscal year, MSL will work to update the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) to reflect these changes.

#### Senate Bill 60 Establish enterprise fund for Montana spatial real time network

A real-time positioning network (RTN) uses a network of GPS reference stations to provide high accuracy (1-3 cm) position information in real time. RTNs have been shown to save up to 75% of surveying time while delivering greater accuracy and significant cost savings. Industries such as transportation, energy, agriculture, and public safety use the RTN. This legislation established an enterprise fund which will allow MSL to deploy a cost-recovery model based on subscription fees



Montana State Reference Network Sensor Map

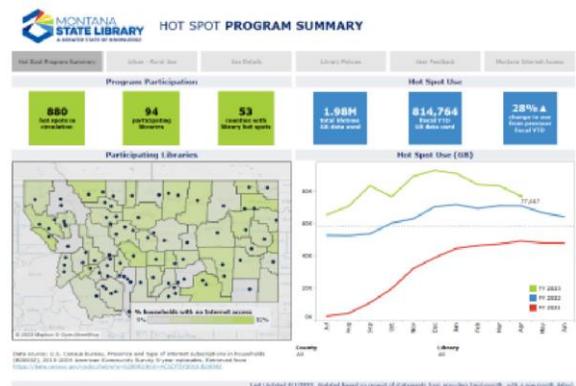
for a self-sustaining RTN.

## House Bill 343 Generally revise library geospatial and natural resource information laws

The State Library worked with the governor's office to introduce and carry HB 343 through the legislative session. HB 343 modernizes and improves the Montana Geospatial Information Act (formerly known as the Montana Land Information Act). Notable changes to the statutes include rescinding the Natural Resource Data System Advisory Committee and reducing the size of the Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council (MGIAC). Each member of the council will serve staggered terms to minimize the loss of institutional memory while maintaining a more manageable size. The legislation also modernizes language to better reflect the work of the State Library and clarifies requirements for planning and the grant program. As with the changes to state aid, MSL will engage in the ARM update process.

## One-time-only Appropriations

The Montana State Library received a one-time-only (OTO) appropriation of \$400,000 per fiscal year to support the hot spot lending program. Established in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hot spot program has demonstrated continued use. In a 2023 survey of librarians administered by the Montana Cooperative Development Center regarding digital needs, support for the hot spot program was rated as a top priority by 86% of libraries. With this funding, hot spots continue to be available for checkout by Montanans at libraries across the state. Over the next biennium, MSL will study the ongoing need and effectiveness of the lending program and report to the Education Interim Budget Committee.



Hot Spot Lending Program dashboard

\$500,000 of one-time-only funds will be appropriated each fiscal year for the continued development of a statewide real-time network (RTN). The Montana State Reference Network (MSRN) will be self-sustaining in future years under a subscription model, but OTO funds allow for the deployment of additional stations and support.

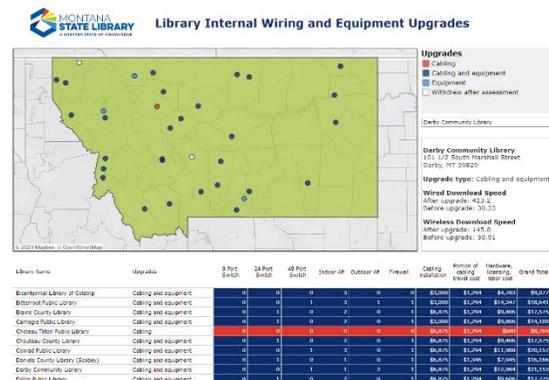
## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Montana State Library received \$2.24M in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program, administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). To support libraries and Montanans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Library allocated funds to two projects, improving broadband access through libraries and supporting online learning through the delivery of digital resources. MSL expended all grant funds by April 30, 2023, and IMLS accepted the State Library's final financial report, closing the grant.

