



## MEMO

**To:** State Library Commission  
**From:** Jennie Stapp, State Librarian  
**Subject:** Public Comments Received from Form  
**Date:** 12/1/2023

10.102.1160: PERSONNEL: 532 Comments, 120 support and 412 oppose the removal of the master's in library science standard.

10.102.1158: LIBRARY BOARD, GOVERNANCE, AND WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR: 4 comments total: 2 opposed, 2 other comments.

10.102 DEFINITIONS & 10.102.4003: 2 comments total: 2 other comments.

General Opinion, not specific to any one rule: 18 comments opposed to any changes to the standards.

Comments from Public Hearing, 12/1/2023 on Zoom: 1 support and 1 oppose.

YouTube video of hearing: <https://youtu.be/zWbJnl37eNg>

**PUBLIC HEARING**

<b>Name: Dave Ingram</b>					
<b>Organization, if applicable: self</b>					
<b>Time Stamp: 1:14pm</b>					
<b>Support:</b>		<b>Oppose:</b>		<b>Other:</b>	
<b>Reasons:</b>		<b>Reasons:</b>		<b>Reasons:</b>	
a. Support local control	X	a. Local control is not a standard			
b. Equalize opportunities for small and big libraries	X	b. The job requires professional education and skills learned through MSL program			
c. Interpretation of MCA 22-1-309 – gives board more power	X	c. Making a change for one library			
d. This could impact other large libraries.	X	d. Library board always has a choice in who to hire			
e. Unfair to place the burden of developing libraries on large libraries. It is the role of MSL and federation to fulfill this role	X	e. The standard has worked well for decades			
Removes ALA dominance from hiring	X	f. Eliminating the standard undermines the profession			
		g. State funds should be tied to clear standards			
Other:		Other:			

<b>Name: Judy Meadows</b>		
<b>Organization, if applicable: Lewis &amp; Clark Library, Great Falls, Butte-Silver Bow, Billings, Bozeman, Bitterroot, Missoula Public Libraries</b>		
<b>Time Stamp: 1:18pm</b>		
<b>Support:</b>		<b>Oppose:</b>
<b>Reasons:</b>		<b>Reasons:</b>
a. Support local control	x	a. Local control is not a standard X
b.		b. The job requires professional education and skills learned through MSL program
c.		c. Making a change for one library X
d.		d. Library board always has a choice in who to hire X
		e. The standard has worked well for decades X
		f. Eliminating the standard undermines the profession X
		g. State funds should be tied to clear standards
Other:		Other: Role of Commission is to encourage excellence; salary is harder to support MLS degrees in smaller libraries but some have invested in a degreed library director; it is not hard to recruit; public comment is overwhelming supportive of keeping the standard.

**EMAIL**

I'm writing in opposition to the proposed change that would lessen the standards to which Libraries in our largest cities are held in order to justify the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

The graduate degree in question is a Masters level degree in Library or Informational SCIENCE -- a degree that recognizes that a properly functioning library that serves everyone is rooted in proven professional standards, much like that for doctors, lawyers, accountants, pharmacists, etc. It is not a job for which one is qualified by mere age, residence, or interest, as claimed by a recent letter to the editor.

To change/eliminate this professional standard simply because one covered library (Imaginelf in Kalispell) has been unable to hire or retain a director who meets those standards reflects a problem with that library's Trustees -- not with the standards themselves. Those standards have been developed by professionals in the field, are universally deemed valid, and are met by all the other covered libraries. We should not eliminate long-standing state-wide standards simply to accommodate Trustees that are trying to micro-manage library staff and policies for ideological purposes, resulting in those with qualifying credentials being unwilling to apply for the director's position or to stay in that job.

In fact, I'm surprised these trustees would want taxpayer monies spent to support a library not held to professional standards. The withholding of funds for libraries that do not meet these standards is the very way government should be held accountable for spending taxpayer monies. Eliminating the graduate degree requirement would mean expending taxpayer funds to support political ideology rather than an institution held to professional standards. And it is entirely reasonable that state certification of a certain level of competence is required to justify taxpayer financial support.

