

State Librarian's Report August & September 2013

Prepared for the October 9, 2013 Commission meeting
by Jennie Stapp, State Librarian

Goal Four, Consultation and Leadership: MSL provides consultation and leadership to enable its patrons and partners to reach their goals.

On September 16, the State Library submitted comments in response to the Notice of Proposed Rule Making issued by the Federal Communication Commission as they consider how to improve the E-Rate program. Established in 1997 to help fund telecommunication costs in schools and libraries, requests for funding now exceed available funding (\$2.25B annually) by about double. See our comments attached. In addition to submitting our own comments, Suzanne Reymer shared feedback with the American Library Association to inform their comments and I helped shape the comments submitted by the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition. I was pleased that the SHLB comments echoed ours in the need for an infusion of capital to bring all schools and libraries up to a minimal acceptable level of broadband.

On September 17 I chaired the Montana Land Information Advisory Council meeting. The Council is awaiting new appointments from the Governor's office so attendance was somewhat slim but we were able to accomplish important business including the review and approval of the draft Administrative Rules that carry out the Montana Land Information Act (see the related agenda item). The Council also heard a proposal regarding how the state might better manage public land survey system control points that are necessary for the conducting state and business including the accurate assessment and collection of property taxes. The Council also had an initial planning discussion regarding how to approach a strategic planning process for the GIS community. The Council plans to evaluate the accomplishments of the previous strategic plan at their December meeting. That plan is available online for Commission review: http://about.montanastatelibrary.org/commission_councils/mliac/publications/.

Through the work of the State Library, in 2001 the Legislature passed legislation that allowed for the creation of Public Library Districts codified as Montana Code Annotated 22-1-7. Unlike other forms of library governance, public library districts are established

through the electoral process and include dedicated mill levies to provide funding to support the operation of the districts. It is because library districts have the ability to generate dedicated funding that can be more secure and, can therefore offer more services to their patrons, that they are strongly encouraged by MSL.

In 2005, Stevensville created the first public library district known as the North Valley Library District. Since then several public library districts and one multi-jurisdictional library district have been formed, all in Western Montana.

While Montana has had its share of successful public library district campaigns (most recently in May with the creation of the Ronan District Library), over the past 12 years, the library community and MSL staff have identified problematic sections of Montana Code that make the creation and/or administration of public library districts challenging. With the aid of those most experienced with library districts, the Montana State Library seeks to evaluate potential improvements to the code that may be presented to the 2015 Legislature.

On Monday, September 23rd, I will chair the first meeting of the Library District Task Force. This task force includes representation from current library districts, libraries interested in forming districts, the Montana Association of Counties and the Montana Library Association, Government Affairs Committee.

I hope to bring a draft report to the Commission in December. If legislative changes are proposed they will be reviewed with the Montana Library Community in December and January. The Commission would then be asked to adopt any proposals in February in time for the spring executive planning process.

The State Library continues to provide leadership to state officials. At the request of Representative Edie McClafferty (HD 75) Sara Groves will present on our early literacy program to the Legislative Education and Local Government Interim committee on September 23. Additionally, Jim Kammerer will represent the State Library on a work group led by legislative staffer, Pad McCracken that will work to meet the objectives of House Joint Resolution 2, an interim study of state and local government records management.

Goal Five, Collaboration: MSL promotes partnerships and encourages collaboration amongst its partners and patrons so that their information needs can be met.

Evan Hammer and I attended the Montana Economic Development Summit hosted by Senator Max Baucus. Much of the content was relevant to the work of the State Library including a panel discussion regarding broadband availability. Federal Communications Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel participated in the panel. She directly addressed concerns over the lack of broadband in Montana by stating that 250,000 Montanans lack access to any form of broadband. During her discussion of E-Rate reform I was pleased to hear her speak to the need for capital investment to bring adequate broadband to underserved areas.

IT Staff have been working with the state IT Services Division (SITSD) to understand their plans to roll-out a new Content Management System (CMS) for use by state agencies. You may recall that MSL moved a significant portion of our content to the WordPress CMS starting in January of 2013. One goal of this project was to provide program staff with the ability to manage web content more directly. We feel this has been a successful venture but because of ITSD security restrictions we were unable to make our CMS pages available under the msl.mt.gov domain. Now that ITSD will be supporting a CMS we hope that we will be able to provide the same type of content management tools to MSL Staff while also making more of that content available from the msl.mt.gov domain.

On September 21 I attended the grand re-opening of the Boulder Community Library. The lovely event was well attended by members of the Boulder community who raised over \$100,000 over three years to significantly expand the size of their library. The library is now equipped with mobile shelving and a large area that can better accommodate programming activities.

On September 22 I attended the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) annual conference dinner. MACo continues to be an important partner representing the needs of county officials on library and GIS issues. This dinner gave me a chance to get to know more county commissioners from around the state.

Goal Six, Sustainable Success: MSL is a well-run organization and a sought-after employer; it is efficient and effective (measured against partner and patron outcomes), and successfully engaged in its ongoing mission.

The MSL leadership team is currently taking the Montana Leadership Challenge. This course was originally a part of my training plan when I became State Librarian however the course was not available to me at that time. I am pleased to now be taking it with Kris, Sarah and Evan. The course is based on the research of Jim Kouzes and Barry

Posner and focuses on five leadership practices: 1) Modeling the way; 2) Inspiring a shared vision; 3) Challenging the process; 4) Enabling others to act and 5) Encouraging the heart. Thus far we have found much of the research directly applicable to the work of the State Library and I look forward to applying some practical applications with both our staff and the communities we serve. I also believe the course would be beneficial for many of our staff in leadership positions within the library and GIS communities. Managers will address this need in the future.

