



Executive Summary

State Employee Awareness and Information Needs Survey

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Introduction

Montana Code Annotated governs Montana State Library operations. This survey pertains to part of subsection 7 of the MCA 22-1-103: “the state library commission may ... 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.” Providing “library assistance and information services” to state employees is a very broad mandate given the wide ranges of services and statutory obligations supported by state employees and the ever expanding universe of knowledge. The Montana State Library collection development policy (CDP) puts some sideboards on what information we acquire and manage. The CDP identifies state publications, natural resource information, geographic information, and professional library development material as its subject matter boundaries. Statewide journal databases funded by the legislature and interlibrary loan services meet as best as possible state employee information needs that lie beyond the state library’s CDP.

Survey Background and Design

In October 2014, needing data about user information needs, Library Information Services manager, Jim Kammerer worked with state librarian Jennie Stapp and Montana State Digital Library managers Evan Hammer, Allan Cox, and Stu Kirkpatrick to develop and distribute the State Employee Awareness and Information Needs Survey. The Montana State Library survey took cues from similar instruments developed by state libraries in Oregon, Ohio, and Virginia. An email was sent to State of Montana Public Information Officers (PIO) on December 16, 2014 asking them to forward the nine question survey to their agency employees. The survey was also emailed to 519 registered MSL card holders with a user profile of state employee. Individual PIOs received reminders about the survey in January, 2015. The survey closed in early March 2015.

Survey Objectives

The survey sought to determine the level of state employee awareness about the information resources and services of the State Library, the importance of library resources and services to state employees, current user information needs, and the current impact of Montana State Digital Library resources/services. This data will be used to better align its resources and services with known user needs. The survey results will also help the library improve its collection development process, improve services, and determine what kind of outreach and training is needed. Money will be better spent because purchases will be based upon known information needs and not perceptions of what users want. A final outcome of the survey is that it brings attention to currently available Montana State Digital Library resources and services. The hope is that increased attention generates more use of the library.

Key Findings

According to a report for state employee by location from the Department of Administration received March 9, 2015, there were 13,120 state employees located in 115 towns across the 56 counties in Montana. Therefore, the 929 state employees who responded to this survey represent about 7% of all Montana state employees. The survey shows that respondents were generally unaware of Montana State Library resources and services. Many expressed surprise at learning from the survey about the range of what MSL offers. Those respondents with some awareness of library resources and services generally used the library periodically which suggests that the library is under-used. Those that did use the library were often complimentary. One

respondent wrote: “Without access to the GIS information as well as the ability to easily research and retrieve scientific/engineering information I would not be able to do my job nearly as effectively. Typically the information I'm seeking is relatively specialized and not readily available.” Others respondents wrote favorably about the personal service that they received from library staff. Nonetheless, there were complaints about absence of follow up after an initial information request, limited range of subject matter acquisition, the kinds of available journals, navigability of the website, and lack of ease using online resources. Among survey respondents unaware about the library, there were numerous requests for training and for more information about the range of resources. Many of these requests came from respondents self-identifying as new employees wanting orientation to library services. “Would be good to have a library 'Basic Training' for new employees” was a typical respondent comment. Email was frequently suggested as a means for communicating about available library resources. Numerous respondents, concluded because they were outside of Helena they could not use the library. The reasons are not clear why respondents conclude that they cannot use the library outside of Helena.

Question 1. What state agency do you work for?
Answer Options
Administration
Agriculture
Commerce
Commissioner of Higher Education
Commissioner of Political Practices
Corrections
Environmental Quality
Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Governor's Office
Judiciary
Justice
Labor and Industry
Legislative Branch
Livestock
Military Affairs
Montana Arts Council
Montana Historical Society
Montana State Fund
Montana State Library
Natural Resources and Conservation
Office of Public Instruction
Public Health and Human Services
Public Service Commission
Revenue
Secretary of State
State Auditor's Office
State Public Defender
Transportation

Twenty nine (29) state agencies were listed as answer choices for this survey. (Note: The number of state agencies can vary depending on whether an agency is counted together or apart from its parent agency). No responses were received from staff of four state agencies.

Question 2.

Do you work or live:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In the Helena area (1-30 miles)	63.6%	590
Near Helena (30-50 miles)	3.4%	32
Outside Helena (50 + miles)	33.0%	306
	<i>answered question</i>	928
	<i>skipped question</i>	1

The majority of respondents (63.6%) were from the Helena area or near Helena (3.4%), while the remainders of respondents (33%) were from outside Helena. The percentage of survey respondents from Helena or near Helena is higher than the actual distribution of state agency employees across Montana. The number of Montana state agency employees living in Helena or near Helena is 6,116 or 47% out of a total of 13,120 state employees. This question sought to better understand how physical distance may correlate with awareness and use of library resources and services.