I would urge the MSLC to adhere to the recommendations of the Public Library Standards Task Force, which was made up of Librarians rather than political appointees, only one of whom has a degree in Library Science. Libraries are unique institutions that hold a special place in the public trust. They receive public funds and should be held to professional standards.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sara Walsh  
Kalispell & Augusta, MT.

Sara Walsh  
swalsh@3rivers.net

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I strongly feel that eliminating the graduate degree for library directors is a step in the wrong direction. It's a way of dumbing down our libraries, saying you don't need to be a professional to run a library. Saying local control is a way of letting people with anti-library views get their way into a position of power, allowing them to push their own agendas, robbing the library of the ability to have something for everyone. I have been to the library trustees meetings in Kalispell, and that is what they are trying to do. As an aside, I really don't understand how Carmen Culbertson was allowed on the commission, being one of the trustees here in Kalispell. She would love to ban books that offend her. Please keep the requirement of a graduate degree. We need educated people taking care of one of our best public institutions.  
Roxie Lehl, roxie@wavydog.com  
Kalispell, Montana

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I am writing to the Montana State Library Commission to voice my strong support and convictions that the requirement for library heads to have a master's degree should definitely be maintained.

Diane Brawner, PhD

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I strongly disagree with the proposal to remove the education requirement.

Kay Canteau, Retired Librarian  
Bozeman, MT

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November 27, 2023

Dear Montana State Library Commission,

The Montana State Library Commission meeting on October 11th left many in the Montana Library community feeling disappointed and dismayed.

The signatories of this letter are writing to convey our concerns about the MSL Commission's decision to bypass the recommendations of the Public Library Standards Task Force and eliminate the requirement for a professional graduate MLS degree for directors of libraries serving a population of 25,000 or more.

This standard has been in place for nearly 50 years, and no one questioned the updated standards when they were adopted two years ago.

There are many reasons in favor of keeping the MLIS standard.

- The state connects high standards to its ongoing financial investment in public libraries. The purpose of the standards is to incentivize local investment in staffing and services so that all Montanans can access quality library services. Undermining this standard at the request of one library can be the first step down the slippery slope undermining all standards.
- The standards exist to ensure quality. Local control is not a standard. Library Boards have the right to exercise local control by choosing whether or not to meet the standards. The role of the Commission should be to encourage excellence.
- The only reason this standard is limited to libraries serving a population of 25,000 or more is out of recognition that our smallest libraries may not have the tax base to support the salary necessary to hire a degreed librarian, but 13 Montana libraries have hired degreed librarians as directors despite serving fewer than 25,000. Some of the smallest are Columbus and Ekalaka.
- Public comment is overwhelmingly in support of keeping the standard.
- Other libraries are successfully recruiting degreed staff. Most recently, Missoula's three finalists all had their MLS degrees.

People across Montana love and hold dear their public libraries, which have a long and proud history of serving their communities. We do not feel the Commission has served Montana Library users in this matter; their actions felt like a subtly subversive and political attack on Montana libraries.

According to the State website, the role of the State Library Commission is "to set forth policies and funding priorities that empower the State Library to meet its mission and statutory obligations and to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible." We ask that you take seriously your duty to advocate for libraries and information communities. We ask that you reconsider your decision to eliminate the MLIS requirement from the Public Library Standards.

Thank you for your time and attention.

John Finn, Director Lewis & Clark Public Library  
 Susan Gregory, Director Bozeman Public Library  
 Stephanie Johnson, Director Butte-Silver Bow Library  
 Slaven Lee, Director Missoula Public Library  
 Susie McIntyre, Director Great Falls Public Library  
 Mark Wetherington, Director Bitterroot Public Library  
 Gavin Woltjer, Director Billings Public Library

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Dear Commissioner,

NO to changes lowering Library Standards. Partisan agendas, White Christian Nationalists agendas, Fascist agendas have no place in Library decisions. As a Montanan I want accountability, stability and excellence in our Library system.

