



Montana State Library Commission

December Business Meeting

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 | 9:00 a.m.

Montana State Library | Gertrude Buckhouse Conference Room

1201 11th Avenue

Helena, MT 59601

MINUTES

Recording can be found at: <https://youtu.be/syH1nIRi5lg?si=rPBvjDk9iwxAd1B6>

Unedited closed captioning is available.

ATTENDEES:

Commissioners:

Vice-Chair Tom Burnett, Carmen Cuthbertson, Kris Goss, McKenna Greg, Tammy Hall, Peggy Taylor, Chair Robyn Scribner

Commissioners Absent

None

MSL Staff:

Colet Bartow, Tracy Cook, Victoria Gersdorf, Ashley Gostnell, Sharon Hardwick, Amy Marchwick, Savanna Sill, Corey Sloan, Jennie Stapp (State Librarian)

Guests:

Molly Kruckeberg, Montana Historical Society Director

(00:00:00) Call to Order and Introductions

(00:00:14) Changes or additions to the agenda – Stapp reported that the MLA President was unable to join the Commission.

(00:00:28) Welcome and introduction of new commissioner, Kris Goss.

(00:06:52) Staff longevity recognition – Ashley Gostnell was recognized for her achievements and received her 5-year pin.

(00:09:14) Scribner thanked Peggy Taylor for being the parliamentarian for the Commission. She reported that Kris Goss will now serve in that capacity. She reviewed the process for motions, presentations, and public comment.

Business items

(00:09:58) **Consent agenda – Action**

Scribner reviewed the items within the consent agenda. She requested removal of the October 8, 2025 minutes because there was a need to correct the list of Personnel Committee members. All other items remained on the consent agenda.



(00:11:17) Motion made by Tammy Hall and seconded by Peggy Taylor to accept the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

(00:11:56) October 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes – Action

Scribner asked that the October 8, 2025 meeting minutes be corrected. Under Timestamp 01:20:35 it said the Personnel Committee included Burnett, Taylor, and Cook. It should say Burnett, Taylor, and Scribner.

(00:12:41) Motion made by Peggy Taylor and seconded by Tom Burnett to accept the October 8 minutes with the correction. Motion passed unanimously.

(00:13:15) Proposed revisions to Administrative Rule 10.102.1159(1) Serving the Community, Open Hours

(00:13:50) Tom Burnett moved to accept the proposed revisions to Administrative Rule 10.102.1159 Serving the Community hours. Tammy Hall seconded.

Commissioners discussed the proposed changes. Goss requested more information about the data used to make the decision. Burnett reported that data from the Public Library Survey was used to determine the hours. The numbers show a decline in visitation from 2013-2024. It includes the large drop during COVID. Numbers are starting to increase but still show around a 30% decrease in visitation. Burnett stressed that this change gives libraries flexibility. It allows them to shift hours to reflect local usage. Stapp confirmed that staff have seen these drops, and there are a variety of reasons for the changes. The visitation numbers are increasing, but they are not at pre-COVID levels. Goss expressed a desire to have a process for reviewing the data should the numbers change. Taylor shares his concerns as she is uncomfortable with lowering standards. She does like the flexibility piece of the proposed revision.

Hall shared that she supported the changes more for the flexibility it gives to smaller libraries. She sees the change as giving them the freedom to adjust the hours at the local level. Cuthbertson also shared her support for the changes. She noted that 89% of libraries meet the open hours standard. This standard is the minimum requirement not the maximum. She expressed support for the change the Commission made during the work session where the “desirable” column was changed to “recommended.” She does not think libraries will lower their hours.

Goss said he also supports local control and flexibility, but he wants more information about the data and would like staff to prepare a report analyzing the data and trends.

(00:28:01) Motion made by Kris Goss and seconded by Peggy Taylor to table the motion for a period of one year for staff to prepare a report with data to analyze.

Hall gave background and history surrounding the decision. She asked Goss what was driving his motion. Goss shared that his interpretation of the public comment was that librarians and

board members were concerned about the proposed changes. The group discussed the work session and public comment. Burnett reminded the group that the data is publicly available.

Goss shared that part of his concern comes from a desire to review the entire process. He suggested that the standards should be reviewed from a larger perspective with a focus on what modern libraries should look like. Burnett stated that he believed Goss' request could be addressed at a future meeting. Stapp confirmed that doing so would trigger another ARM process. Cuthbertson and others shared that they are not opposed to reviewing all other standards.

(00:40:49) Commissioners voted on the motion to table the primary motion. Goss – aye. All other commissioners voted nay. Motion failed.

