

Federation Task Force Minutes
Thursday, November 10, 2022, online via Zoom

Task Force Attendees: Crystal Buchanan, Tracy Cook, Abbi Dooley, Valerie Frank, Tammy Hall, Pam Henley, Kathleen Ralph, Kelly Reisig, Nancy Schmidt, Jacque Scott, Jonna Underwood

Absent: Lori Cannady

Guests: Jennifer Ball

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm

[Review of task force charge](#) – Tracy reviewed the charges of the task force. She stated the main desired outcome was to create recommendations that work towards high quality library services for Montanans. The recommendations also need to work for the library directors and board members that participate in federations.

[Federation History – discuss questions](#) - observations from the task force members about the history of federations included:

- surprise at how fully funded the federations were in the 1980s
- that public libraries were the only library types in the federations for most of their history
- that federations were regional libraries – which raised a question about any value in returning to that model for reference/research – would this be a good use of physical spaces?
- In reviewing the original charges to the current day, technology has been the biggest change
- Continuing education and programming seem to be core programs.

[Feedback from federations and questions from the Commission](#)

[Federation feedback](#) – observations/questions from the task force upon reviewing feedback from each federation:

- Training is critical. Regional boundaries are helpful.

- Networking and smaller groups are valuable. This led to a question about whether federations should be broken up? **Questions for the group to discuss further:** If federations were smaller would that improve the networking and connections between libraries? Should we consider recommending a change in federation boundaries?
- Sharing resources, providing funding is important to members
- Federations are invisible to patrons. The group discussed whether this was a problem. Perhaps federations are an internal structure necessary for libraries to provide services – not something patrons need to know about. There was a recommendation that library boards and local government officials know about the role of federations. Libraries need to improve on getting the word out. **Questions for group to discuss further:** Are federations internal to libraries? Is it necessary for library patrons to know about federations? Or should we focus on library and local government leadership with an emphasis on how libraries are leveraging local tax dollars?
- Group discussed the role of federations and how they fit with statewide projects like the Montana Shared Catalog and Overdrive. What niche do they fill? It seems easier for librarians and board members to connect at a regional event. Are there other ways to capitalize on the regional aspect? Even if many programs/projects go statewide, there will still be a need for some regional work. Some possible regional service ideas are IT support and reference services. **Question for the group to discuss further:** How do federations fit in to the statewide picture?
- Group discussed the importance of libraries maintaining their autonomy while being a part of statewide efforts.
- Federations bring value by making human connections. An example of this is new directors have support from the federation coordinators. The group discussed the important leadership/mentorship role of federation coordinators. Connection and collaboration are valuable outcomes of federations which means participation is important.
- Federation meetings need to be more valuable for board members. The group saw value in having board members participate – both for their fiduciary responsibilities over library funding and for the support and education that occurs when trustees are active in the federation. **Question for the group to discuss further:** how can we make federations more valuable for volunteer trustees?
 - Initial ideas proposed: explain the role of board members versus directors, have trustee breakout sessions, share federation history,

think about who else could ask a trustee to attend, could MSL commission send an invite letter to trustees, keep Zoom option, make a short video for federation board chair and vice chair with explanation of roles and tips

- Group discussed how some federations have retreats while others do not – usually due to funding. Group also discussed the value of having in-person meetings and how libraries can choose to reimburse their trustees for travel expenses. **Questions for the group to discuss further:** Is there value in increasing funding for federation retreats? Or should we increase funding for in-person meetings? Should we reimburse trustees for mileage and travel?
- Group discussed the multi-type versus public library only and the observation of one federation that it would be nice to include tribal college libraries since they often provide public library services. Group learned about the experience of federations in providing funds for school libraries and a tribal college library. **Questions for the group to discuss further:** Should federations include other types of libraries? Should we provide funds for getting to federation meetings? Should we provide enough funding for grants to those libraries?
- Group discussed the funding of federations and how the money is used. They talked about the legislative intent and whether it should be changed. They also discussed the question about equitable versus equal split of money. **Questions for the group to discuss further:** What recommendations do we have for funding? Should we recommend equitable versus equal split of money? Should we recommend changes based on legislative intent – should it go to pay for state projects, or should it remain with federations? Should we change the legislative intent? Should we tweak the process, so money used for state projects remains at MSL and money used for library specific work goes to libraries?

Next Steps – Tracy will send out a Doodle poll for a January meeting. The group will discuss the questions that came out of this meeting to begin crafting recommendations for the State Library Commission and library community to review.

Other Business & Announcements – there were none.

Meeting adjourned at 3:35pm.