Sandy Young, bnsyoung@gmail.com  
Kalispell

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Members of the Montana State Library Commission:

I have followed the issue of Administrative Rules Changes with great interest. I have personal connections to this issue that I would like to share with you. My mother, Velma Pemberton, from Broadus, Montana, was appointed to the State Library Commission by Governor Tim Babcock in 1964. During the six years that she served on the Commission, many Montana communities began to understand the value of public libraries. At that time very few Montana librarians had formal training from an accredited graduate level program. Those people who did usually went to the University of Washington or the University of Denver for their education. In 1969 the standard of having a Master's Degree for certain size libraries was recommended and approved.

At that time I was living in Denver, Colorado, and I decided to pursue a Master's level library degree at the University of Denver. In March 1974 I received a Master of Arts in Librarianship. Because the university was accredited, I was qualified to work in various types and sizes of libraries. In 1996, Governor Marc Racicot appointed me to the Montana State Library Commission and I served until 2002. The other commissioners and I continued to value the importance of libraries in all Montana communities and made some significant progress under the leadership of Karen Strege, the State Librarian. It seems that the majority of the current members of the Montana State Library Commission have some very different goals than those of the people with whom I served.

In 1998 I was hired as an interim library director for the Flathead County Library. At the end of one year, the library trustees appointed me to the position of library director. I spent five years in that position. During that time I worked with a variety of trustees. They had the interest of the community as their priority. I also worked with many different Flathead County Commissioners all of whom cared about meeting the information needs of the community. I can assure you that having a Master's Degree with the qualifications connected to it made it possible for me to step into the position of library director for a large Montana library system.

Now is the time for you, the current members of the Montana State Library Commission, to agree to keep this standard.

Sincerely,  
Dorothy Pemberton Laird  
Whitefish, Montana

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Hello Commissioner Scribner,

I am writing to ask that you leave the current standards for MT libraries in place, rather than implementing the new ones as proposed. I am especially concerned that you would eliminate the professional requirement for a graduate degree for librarians, and I continue to believe it's important to connect our libraries with the benefits of membership in the ALA.

Please leave the State Library standards unchanged.

Thank you for your service in ensuring that these important community institutions survive and thrive as one of the pillars of our democracy.

Lynn Stanley  
406-471-8317  
838 2nd Ave. E.  
Kalispell, MT 59901

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I believe it is very important to have our public libraries run by very qualified people who have at a minimum a graduate degree in the library sciences field. Libraries are vital and dynamic parts of our communities and we should have the best and highest standards for those who are in charge of them.

Thank you

Diana Rahdert  
[dianarahdert@gmail.com](mailto:dianarahdert@gmail.com)

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The library commission should, as proposed, drop the requirement that directors of Montana libraries serving over 25,000 people must have an MLS degree or equivalent. The existing requirement reflects the triumph of credentialism over experience. (In our era, credentialism\* is a widespread American malady.)



My experience illustrates the point—I'm a retired physicist who has specialized in applied optics and fundamental optical physics for more than three decades (including university teaching), yet I've never taken a course in optics. And my graduate education was in radio astronomy.

So acquiring relevant expertise on the job is a real thing! I'm confident that this applies to running a public library, too, a job which surely also requires management and political ("people") skills that aren't covered in library school.

It's not that having an MLS is undesirable. But its prerequisite for directors' jobs is needlessly restrictive. So the MSLC's suggested policy change is merited.

\* Per Meriam-Webster Dictionary online, credentialism is the "undue emphasis on credentials (such as college degrees) as prerequisites to employment.

Paul Nachman  
1611 W. Koch St.  
Bozeman 59715  
406-587-2488

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I can't believe the library commission is considering lowering the requirements for Montana library directors. I'm from Kalispell and know our library board is very far right, would like to ban books and control our freedom to read. Please do not change the standards for our library directors.