(00:41:47) Commissioners voted on the primary motion to accept the rule change. Motion passed.

**Burnett – aye
Cuthbertson – aye
Goss – nay
Gregg – aye
Hall – aye
Scribner – aye
Taylor - nay**

Commissioners requested that a review of the public library standards be added to their 2026 goals.

(00:43:07) Proposed revisions to Administrative Rule 10.102.1160 (6) Personnel, Certification

(00:43:59) Motion made by Tammy Hall and seconded by Tom Burnett to accept the proposed revisions to Administrative Rule 10.102.1160 Personnel Certification.

(00:43:37) Motion made by Carmen Cuthbertson and seconded by Tammy Hall to amend the draft notice of adoption ARM 10.102.1160 with a change to strike "and topics offered by the State Library" from the language proposed in the notice of adoption. The reason is to further clarify that credits provided by others may count for certification credit if they are pre-approved.

Cuthbertson shared that she was struck by the number of comments that expressed concerns that only classes taught by MSL staff would count for credit. She realizes that people might not have time to review all the work of the committee and after reviewing the proposed ARM changes, she could understand how the phrase "and topics offered by the State Library" could be interpreted to mean only classes taught by MSL staff count for credit. She proposed striking that language to make it clearer. She confirmed that the Lt. Governor reviewed the proposed language and process and felt like it was an appropriate change.

Taylor asked if the language in ARM regarding the course of study meant that the Commission would only review proposed credits annually. Cook shared that there are two components to updating the certification program – the ARM process and the policy process. Cook shared that the course of study is when the Commission would review the responsibilities, and that would happen once a year. That is what is appearing in ARM. There would be a course catalog which would list the classes eligible for credit. Staff would do their best to present a comprehensive course catalog in June. However, it would be difficult to think of everything. The pre-approval process where Commissioners review the courses throughout the year is how the catalog will be updated on a regular basis. The process of reviewing courses is part of the policy document.

(00:59:01) Commissioners voted on the motion to amend the draft notice of adoption for ARM 10.102.1160. Motion carried.

Commissioners returned to a discussion about the main motion to approve the amended proposed changes to administrative rules. Goss asked what the process would be for reviewing and approving the policy portion of the certification process. Cook shared the timeline and reported that the CE subcommittee would like to host public drop-in sessions where librarians and interested parties can ask questions. The committee will work out a few remaining details. Bartow and Cook will create a draft for Commissioners to review.

Cuthbertson and Hall shared what they learned from the process and the value of the ARM process in hearing and considering public input. Hall requested that a goal of improving communication with the public libraries be added to the 2026 goals.

Hall requested feedback on how the committee is handling the library and information science degree. Cook reported that a degree earned within 5 years could be substituted for the initial track. If a person had already earned their initial track, it would substitute for 20 credits of the renewal track. Commissioners felt that was fair and appreciated the recognition of the degree.

(01:07:54) Commissioners voted on the primary motion to accept the proposed revisions for Administrative Rules of Montana 10.102.1160 (6) with the change made by the amendment. Motion carried.

**Burnett – aye
Cuthbertson – aye
Goss – nay
Gregg – aye
Hall – aye
Scribner – aye
Taylor – aye**

(01:09:13) Commission break from 10:15am to 10:30am.

Discussion Items:



(01:20:34) Montana 250th Commission Update

Director Molly Kruckenberg gave an update on the Montana 250th Commission. It was created by the 2023 Legislature. Its purpose is to celebrate the 250-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The Commission is interested in celebrating civic engagement and the history of the US and Montana tribes.

The overarching theme is we are all connected. The three primary themes are the ongoing American experiment, the power of place, and doing history. The Commission was given \$400,000 to award general grants to organizations that are supporting these themes. There is an additional \$100,000 to be awarded to communities who sponsor events to celebrate the 250-year anniversary.

Kruckenberg shared the various ways the MT250 Commission is supporting this work. State Library Commissioners shared various ideas for celebrating MT250. Kruckenberg encouraged them to reach out to her as she would love help promoting the work of MT250. Commissioners asked if MSL staff are sharing this information. Stapp confirmed they are promoting and sharing the work of MT250. Kruckenberg answered a few questions about schools and their participation in MT250.

(01:43:56) Equity vs. Equality

Cuthbertson led a discussion about equality vs. equity. There is confusion about these two terms. Equality happens when everyone contributes equally and receives equally. Equity happens when everyone contributes according to a set of rules and receives according to a set of rules. She shared examples of the two definitions – equality is when every club member pays the same dues and equity is what occurs when club members pay a membership fee based on income levels.