## Improving broadband access through libraries

In 2019, MSL commissioned a study of the broadband capacity of Montana public libraries, including subscribed broadband speeds and internal broadband capacity. Despite being the only source of freely

available Wi-Fi in nearly 24% of Montana communities, the study revealed that 40% of libraries have outdated wiring and Wi-Fi equipment including routers older than five years. This finding became even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic as many Montanans turned to the library for Internet access and support in a new remote work and school environment. MSL invested \$1.2M in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address library connectivity. MSL completed cabling installation at 28 libraries and equipment upgrades at 29 libraries resulting in more reliable networks. Libraries such as Darby Community Library reported significant success from this program. Before cabling and equipment were installed, the library reported wired download speeds of 30 Mbps. After the project, they reported download speeds of 423 Mbps.



[Library Internal Wiring and Equipment Upgrades dashboard](#)

*"The staff are so friendly and helpful. When I was out of work and needed to use the library computers to apply for jobs, they were so encouraging."* Montana library patron, Love My Library Survey

More than 90 libraries further bridged access to the Internet in their communities by loaning hot spots. Residents in 53 counties borrowed hotspots procured and supported with ARPA funds. 49% of library hot spot users reported using the devices for educational or employment-related purposes such as completing homework, checking school information, or applying for jobs.



*"Thank you for making the mobile hotspots available. We used it to live stream my uncle-in-law's funeral. He passed away unexpectedly and lots of family and friends were unable to travel to Butte for the service. With the hotspot we were able to share those moments with them even though the church did not have wifi. Thank you."* Montana library patron, Hot Spot Lending Survey

## Supporting online learning through the delivery of digital resources

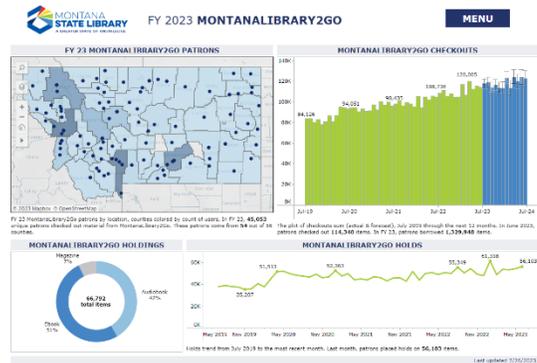
As Montanans transitioned to an online work and school environment in 2020, MSL invested \$1M federal pandemic-relief funds to enhance the range of digital resources available to all learners. Resources included:

- Self-paced web courses on topics such as accounting and community development. Montanans viewed over 13,000 lessons through this program.
- Digitized historic print volumes of Montana laws dating back to 1871, granting citizens permanent, digital access.
- Primary sources available through the [Montana History Portal](#), including teacher curated exhibits for K-12 education. The Portal reached 6.9M people through social media, connecting

new audiences with Montana's rich cultural history.

In addition to the above resources, MSL used ARPA funds to bolster the e-book and digital audiobook collections available to public library patrons and K-12 students. The impact of this investment is evident:

- Montanans from 54 out of 56 counties checked out materials from [Montanalibrary2Go](#), including a new collection of 4,500 digital magazines.
- Investment in the Montanalibrary2Go collection budget reduced patron wait time for titles from 42 to 39 days, and the number of books borrowed each month increased 27%.
- When compared to just prior to the pandemic, 87 more schools participated in the shared school digital collection, and 213% more students borrowed e-books.



[MontanaLibrary2Go dashboard](#)

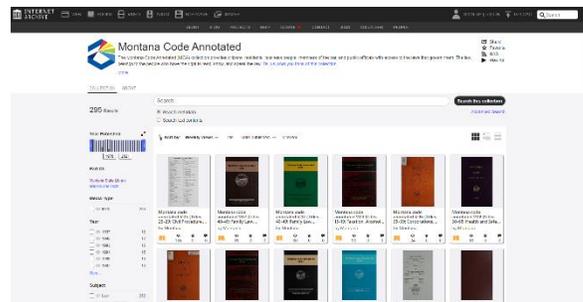
*"I am basically home bound and use the ebooks often and the online account management devices to maintain my books checked out/ returned/ renewed and to place holds. The overall library is vital to my quality of life as a 71-year-old. I must emphasize that- vital to my quality of life and as a lifeline to the world. Thank you!"* MontanaLibrary2Go patron, LSTA Five-Year Evaluation, 2018-2022