Marylane Pannell, [kuhlpan@cyberport.net](mailto:kuhlpan@cyberport.net)

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I would like to respond to proposed changes currently being considered to Public Library Standards. I am absolutely against lowering the education standards for library directors. The use of lower standards used by the Imaginelf library in the Flathead valley resulted in the hiring of a library director with no college degree of any kind. I do not want to see that happen all over Montana. The current Board of Trustees in Kalispell has ruined one of the best library systems in the state and plunged it into chaos. There has to be some kind of knowledge standard required for someone to be hired as director of a library. Would you trust a mechanic to work on your car whose only experience was a semester of auto mechanics in high school? This is clearly an attempt by the Imaginelf trustees to reclaim the money they lost when they hired an unqualified person to run their Kalispell branch. Please don't allow the likes of Carmen Cuthbertson and like minded people like her to lower your standards.

Sincerely,  
Jim Marron

Ms. Scribner -

I have been a trustee with Lincoln County Libraries (LCL) for the past eight years, serving as board chair for most of that period. LCL has a staff of four FTE and three PT employees with a service population of 9000 cardholders spread across three branch locations. We have the second largest budget for Lincoln County at \$450,000. These figures rank LCL as mid-range in size among Montana libraries. We are not required, but feel extremely fortunate, to employ a director with a master's degree in Library Science from an accredited university.

I am deeply concerned with the Commission's recent recommendation to eliminate the Master's degree requirement for directors of the state's largest libraries. This letter will focus on the two primary arguments brought forth by Commissioner Hall, who made the motion, and Commissioner Cuthbertson who seconded the motion.

Firstly, Hall emphasized the importance of 'local control', that individual library boards should determine what's best for their library. She stated 'I hope they (trustees) will, I know they (trustees) will do the right thing'. Hall's assumption was proven wrong 15 months ago when trustees for Kalispell's Imaginelf, third largest library in the state, hired a director with no college degree. Commissioner Cuthbertson stated it was ridiculous to think a library board would hire someone with a high school diploma but she herself, a trustee for Imaginelf, voted to hire a director that hadn't yet completed a bachelor's program. At one point in the Commission meeting there was approximately 15 minutes of discussion regarding the importance of providing increased education and training for trustees but this would seem to contradict their minimizing the education requirement for the director's position. Will these same 'untrained' and 'uneducated' trustees be selecting the individual who will oversee budgets of \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000 at the state's largest libraries? Furthermore, library boards have regular turnover as trustee terms expire and new trustees come on board, underscoring the need for the more knowledgeable and experienced State Board of Commissioners to set basic, consistent standards.

Hall went on to state it would be arrogant of the State Library Commission to set standards but I would argue that is absolutely one of their most important responsibilities. Montana has numerous boards that set standards for doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers and a host of other professions. Montana's Office of Public Instruction, under Superintendent Elsie Arntzen,

sets the standards for public schools librarians who are required to have a degree along with a library endorsement (i.e. Master's). Arntzen, also an MSL Commissioner, voted in favor of eliminating the degree requirement. It would appear she, and the majority of MSL Commissioners, have a lower standard for public libraries?

Secondly, I question why Commissioner Cuthbertson took part in discussions relating to this standard. Cuthbertson also serves on the Imaginelf board of trustees and this dual role creates a flagrant conflict of interest. While she may have been advised otherwise, and did not benefit personally, the library she represents will receive a significant financial benefit. Imaginelf is currently the only library in violation of the education standard. They stand to receive \$42,000 in State Aid lost when they hired a director with no college degree to lead a library with a service population of 74,471; a collection of 174,854 books; an annual circulation of 513,860 in materials; and a budget in excess of \$2,000,000. That should be proof for the Commission that library boards don't necessarily 'do the right thing'!