Question 3.

How important are these Montana State Library services for your work?

Answer Options	I'm NOT aware of this service.	Very important.	Somewhat important.	Not important.	No opinion.	Response Count
Conference room	466	98	118	171	72	925
Public access computers	289	145	120	266	89	909
Interlibrary loan	296	199	161	165	89	910
Reference, research assistance	306	225	131	172	85	919
Webinar/Training	337	139	178	173	93	920
Access to State Publications	257	311	155	118	82	923
Tell us more about the importance or non-importance of these resources for your work:						262
						<i>answered question</i>
						928
						<i>skipped question</i>
						1

This question asked respondents about their awareness of and to rank the importance of various library services. The Montana State Library has three conference rooms equipped with information technology that is available for state employee use. That over half or 466 were not aware of this service suggests the need for the library to review how it advertises the availability of MSL conference rooms for patron use. One respondent commented about taking more advantage of the conference rooms, if greater lead time and guaranteed reservations were allowed. Another respondent from a question later in the survey wanted to know the dimensions of the conference room and how many people it would accommodate. Regarding the availability of the six public access computers, 289 (31%) of respondents were unaware of this service and 171 (18%) responded that this service was not important. While most state workers would each have their own work computer, several comments were supportive of MSL having public access computers for citizen use and for state employees needing to conduct personal business. While 296 (32%) of respondents were unaware of interlibrary loan service, 199 ranked ILL as very important. The comments about ILL service were all generally very positive. Providing public access to state publications was ranked as "very important" by 311 respondents which is the highest ranking among the listed library services. 306 respondents were unaware of the reference, research, and mapping assistance available to them from librarians, GIS analysts, and data professionals. Similarly, 337 respondents indicated

that they did not know about available webinars and training on library resources. In general, the level of unawareness of all library services points to the need for more marketing and outreach. And judging from numerous comments, respondents are interested in learning more about library services. Numerous respondents assume that because they work outside of Helena, that library services are generally unavailable to them.

Question 4.

How important are these Montana State Library resources to your work?

Answer Options	I'm NOT aware of this resource	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Response Count
Library catalog	260	119	188	223	122	912
Journal and article databases	259	185	172	204	97	917
Natural Heritage Program Information	311	107	102	280	118	918
GIS data services	282	183	130	224	99	918
Library website to find information	245	230	183	165	94	917
ReferenceUSA business database	354	83	117	244	120	918
BioOne life science database	370	60	79	284	128	921
Safari Tech Books online	388	42	75	271	144	920
MT.GOV Connect web archive	354	119	141	187	112	913
Federal document collection	329	124	156	200	108	917
Natural resource information collection	308	98	100	255	117	878
State publications collection	283	163	189	184	97	916
Topographic maps (print)	283	98	125	285	116	907
Newspapers (print)	215	85	155	305	121	881
Tell us more about the importance or non-importance of these resources to your work						175
<i>answered question</i>						923
<i>skipped question</i>						6

This multi-part question sought to better understand the level of user awareness of 14 library resources. While high numbers of respondents were unaware of several licensed databases, e.g. Safari Tech, BioOne, and ReferenceUSA, the comments by respondents using these licensed databases were generally favorable. One respondent remarked “The Safari catalog is hugely useful for my work.” Of all the listed MSL resources, “the library website to find information” was ranked by the most respondents (230) as being “very important”. Awareness of “the library website to find information” was also favorable relative to other listed MSL resources. Although awareness of print format for topographic maps and newspapers was greater compared to other library resources, print topographic maps and print newspapers when compared to other resources were ranked low in value compared to other resources. Print topographic maps and print newspapers received the highest numbers for “Not important”. Natural Heritage Program information and GIS data received high marks in the comments section. “I use the Natural Heritage Program at least once a month to check for wildlife observations” and “The GIS data services is very important to my work” were representative comments from respondents expressing their appreciation. The number of respondents commenting about not using the library resources because they were not in Helena, indicate a need for educating our potential users that distance is not necessarily a barrier to accessing all library resources. This comment is representative: “I was unaware that these resources were offered, however, also am unclear if it would be something that could be utilized by our office due to the distance from Helena.”

Question 5.