## Creating a useful information infrastructure

- Digitization of Montana Code Annotated
- Species Location Tool for sustainable forestry
- Continuing Education and Certification study

## Digitization of Montana Code Annotated

Citizens interested in self-representation or conducting legal research typically must access reference materials by visiting physical spaces like law libraries. This need was especially problematic during the pandemic, when people observed physical distancing and many government buildings operated at reduced occupancy. To enable remote access to important legal materials, the Montana State Library collaborated with the State Law Library of Montana to digitize historic print volumes of laws dating back to 1871.



[Digitized Montana Code Annotated](#)

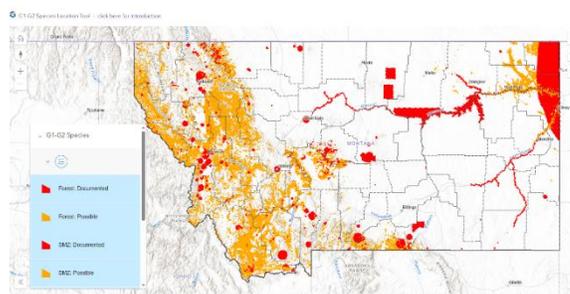
This project resulted in the digitization of 534 volumes (592,088 pages), including Annotations to the MCA 2002-2020, MCA 1978-2021, Laws of Territory of Montana 1871, Revised Statutes of Territory of

Montana 1879, and Revised Codes of Montana 1907-1947. Staff added the items to the Montana State Library's collection on the Internet Archive for open, public access. By using materials online, patrons benefited from full-text search, and digitization mitigated the risk of damage and loss of irreplaceable historical documents. Between September 2022 and June 2023, patrons viewed the Montana Code Annotated and Annotations to the Montana Code Annotated collections 15,567 times, making them the top two resources available in the digital collection.

*"You know this, but it bears repeating. I have a few small tasks (or initiatives) that bring me into contact with MSL staff. All my interactions have been incredibly positive! Your team cares about our profession and state!"* Franklin L. Runge, State Law Librarian for Montana, letter to MSL, August 2023

## Species Location Tool for sustainable forestry

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) provided training videos, brochures, and digital applications to allow patrons to use MTNHP information more efficiently and effectively in their specific workflows and processes. One example of this is the MTNHP's G1-G2 Species Location Tool for Supporting Timber Sourcing. This online tool supports timber mills across Montana with efficiently meeting Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification requirements which require that timber sourcing does not impact species that have global conservation status ranks of G1 (critically imperiled) or G2 (imperiled) as assigned by NatureServe. SFI certification indicates that source forests are managed sustainably and thus allows the timber to be sold at higher market prices.



G1-G2 Species Presence Map

Prior to the development of this tool, timber mills independently queried a list of the 178 G1-G2 species documented in Montana from the Montana Field Guide and then sorted through those accounts by hand to determine which species they needed to be concerned about. This was a time-consuming and tedious task that was being repeated by individual mills, potentially leading to inconsistent approaches. The G1-G2 Species Location Tool for Timber Sourcing identifies which of these species timber mills need to consider and in what context and area they need to consider them. If the G1-G2 Species Location Tool for Timber Sourcing shows that a timber source area overlaps with the general location of G1-G2 species, the mill can request an Environmental Summary Report so that they can work with the source provider to mitigate impacts. This tool is being further developed this year to crosswalk with species accounts and best management practices to make it even easier for timber sourcing to meet SFI certification requirements.