In closing, I would like to point out there was little mention of the Public Library Standards Task Force established to review a number of issues and make recommendations to the State Library Commission prior to their October 11 meeting. The Task Force recommended the education standard for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people remain as is: "Directors of the state's largest libraries shall be required to have a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree". I agree with those Commissioners who pointed out a Business or Information Technology may be more relevant for these larger institutions and the 'equivalent degree' caveat allows for just that. Standards ensure that only qualified individuals are employed to lead our libraries. It is the Commission's responsibility to set those standards. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Hvizdak  
Lincoln County Libraries, board chair

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I definitely disapprove of the decision to eliminate the need for library directors to hold a bachelor degree in library science. Ridiculous to make a decision based on one library director's lack. For heaven sake, let's keep some standards in place.

Thank you. Bobbi Jasmin, [bobbijasmin@gmail.com](mailto:bobbijasmin@gmail.com)

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Good morning.

I have sent, by other means, an essay written or approved by four previous MSL Commissioners, speaking to professionalism's value. Our essay doesn't fit on this comment form. I encourage the Commission to read this essay, titled 'Your Work Matters, No. 9: Librarians Profess Professionalism' and hope that it is of some real use to the Commission. This essay was shared to the Wired-MT listserv on November 3, 2023.

My comments -- The argument that professional standards are best left to local library boards has merit, at first glance, but closer examination reveals this argument to be logically flawed and disingenuous. Montana's library community fully understands that the Commission, by abandoning its statutory role as "professional standards and library examiners" has thrown the baby out with the bathwater and has done so for ideological or partisan, not practical or pragmatic reasons. This will waste an opportunity for the Commission to help Montana libraries get even better at serving their communities. Ignoring the Montana library community, those that the Commission serves, will not enhance the Commission's ability to lead. This act will not serve the public good. I urge the Commission to reconsider this rash act.

Thanks for hearing me out. The Commission has my best wishes, and my best hopes for in the future better serving all Montanans with great library services.

End my personal comments

The essay:

Your Work Matters, No. 9: Librarians Profess Professionalism (For boards and staff)

Librarianship is not just a job, it's a profession, therefore librarians are professionals. This timely if straightforward statement contains several rabbit holes. Why is this topic timely and what distinguishes a profession from an occupation? Let's dive right in.

From the Wikipedia: "A profession ... can be defined as a disciplined group of individuals ... who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others."

[https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_\\_https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profession\\_\\_;!!GaaboA!tu48wAbLJU8jcJZeRiYFJi8-XBqix1unroOkocX8CY\\_j1RGKWACIV34E5zSOgdVLJLPO8ypV77n0Z-FggA9O4A\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profession__;!!GaaboA!tu48wAbLJU8jcJZeRiYFJi8-XBqix1unroOkocX8CY_j1RGKWACIV34E5zSOgdVLJLPO8ypV77n0Z-FggA9O4A$)

An occupation becomes a profession "... [through] the development of formal qualifications based upon education, apprenticeship, examinations, the emergence of regulatory bodies with powers to admit and discipline members, and some degree of monopoly rights..." Ibid.

In European Medieval times there were three recognized 'learned professions': divinity, medicine, and law. In the 19th century a number of recognized 'profession libérale' emerged in addition, included were surveying, actuarial science, civil engineering, logistics, architecture, mechanical engineering, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, psychology, nursing, teaching, optometry, social work, and librarianship. Ibid.

For context, Melvil Dewey (1851 – 1931), famously inventor of the Dewey Decimal System and founding member of the American Library Association, was the director of the first American school of professional librarianship at Columbia University, where in 1887 a professional degree

in “library economy” was first offered. The equivalent degree today is called a Masters of Library Science (MLS) or a Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS).

To earn a MLS, librarians begin with a four-year bachelor’s degree and have spent several additional years studying at the graduate level. Typically library directors have come up through the ranks holding increasingly responsible positions before they take a library’s reins. Professional librarians hold themselves accountable to a code of ethics (which we will discuss in a future Your Work Matters), adhere to a set of professional standards, and often, and in theory answer to a regulatory board.

