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Darlene's vision for the  
Montana State Library  
And its library community

2015

Montana State Library's mission is four-pronged: To strengthen local community public libraries, to service the library needs of Montanans who are blind and physically handicapped, to serve the information needs of agencies of the state, and to serve government generated information to Montana businesses, organizations, and citizens.

- Montana State Library has become the branded name for all the various programs: Montana Library Network, Montana State Digital Library, Library Development Program, Natural Resources Information System, Talking Book Library.
- Montana State Library is always on the list of top three places Montanans go to in order to fill their library information needs.
- Montana State Library provides libraries, state employees, and others sound advice about quality library service and information to meet their needs.
- With help from the Montana State Library, libraries throughout Montana are recognized by members of their service area populations as providing good value to their lives. Libraries throughout Montana are well funded and staffed.
- Montana State Library is a special library for state government. We provide for our library users self-service opportunities, satisfaction, and seamlessness as they pursue their information needs.
- Montana State Library provides a robust consulting service to the public library community.
- Montana State Library enjoys an economic landscape that recognizes libraries as a public good and funds that public good.
- Montana State Library has the appropriate staff and funding to provide continued shared/coordinated purchasing of resources that serve library user needs throughout the state. There is exceptional value in Montana State Library's sponsored statewide contracts and Montana State Library's sponsored staff development, which allows for the effective leveraging of local dollars and improvement of information services.
- Montana State Library has a robust network infrastructure and the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) of the Department of Administration views us as a valued partner and visa versa.
- Montana State Library through the provision of access to mission critical information, is a resource that is essential to the successful functioning of

state agencies, as well as businesses, organizations, and individuals who interact with state agencies.

For those of us who work in Montana libraries, the value of libraries goes without saying. We believe that libraries are a public good. We believe that libraries positively influence student achievement, contribute to the corporate bottom line, fuel research, support community development, improve the quality of life, further education from cradle to grave and contribute to personal betterment. Do our users also believe in the value of libraries? We think so and on several occasions local library patrons have “proven” their support of their local libraries by strongly supporting mill levies. We all need to be able to readily answer the question for all Montana library users, taxpayers and government funding agents...what difference does this library, this library program make in my life? Are the taxpayers of Montana getting the best impact for their dollars when it comes to statewide library services? Are we using the funding provided to libraries effectively and efficiently

As my colleague from Texas, Peggy Rudd has stated: “We believe that libraries have a profound impact on individuals, institutions, and communities. How can we engineer a measurement system that will verify our intuition?”

#### Process/timeline:

- Darlene’s draft vision statement to Commission – August 2005
- Define and select key issues, agree or not, edit, vision statement and take to the library community – September/October/November
  - Focus group meetings
  - Add to Federation meetings and other group gathering agendas
  - Wired-Mt discussion(s)
  - Start a blog or add discussion(s) to existing blog.
  - Questions to be considered: What services provided by MSL or funded by MSL have helped your library or organization be successful? What needs does your library or organization have that are not addressed by a MSL service? What services currently provided by MSL would provide greater benefit to your library or organization if they were emphasized more or better implemented? What programs or services not currently provided by the MSL would help your library or organization be successful if they were provided? What challenges do you encounter when you present the case for state or local funding for library services?
- Write specific goals and objectives to get us to the final “vision”.
- Implement the goals and objectives as planned. Start building legislative process/platform as soon as possible. Starting December 2005 to February 2006

- The most interesting part of this process is the chance to join in discussions, read some thought-provoking words, and listen to others discussing what they future might hold.

Other important things to remember as we go through the process:

Profession remains the same: we organize information and help people find it. The tools we use to do the job are constantly changing, mostly improving.

Base priorities on the vision and mission of your library and institution.

What is the better future of the people we/our library serves?

Three bottom lines create the ratio by which people determine value: time quality, and resources.

Plan for MISO (mistakes, interruptions, surprises, opportunities).

Don't keep pet projects that are no longer relevant to the strategic plan.

Montana's libraries work together to an astounding degree!