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington DC 20554

In the Matter of
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries

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WC Docket No. 13-184

Comments from the Montana State Library

(Filed September 16, 2013)

The Montana State Library is submitting comments in response to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Notice for Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) in order to express the needs of the rural, public libraries in our state and to share the realities they face day-to-day in their effort to secure and provide adequate broadband and other services to their communities.

71% of Montana's public library systems applied for E-Rate in 2013. Of those, only 10% of the requests came from libraries serving populations of 25,000 or more while 30% came from libraries serving populations of less than 2,000. None of the individual requests was over \$5,000. Only 5% were over \$2,500. 79% of the funding requests were under \$1,000. Montana libraries are the epitome of small, rural, public libraries providing public access to the Internet in their communities.

As a state with predominantly rural communities, we believe it would be helpful to revisit some of the definitions used to define "rural." The Goldsmith definition, in many cases, incorrectly identifies a public library as urban because it's in the same county as an identified urban center. In Montana's large counties, this has had ridiculous results. We've seen towns of less than 1,000 people defined as urban when they're 50 miles or more from any city but are located in the same county. The Montana State Library suggests an additional definition of rural, remote to benefit Montana libraries which are indeed in remote areas with few services.

In general, the Montana State Library supports the overall shift in priority for E-Rate towards greater broadband deployment if it means that increased funding will be available to rural libraries to both deploy and afford the long term costs of increased broadband capacity. However, the elimination of Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) from E-Rate program discounts will have a negative impact on Montana public libraries. 30% of the funding requests in 2013 were for POTS only. For many, telephone is a greater expense than is Internet so the

discounts on POTS helped make other services more affordable. Further Montana libraries appreciate that POTS discounts never carry the additional burdens of CIPA compliance and technology plans which can be extremely time consuming for Montana's single-staff libraries. If it is deemed necessary to eliminate POTS discounts in order to focus on broadband goals, we ask that it be phased out over several years to allow those most impacted to find alternate sources of funding.

From NTIA's May 23 report: U.S. Broadband Availability: June 2010 – June 2012¹, we learned that Montana was 50 out of 51 states for broadband availability at all levels measured. This lack of bandwidth means that Montana public libraries may be unable to meet arbitrary goals for library bandwidth such as the 1 Gbps goal proposed by the State Library of Kansas. We believe more reasonable and attainable bandwidth goals would be based on the service population which, in turn, should drive benchmarks like the number of public workstations at each library. Newly released Montana public computing center guidelines² encourage libraries to monitor bandwidth usage and to use the data collected to drive broadband upgrades. The Montana State Library will collect bandwidth data as part of our library statistics. This data would be available to USAC. In light of the lack of overall broadband services available to Montana libraries, the Montana State Library suggests that the FCC create a separate, additional amount of funding in the E-rate program specifically directed to supporting the capital investment costs of deploying high-capacity broadband to libraries in areas like Montana where it is not currently available. Deployment should be tied to meaningful and attainable bandwidth goals and funding could be reduced overtime as broadband capacity goals are achieved nationwide.

Because increased bandwidth availability will naturally result in increased cost to libraries, the Montana State Library supports an increase in the E-rate cap to provide more funding on a permanent basis so that libraries can afford greater broadband services.

The Montana State Library suggests that E-Rate discounts further be available for internal data connectivity. 72% of Montana's public libraries participate in a shared catalog consortium where they access library holdings via a central server via the Internet. This service requires a consistent Internet connection. A single data line, rather than a line shared competing with public workstations, would make access to the system more reliable and would free up additional bandwidth for patron use but most Montana libraries cannot afford additional lines. If libraries

¹ NTIA May 23 report: U.S. Broadband Availability: June 2010 – June 2012:
http://www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/usbb_avail_report_05102013.pdf

² Best Practices for Public Computing Centers:
http://docs.msl.mt.gov/word/digitalilliteracy/publiccomputercenter/pcc/PCC_Best_Practices.docx

were able to apply E-Rate discounts, this would allow more secure and consistent Internet connections that would benefit library patrons even if it were not something they would directly utilize.

Finally, and most importantly, we're submitting comments in response to the NPRM in order to beseech the FCC not to place any additional burdens on applicants to the E-Rate program. We're already in a situation where many public librarians choose not to apply and those that do often apply for minimal POTS discounts because the E-Rate program is widely viewed as "more trouble than it's worth." We believe that routine annual applications for Telcomm and Internet Access on-going cost discounts should receive minimal Program Integrity Assurance reviews and audits. This is not where waste, fraud and abuse in the program are occurring.

In rural Montana, we have little or no competition among telecommunications or Internet service providers. Most communities have one rural telephone cooperative providing phone and DSL Internet. Most libraries receive no bids at all for their 470 postings. Frequently they will not even receive a bid from their service provider. The applicant should not be penalized with additional paperwork when competitive bidding is nonexistent, particularly when it involves modest requests. The burden of proving LCP compliance should fall on the service provider, if anyone, not on the applicant.

On behalf of Montana's 82 public libraries we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the NPRM and we look forward to working with the FCC to further improve the E-Rate program.