The State of Montana has licensing boards for a dizzying array of professions, some you’d expect: doctors, lawyers, and nurses; and a few that surprised us: sanitarians, timeshare brokers, and construction blasters. While there is no licensure for public librarians, since 1945, as per statute, the State Library Commission is directed 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;” Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 22-1-103 (8).

The Commission’s oversight of Montana’s librarian profession has always been minimal, but there’s been an agreement (evidenced in Public Library Standards) that libraries will strive to improve the training and educational attainment of their chief librarians and staff. The thinking has run something like this: We’re a frontier state, we’re small, we’re poor, we may not have the money or labor pool to hire a staff of professional librarians, but we do the best we can. The State Library Commission has initiated just two standards relating to librarianship:

1. In 1915 the MSL Commission required a professional library degree for chief librarians in all county libraries. This more or less remained the requirement until 1990 when the rule was revised to require a professional degree only in public libraries serving Montana’s larger communities. All public library standards (enshrined in administrative rule) were in 1999 tied to receiving state funding when state aid became Montana law. These rule changes are detailed in an August 2023 working document from the State Library titled: History of Professional Qualifications for Montana Librarians. [https://ftpaspen.msl.mt.gov/EventResources/20230815155255\\_24864.pdf](https://ftpaspen.msl.mt.gov/EventResources/20230815155255_24864.pdf)

Undoubtably you are aware that at its December 2023 meeting the MSL Commission will likely discard this standard, walking away from its statutory role of encouraging professionally credentialed library directors. This proposed rule change may be found in Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.102.1160. Beginning November 3, the start of a 30-day comment period, proposed changes to this rule will be posted on the Commission’s home page. [https://msl.mt.gov/about/commission\\_councils/commission/](https://msl.mt.gov/about/commission_councils/commission/)

2. The only other professional requirement from the MSL Commission is that of encouraging librarians and library board members to commit to continuing education. These standards are spelled out in administrative rule, and clearly explained in MSL’s Certification Handbook. [https://msl.mt.gov/\\_docs/2023CECERTHandbookFinal.pdf](https://msl.mt.gov/_docs/2023CECERTHandbookFinal.pdf)

K-12 school librarians are licensed and hold a library/media endorsement, a process supervised by the Board of Public Education. We understand this typically requires a bachelor’s degree, an additional 25 endorsement credits, and a practicum. Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.709

Professionally trained public librarians possess specialized knowledge, skills, and a set of professional ethics to guide their management of their library. As the demands upon our profession have grown, so too has the need for advanced skills and training. Information has gained educational,

occupational, and economic primacy as a tool and as an economic good. These last few decades have witnessed neck-snapping changes to our now networked global society, and libraries have become community portals to this brave new world of information.

Case in point — When many of us were trained as librarians, about the time that dinosaurs roamed what's now the Rocky Mountain Front, children's librarianship was generally limited to knowing about children's literature. This has changed. For children's librarians, mastering the arc of children's literature is still vital, but nowadays great public libraries look for children's librarians who have psychological and sociological insight into the needs of children and their families, who understand early childhood and cognitive development, who can engage the central role of play in learning, who are performers at story time and masters of myriad library technologies, are capable marketers, who work ably with community partners, who are competent personnel managers and skilled at budgeting and accounting... and at the same time consistently provide welcoming, friendly, efficient, knowledgeable, and professional customer and library service to in-library and remote library users.

These skills, this knowledge, and these attitudes rooted in our profession's foundations are almost always acquired while earning a professional degree. We don't know of any librarian who hasn't had their abilities broadened and deepened in the process of earning a MLS or MLIS. It would be a mistake to judge the value of a MLS by considering any single individual, as a group however, librarians with a MLS or MLIS consistently demonstrate the benefits of having gained a set of skills, attitudes, and a set of professional ethics that guide their practice of librarianship.

