

Memo

To: Montana State Library Commission

From: Jennie Stapp, State Librarian

Date: January 26, 2022

Re: The Montana State Library Commission, local policies, and materials challenges

Both nationally and in Montana, libraries are facing an increase in challenges to books held in library collections. The Montana State Library (MSL) is aware of three challenges in Montana including one at the ImagineIf Library where MSL staff have been asked to provide guidance. The following information is shared with the State Library Commission to help inform the Commission about MSL's role in these matters.

[Library Policy Committee Conducts Review, Clashes Over Definition of Censorship - Flathead Beacon](#)

[Billings School Board votes to keep controversial books addressing LGBTQ+ issues | Local News | billingsgazette.com](#)

Collection Development Policies

Collection Development Policies are policies adopted by local library boards that guide how staff select materials to meet the information needs of their patrons. Policies describe what kinds of materials will be selected, how will they be selected, how donations will be handled, how collection maintenance will be done, and how the library will respond to complaints about materials. Often the complaint process involves a written statement of objection to the library board. It is up to the library board to act on the objection according to the collection development policy.

Interlibrary Loan Policies and Resource Sharing

Interlibrary Loan Policies are policies adopted by local library boards that guide how staff request materials from other libraries to fill patrons' information requests if their

local collection does not contain the necessary materials. Policies may allow libraries to charge patrons fees to cover the expense of requesting materials.

Libraries have recognized the value of sharing their resources and collections since the 1950s. Sharing resources has allowed libraries to offer a much broader array of services and materials than any one library could provide on its own. The recognition of this value has led to cooperative projects like the Montana Shared Catalog and MontanaLibrary2Go.

MontanaLibrary2Go shared ebook collection

When MontanaLibrary2Go was formed it was created as a shared ebook collection that any patron of any participating library could access. As such it has a single collection development policy for the shared collection which guides both what and how items will be selected for the collection. A volunteer selection committee of librarians from participating libraries selects materials for this shared collection on a monthly rotating basis. Because no single library governs the shared collection or the MontanaLibrary2Go collection development policy, after local review, a materials challenge may come to the State Library Commission for consideration. This policy was created in 2011. To date, no materials in the shared collection have been challenged.

- [MontanaLibrary2Go Collection development Policy](#)
- [Montana Library2Go Selection Policy: Appeal Process Documentation](#)

The Montana State Library role in collection development and resource sharing

[22-1-103 \(8\) Montana Code Annotated](#) authorize the State Library Commission to “act as a state board of professional standards and library examiners, develop standards for public libraries, and adopt rules for the certification of librarians.” Public library standards require Montana public libraries to adopt collection management policies ([ARM 10.102.1150H](#)) and to offer interlibrary loan ([ARM 10.102.1150I](#)).

MSL staff serves as professional consultants to library boards and staff. In this role, staff advises local libraries to have policies in place to guide decisions and to direct responses when a library is challenged for its practices. MSL reminds local libraries that they cannot prevent challenges however they can reduce the number of challenges and the impact of those challenges if libraries have policies in place and they follow those policies. Policies should direct library actions to meet local community needs and should be adopted and followed in a transparent manner.

MSL created and maintains a Library Administration Manual and Trustee Manual that are educational resources for local library staff and boards.

- [Library Administration Manual](#)
- [Trustee Manual](#)

In the 1980's the MSL worked with local libraries to create collection development policies to comply with public library standards and to improve their collections. For many years the State Library maintained a Collection Development Honor Role which recognized libraries that had current policies and that shared their library holdings information through WorldCat, a shared database of library holdings used to facilitate interlibrary loan. The honor roll was replaced in approximately 2013 with the Excellent Library Services Award, in part because all public libraries met the requirements of the honor roll.

As system administrators, MSL Shared Catalog staff provide technical support and system administration for the resource sharing groups that allow patrons from participating libraries to place holds on items from other participating libraries. These items are physically shared through the statewide library courier that the State Library administers through a contract. Library materials shared through these resource sharing groups are collected through local collection development policies of the owning libraries.

MSL has long encouraged libraries to engage in cooperative collection development to reduce unnecessary duplication in library collections and to maximize investment of library collection budgets. The MontanaLibrary2Go shared collection is an example of cooperative collection development.