Check all the ways that you prefer to interact with Montana State Library staff.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
in person	54.4%	449
phone	52.5%	434
webinars	27.8%	230
email	79.8%	659
texting	4.0%	33
social media	10.5%	87
<i>answered question</i>		826
<i>skipped question</i>		103

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences for interacting with Montana State Library staff. A very high percentage (79.8%) preferred email followed by a preference of interacting in person (54%) and by phone (52.5%). User interaction via webinars (27.8%), social media (10.5), and texting (4%) were the least preferred.

Question 6.

Below are some reasons you might not currently use the Montana State Library. Please check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I didn't know the State Library has resources and services that might be useful to me.	66.7%	546
I rarely need to go outside my agency for information.	45.9%	376
The library staff has not been helpful to me in the past.	1.5%	12
I have my own resources that take care of my information needs.	28.2%	231
The library's resources don't cover topics important to my work.	10.0%	82
I don't have enough time to use the library.	15.5%	127
Other people in my agency do the research I need.	6.3%	52
I am already overloaded with information.	7.7%	63
Tell us your other reasons for NOT using the Montana State Library:		190
<i>answered question</i>		819
<i>skipped question</i>		110

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons they might not currently use the Montana State Library. That a high percentage (66.7%) responded “I didn’t know the State Library had resources and services that might be useful to me” aligns with numerous respondent comments for this question and other survey questions. Again, a large number of comments equate use of the state library with physical visits within normal business hours Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This comment was representative of a number of comments: “As an outside [sic] Helena employee, I haven't the opportunity to investigate State Library resources that might be available.” Another respondent commented: “I live 2 hours from the Library.” Response percentages for “I rarely need to go outside my agency for information” (45.9%) and “I have my own resources that take care of my information needs” (28.2%) indicate a certain level of information self-sufficiency by users and maybe coming from respondents whose state agencies have an in-house library and librarians.

Question 7.

How do you presently get information needed to do your job? Check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The Web	90.8%	814
My agency librarian	6.3%	56
Networking with colleagues	70.9%	635
Licensed databases (specify below)	22.9%	205
Print subscriptions (specify below)	14.0%	125
Other (please specify)		238
<i>answered question</i>		896
<i>skipped question</i>		33

A large percentage (90.8%) responded they got information needed to do their job from the web. This question sought to better understand how the Montana State Library might support or supplement users' current sources of information. Respondents listed by title in the comments box a number of specific journals and databases. Knowing these specific titles will assist the Montana State Library in making collection development decisions about what resources to acquire or discontinue.

Question 8.

What new service, resource, or training from the Montana State Library would help your work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Training on library resources (specify below)	67.7%	339
More electronic resources (specify below)	48.9%	245
More mobile services (specify below)	12.0%	60
Digitization/scanning services (specify below)	14.2%	71
Other (please specify)		252
<i>answered question</i>		501
<i>skipped question</i>		428

A significant percentage of respondents (67.7%) indicated that training on library resources would help their work. Some respondents made a distinction between training on *what* resources were available and training on *how* to use the available resources. Numerous respondents indicated they wanted more information about what MSL offers. One respondent suggested: "I would be interested in scheduling a tour or something for me and some of my staff." Another respondent suggested: "Have an open house. I wasn't aware of a lot of the resources and I'm sure my staffs aren't either." Almost half of respondents (48.9%) indicated having more electronic resources would help their work. Lesser percentages indicated digitization/scanning services (14.2%) and more mobile services (12%) would help their work. The majority of comments mentioned training to learn what library resources were available and how to use them. Several respondents requested training as part of new employee orientation. Others asked for email and reminders about state library resources and services. A couple of respondents wanted information about our plans for future resources and services.

Question 9.

What would you like us to know or think about that we have not already asked?

Answer Options	Response Count
	160
<i>answered question</i>	160
<i>skipped question</i>	769

This open ended question sought to gather qualitative data not acquired by other questions. Respondents included compliments and complaints in this section. The comments section also included numerous recommendations variously worded, e.g. advertise, publicize, promote, get the word out, etc. all indicating that users want more information about state library services and resources. Several respondents again suggest using email for making contact with library users. One respondent asks “Is the library open to the public and what are the hours”? Respondents elsewhere in this survey made similar remarks indicating their uncertainty about who the library serves. Follow-up questions are needed to better understand why some respondents are unsure whom the library serves.

Conclusion

Significant numbers of state employees, however, are interested in finding out more about the state library through various means of communication. The survey itself is part of the state library campaign to inform state employees about library resources and services. The survey responses offer valuable data for additional state library projects to better meet user information needs and are the basis for several Library Information Services work plan objectives for fiscal year 2015.

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