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May 25, 2016

To the Montana library and education community:

On May 16, the Montana State Library (MSL) was informed by the Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning that the Coal Severance Tax (CST) Shared Account continues to face dramatic revenue declines over previous revenue estimates; as a result, MSL was informed of the need to further reduce our CST expenditures this biennium by an additional \$166,000.

This \$166,000 reduction is in addition to the \$46,000 reduction MSL had been notified of in January. In total our \$943,458 biennial CST appropriation has now been reduced by \$212,591. The cut represents a 45% reduction to our FY 17 appropriation and a 23% reduction to the total biennial appropriation that had already been reduced by more than \$90,000 from the previous biennium.

Due to this very significant reduction, the State Library no longer has the luxury of the one-size-fits all approach afforded by statewide funding to procure and administer the current statewide databases contract model. In order to fund Library Development services in a stable and responsible manner it is imperative that MSL meet the challenges resulting from volatile and declining CST monies and stagnant federal Library Services and Technology Act dollars. While we have always made careful use of the limited resources available to us, MSL must now make very difficult choices about the services we offer. To help make these decisions, we are grateful to the guidance afforded to us through the recent recommendations of the Library Development Study Task Force (LDSTF) that reflect the most pressing priorities as identified by librarians and other stakeholders statewide and on which MSL will focus. Those recommendations are available online:

http://about.msl.mt.gov/commission_councils/library_development_study_task_force.

Given the significance of this reduction, on top of previous cuts, on May 25th, the MSL Commission made the difficult choice to completely eliminate funding of the statewide database contract. Access to the statewide databases will continue through August 31, 2016. Materials from the Commission meetings are available online:

https://mslservices.mt.gov/About_the_Library/Commission_Councils/Commission/comm_MeetingMaterials.

As was previously announced, the Commission voted at their April meeting to significantly reduce the funding of the statewide databases. In the face of the most recent round of cuts, regardless of usage or where these resources fit within the LDSTF recommendations, we no longer have the financial resources necessary to sustain the current statewide contract model.

Additional CST cuts will be absorbed by statewide training, the Montana Memory Project, E-content, and the lifelong learning programming budgets. Some of these budgets have been zeroed out (E-content and lifelong learning programming). The other projects have sustained significant cuts.

The MSL Commission has decided to move forward with funding a new lifelong learning librarian position guided by the belief that in a society of lifelong learners – whether of a formal or informal nature – libraries are nodes connecting the local learning setting with the global resources of information and knowledge. Libraries must therefore be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of lifelong learning. Libraries are necessary prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society. It is the belief of the MSL Commission that an enhanced focus on lifelong learning will grow engaged community partnerships, high quality online information resources, and researched-based programming, in the absence of previously state-funded resources.

The MSL Commission and the entire State Library staff are very cognizant of the impacts that the difficult decisions made today will have on libraries across the state. Given the extreme circumstances we face, we believe we are making the best choices available to us that will allow us to continue to serve libraries and Montanans in every corner of our state. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the Network Advisory Council, which represents all library types, and other partners, to shape a future with rich information resources accessible to all Montanans, and continued collaboration to support efficient resource sharing.

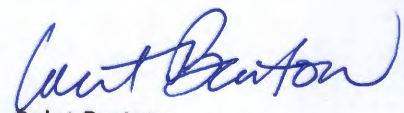
Please share any questions or comments with Jennie Stapp, jstapp2@mt.gov.

Sincerely,



Jennie Stapp

Montana State Librarian



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MSL Commission Chair