## Continuing Education and Certification study

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. Beginning in September 2022, the Montana State Library and the Continuing Education task force studied the certification requirements to consider opportunities to increase flexibility, participation, and value for the program for Montana library directors, staff, and trustees. During its June 2023 meeting, the State Library Commission adopted

recommendations from the task force that go into effect July 1, 2024. With the task forces input, the Continuing Education coordinator published an updated [Certification and Continuing Education handbook](#) that librarians and trustees can use to navigate new requirements. The handbook also describes the program's three main goals:

- Promote continuing education and demonstrate its impact for quality library services
- Promote recognition for librarians who participate and libraries that encourage staff to continue learning
- Provide continuing education opportunities that benefit library directors, staff, and trustees



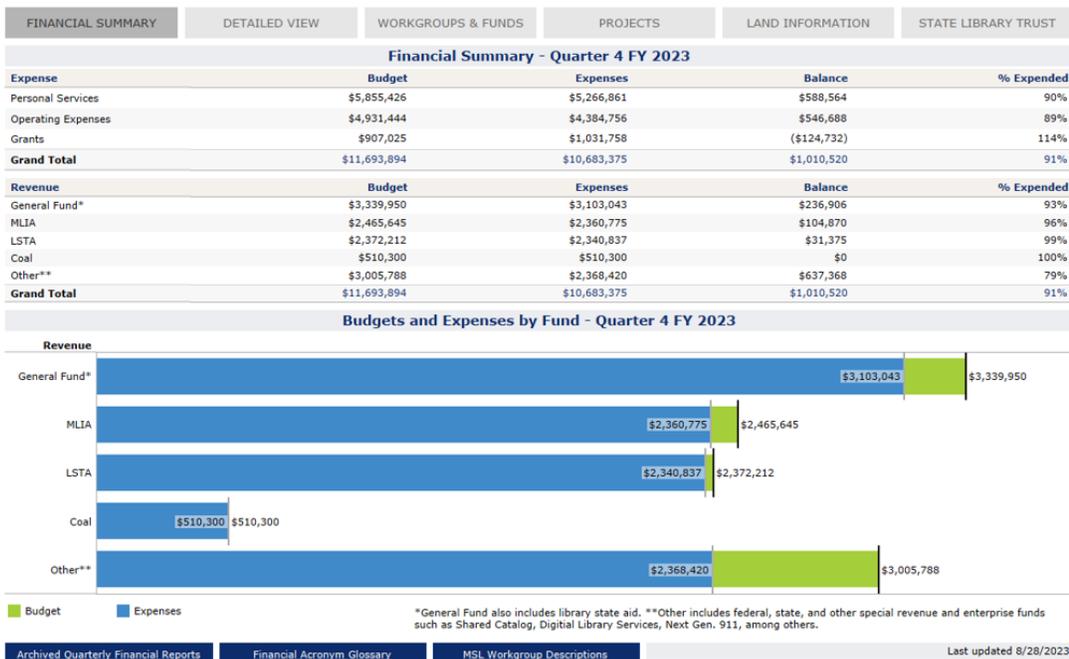
[Montana's Continuing Education and Certification Program: A Short History 1990 to 2022](#)

[ARM 10.102.1160 Personnel](#) sets the expectation that library directors must be certified. However, as indicated in the third goal, staff and trustees can also benefit from continuing education opportunities offered through an optional trustee or library staff track. Last year, 407 unique learners claimed 7,168 continuing education credits, and the State Library awarded 121 certifications to library staff, administrators, and trustees. While continuing education credits can be pursued through a variety of professional sources, MSL staff delivered training tailored to the needs of Montana librarians and trustees. 92% of surveyed participants agree that applying what they learned through MSL training opportunities will help improve library services to the public.