Other commissioners shared their definitions. Equality is when everyone has the same opportunity. Equity is based on outcome. It is about what you choose to do with the opportunity. Equality is the ideal. Equity is reality.

The Montana Constitution addresses education. After review of the language, Commissioners noticed it was about equality which led to a discussion about equity being about action. One example shared is equality is wanting everyone to understand the Montana/U.S. Constitution. Equity occurs when we think about someone who is blind or low vision, and we make sure the library provides a way for that person to access the Constitution.

A concern with equity is who makes the rules. Equity requires creation of rules. A challenge when addressing equality vs. equity is how to do it fairly and who is responsible for making the rules. It's also important to be clear about whether we are working with equality or with equity in mind. Balancing the two concepts is important.

Commissioners shifted into a discussion about how these concepts relate to libraries. The group discussed the idea that libraries stand between the two concepts. Their services are about



helping people get from opportunity to outcome. Libraries should talk through their role with both equality and equity. Equality is simpler but may not always be the right choice. Commissioners discussed how the Montana Constitution references libraries as part of the educational system. There is an expectation for learning for all ages. The Constitution also emphasizes personalized instruction. Libraries can play a role by providing equal access, but if a person cannot take advantage of the existing opportunities libraries may need to explore what it means to offer equitable access. Commissioners discussed the weight of that mandate. It is an ideal, but resources are limited.

Cuthbertson thanked Commissioners for the discussion and asked for time on the next agenda to discuss neutrality. Goss requested that it be a conversation about neutrality versus objectivity.

(02:14:45) Preliminary 2026 Commission Goals

Scribner and Stapp reviewed what is on the current list for Commission goals. Stapp recommended the Commission discuss the various goals and take action at the next meeting.

Goals added include improve public relations and communication with libraries. Greg offered to assist with the creation of a Commission newsletter. Scribner requested a goal to improve relations with the libraries. Goss requested that as part of a data review the Commission discuss how to improve visitation and usage. There is a desire to review the public library standards. There is also a goal of learning more about AI and how it might impact libraries. The final goal discussed was about documenting the process for reviewing and updating the State Librarian's job description.

There was a brief discussion about the Montana Library Association and communication with officers.

(02:31:42) State Library Reports – Stapp

Stapp reported on the federal shutdown. The State Library was able to weather the shutdown. She is monitoring the federal funding continuing resolution. She reported that on December 3, the Institute of Museum and Library Services reinstated all grants. The reinstatement didn't impact MSL, but there are Montana libraries and museums that received grants that had previously been terminated.

(02:35:00) Commission Goals and Objectives

Scribner confirmed that most of the 2025 goals are complete.

Stapp reported the following items for February: discussion about neutrality, MLA invitation, discussion about public library standards and next steps, review of Commission bylaws, action on 2026 Commission goals, action on MLA "Conversations with Commissioners" proposal, possible action to set a special May meeting to review MGIA grants, AI presentation from the State's Chief AI Officer, and discussion about holding October commission meeting in Miles City.



Commission briefly discussed concerns about expenses related to attending and holding “Conversations with Commissioners.” It is a good opportunity to talk about the CE changes, but there is currently a requirement for Commissioners to register for the conference even if they are only presenting at that session. Goss requested that Stapp ask MLA about waiving the requirement for presenters to register for the conference if they are only presenting and not attending the conference.

There was a discussion about the budget process. This is the second year of the biennium, so it will be a simple process. MSL is not requesting any financial changes.

The Montana Geographic Information Act (MGIA) fund is around \$1.29 million, so, based on the Geospatial Information Plan adopted at the October meeting, staff are reinstating the MGIA grants again. Staff will need to ask for a special meeting between May 4 – May 14.

(03:02:38) Public Comment on any matter not contained in this agenda and that is within the jurisdiction of the State Library Commission.

There was no public comment.

(03:03:04) Other Business & Announcements.

Stapp thanked Scribner and Briggs for their work to make the travel reimbursement process easier. Briggs will hold a couple of voluntary drop-in sessions for Commissioners to receive assistance with the process.

(03:03:50) Commission broke for lunch

Commission entered executive session to discuss the State Librarian’s evaluation at 12:47pm.

(03:04:17) Commission exited executive session and entered open session at 1:46pm.

Burnett noted that the Commission commends the State Librarian for her performance.

(03:04:29) Motion made by Peggy Taylor to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1:47pm.

Minute document created by Tracy Cook, 12/24/2025.