

Second Discussion Draft, Tuesday, February 5, 2019

Fair Library Access for All Montanans:  
A Resolution From the Montana State Library Commission, Regarding Fair Standard Access to  
Library Content and Services for All Montanans

Montana State Library Commission, Aaron LaFromboise, Chair

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[ Montanans' Dignity ]

Whereas all Montanans are born with inherent, inviolable dignity; <sup>i</sup>

Whereas all Montanans' are at liberty to pursue life's basic necessities, health, and happiness; <sup>ii</sup>

[ Right to Lifelong Learning ]

Whereas in pursuit of life's basic necessities, health, and happiness, all Montanans have the right to seek information and pursue ideas, through any media, regardless of location, <sup>iii</sup> and without discrimination; <sup>iv</sup>

Whereas it is Montana's constitutional goal to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person, with equitable education opportunities being guaranteed to each person of the state; <sup>v</sup>

Whereas, the Montana State Library is aligned with and affirms the American Library Association's valuing a learning society, and in affirming libraries' vital and cooperative role in supporting all Montanans' lifelong pursuit of inquiry and learning for all; <sup>vi</sup>

[ MSL's Role ]

Whereas libraries exist to help Montanans to enrich and inform themselves; <sup>vii</sup>

Whereas Montana State Library's purpose is to assist all organizations, communities, and Montanans to thrive through excellent library resources and services; <sup>viii</sup>

Whereas it is MSL's duty to directly provide or distribute access to library content and services, sufficient to each user's needs, to all Montanans; <sup>ix</sup>

Whereas MSL's users and partners include (1) Montana's blind and physically handicapped citizens, (2) State agencies, employees, and contractors working for state agencies, (3) Federal agencies and cooperators, (4) Montana's geographical information systems community, (5) Montana's natural heritage community, and (6) All Montanans, either directly or indirectly, all Montana libraries, and all Montana's libraries' communities; <sup>x</sup>

[ Fair (equitable) Access ]

Whereas all Montanas should have convenient access to sufficient (if not necessarily the same) library content and services, so that they can seek information and pursue ideas;<sup>xi</sup>

Whereas Montana's communities vary, in regards to the availability of local resources, in differences between each communities' ability to provide their users with sufficient resources, and in their ability to participate as a partner with other Montana information resources (such as the State Library);

Montana communities exhibit gaps in library services, and vary greatly in their ability to help their users and their communities thrive; therefore, let it be<sup>xii</sup>

[ Resolution ]

Resolved, that the Montana State Library acknowledges that that there is an uneven distribution of library services throughout Montana, and that there are gaps in the sufficiency of library services;

Montanans have unique critical needs for convenient access to sustainably funded,<sup>xiii</sup> sufficient unto each Montanan's needs, high-quality library content and services;

With its partners and all Montana Libraries, Montana State Library commits to developing and implementing a statewide strategy, toward the goal of providing all Montanans with equitable, sufficient access to library resources;

That all Montana's libraries, all Montana State Library's partners, and all state agencies will be encouraged to join in this statewide strategy; so that

All Montanans, regardless of where they live, regardless of their economic status, regardless of their race, sex, culture, social origin or condition, and regardless of their political or religious ideas, will have access to library services, sufficient unto their needs.<sup>xiv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The Constitution of the State of Montana, Article II, Declaration of Rights, Part II, Declaration of Rights, Section 4, Individual Dignity

<sup>ii</sup> The Constitution of the State of Montana, Article II, Declaration of Rights, Part II, Declaration of Rights, Section 3, Inalienable Rights

<sup>iii</sup> UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Constitution of the State of Montana. Article II. Declaration of Rights. Part II. Declaration of Rights. Section 4. Individual Dignity

<sup>v</sup> MCA 2017, Constitution. Article X, Education and Public Lands, Part X, Educational Goals and Duties, Section 1.

<sup>vi</sup> American Library Association Mission. ALA Policy Manual A.1.1 Introduction.

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/section1/1mission>

<sup>vii</sup> MCA 2017, 22-1-302, Free Public Libraries Purpose

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<sup>viii</sup> Purpose, from Montana State Library Strategic Framework, Adopted December 14, 2016

<sup>ix</sup> This is an attempt to restate, more specifically, in one, MSL's stated purpose and roles.

Specifically: Our purpose: The Montana State Library (MSL) helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services. Our roles:

(1) The Montana State Library is the source for State Government Information, Natural Resources Information, and Geographic Information, for all Montanans.

(2) MSL supports the development and excellence of Montana's tax-supported public libraries.

(3) MSL supports reading for Montanans with visual or physical disabilities.

<sup>x</sup> [http://docs.msl.mt.gov/aboutweb/documents/strategic\\_framework.pdf](http://docs.msl.mt.gov/aboutweb/documents/strategic_framework.pdf)

<sup>xi</sup> The idea of sufficiency springs from the notion of distributive justice, where equal library access to library content and services doesn't necessarily mean everyone has identical access to the same content and services, but instead, that everyone has access to the library content and services sufficient for their purposes and respectful of their equal rights as Montanans and human beings. While there are multiple possible definitions of distributive justice, guided by the norms of Montana's Bill of Rights, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and ALA's Library Bill of Rights, This resolution focuses on two of five possible parameters, need and responsibility. 1.

Need: Those in greatest needs should be provided with resources needed to meet those needs.

These individuals should be given more resources than those who already possess them, regardless of their input. 2. Responsibility: Group members who have the most should share

their resources with those who have less." See the ALA Library Bill of Rights

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/intfreedom/librarybill/lbor.pdf>,

also see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distributive\\_justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distributive_justice).

<sup>xii</sup> Montana libraries vary in their local capacity to meet users' needs. They vary by (1) Staff size, the depth of staff skills, and differences in their staff's overall experience; (2) By differences in their buildings, services available, and information resources; and (3) By differences in their community's relative ability to pay for content and services, to match local user requirements (measured by disparities in taxable property value within a library's service area or support from its governing institution, by differences in median household or per capita income, and by differences in capacity brought about by differences in size and scale of services).

<sup>xiii</sup> From and restated, MCA 2017, 22.1.302. Purpose (of free public libraries)

<sup>xiv</sup> List from Montana Constitution. This list implies the inclusion of geographical location or economic wealth, as not being disqualifying circumstances.