## Finances



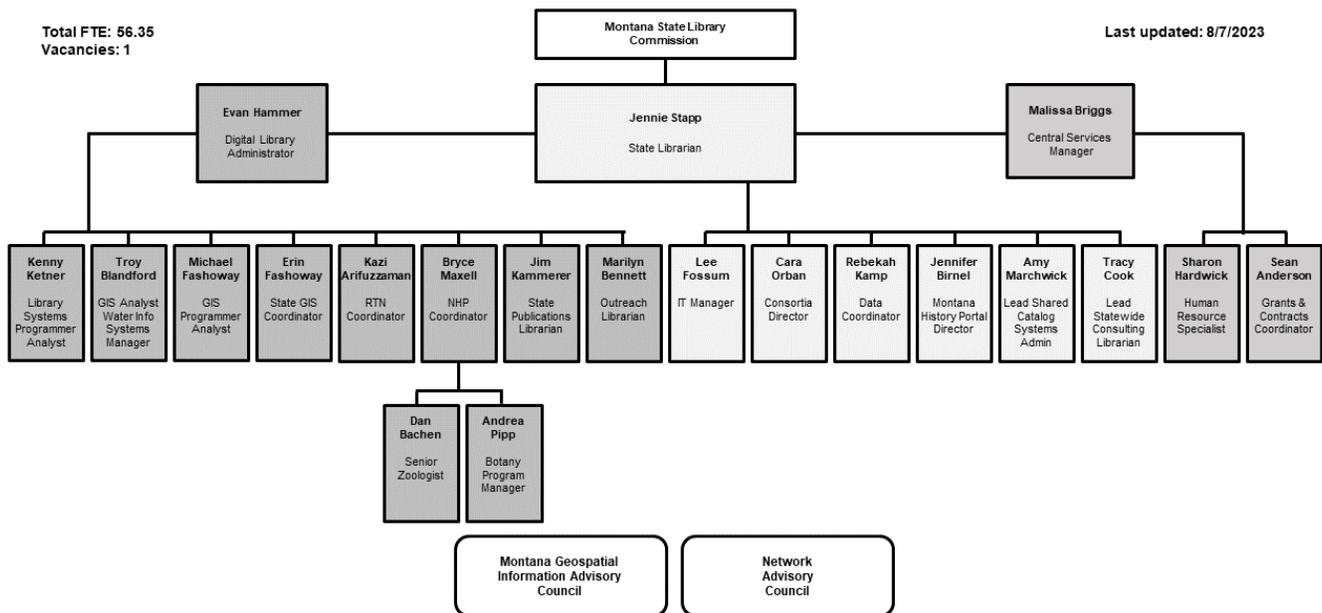
### QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT



# Structure

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. Our leading-edge data and applications help those seeking answers about Montana's government, natural resources, heritage, land ownership, and more while our vital services improve public libraries and provide reading materials to those with disabilities. The following organization chart depicts the leadership structure of the Montana State Library.

## Montana State Library – Lead Organization Chart



## Commissions and Councils

### Montana State Library Commission

The State Library Commission is the governing body of the State Library in accordance with 22-1-101, Montana Code Annotated. The seven-member Commission seeks advice from standing advisory councils and ad hoc task forces on issues of importance to the communities served including the Network Advisory Council (NAC) and the Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council (MGIAC).

### Network Advisory Council

The Network Advisory Council (NAC) represents the interests of all types of Montana libraries and maintains the perspective of statewide geographical balance as it explores ways to help libraries; assesses community needs; identifies innovation opportunities; reviews and evaluates the feasibility, design, and outcomes of statewide library projects; assists with statewide planning and advises the State Librarian and the State Library Commission.

## **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 geographic information, on the priority of geographic information, including data layers to be developed, 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.

## **Library Staff**

To achieve the work of the State Library, staff operate within four work groups, Administration, User Services, Information Management, and Information Products.

### **Administration**

The Administration work group provides leadership and administrative support for the library's daily operations. This group includes agency managers and services such as accounting, procurement, and IT.

- State Librarian
- Digital Library Administration
- Central Services
- IT Management

### **User Services**

The User Services work group interacts directly with library patrons and partners to provide resources, consulting services, and training. Staff also facilitate committees and statewide collaboration.

- GIS Coordination
- Library Consulting and Learning
- Continuing Education & Certification
- Outreach & Research Services
- Statewide Library Consortia
- Talking Book Services

### **Information Management**

Through the Information Management work group, MSL collects and coordinates multiple types of information for state employees, federal partners, and the citizens of Montana.

- Government Information
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure
- Montana State Reference Network

### **Information Products**

Dedicated to delivering trusted resources, the Information Products work group focuses on developing and administering tools to access information.

- Library Systems and Applications
- Data Coordination
- Montana History Portal
- Montana Shared Catalog