We are not in any way slighting the majority of those working in Montana's libraries who don't have an advanced library degree. This is a group who energetically, wholeheartedly, skillfully and effectively serves their communities. Those of us fortunate to receive an advanced degree unreservedly count these Montana librarians as friends and colleagues. We are simply pointing out that employing staff with a MLS or MLIS holds real and additional significant value for Montana's libraries and those they serve. Despite the anticipated actions of the MSL Commission, we believe Montana's librarians will continue to understand the value of their profession, as will the library boards that employ them and the Montana communities they serve.

That's this week's rabbit hole. We hope we kept your interest or at the very least amused you; toward that end: "Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen." John Steinbeck

Thanks again for reading Your Work Matters.

Written and approved of by these four former State Library Commissioners:

Kenning Arlitsch

Cheri Bergeron

Aaron LaFromboise

Bruce Newell

End Essay

Bruce Newell

[bruce.newell@gmail.com](mailto:bruce.newell@gmail.com)

The amendment as proposed to remove the master's-level credential requirement for directors of libraries serving communities of over 25,00 people is short-sighted in today's world with increasing emphasis on information technology and management, particularly in Montana's environment of strengthening life-long learning. Logically, there are greater demands by a larger number of patrons on libraries that serve larger populations, justifying the master's credentials for directors of these libraries. While there is some justification for the Commission's expressed opinion that "local boards should be given responsibility to set library director qualifications as the size of the community may require a different skillset or knowledge base" for the director, over time we can expect smaller Montana libraries to seek a higher level of qualifications including library science baccalaureate (and even master's) degrees for their new hires as opportunity and funding permit.

Thank you

Peter Fox, [pdfox48@gmail.com](mailto:pdfox48@gmail.com)

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The Montana State Library Commission has voted to remove a state requirement that directors of a library serving more than 25,000 residents must have earned a masters degree in library science.

Library Science and Information Technologies are not offered as undergraduate degrees. Pay scale for a masters educated librarian exceeds that of assistant librarians or library technicians. If Montana no longer requires masters graduate degree librarians the libraries will offer less salary for those positions. Our libraries will get the professional expertise of what we offer our potential hires in terms of pay scale.

Is the librarian's role a moral duty to protect the public from material that might be considered harmful or whether the restriction of access to information of any kind is itself unethical? The early church used its censorial authority to establish orthodoxy and condemn heresy. The development of the Gutenberg press in the fifteenth century set the monopoly over interpretation of sacred text on its heels. Here in the United States our first amendment rights were designed to prevent this very sort of censorial authority.

I live in Kalispell and see the actions of the library board as a McCarthy era type of censorship designed to silence those they perceive as aberrations. Board member Dave Ingram has stated that the American Library Association is promoting Marxist ideology. Some of the most insidious censorship comes in the form of self-censorship and inappropriate cataloging. Self-censorship is governed by the prejudices and preferences of individual librarians. This is often an unconscious decision on which books are bought and promoted. Books of value can be overlooked in this process. Items that are labeled or cataloged inappropriately can escape the attention of a researcher investigating the area in which they truly belong. The dumbed down educational requirements for librarians in the state of Montana will only contribute to these sorts of problems. The board has no right to exert their self-proclaimed book policing on the public or the librarians they choose to hire. Increasing educational requirements helps to prepare librarians to recognize and combat these sources of censorship.

So just what sort of educational standards will be imposed on librarians in Montana? Will the training they have give them the tools and insight to navigate the inevitable conflicts between board members, aggressive parents and the public at large? How will they stand up to the inevitable criticism and threatening words that will appear on social media?

The decreased educational requirements to be hired as a librarian are regressive and will not serve our communities or first amendment rights positively.

Todd Johnson

[todd@wildsalmonman.com](mailto:todd@wildsalmonman.com)

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After spending a few weeks in October doing my best to provide my community with opportunities and events to celebrate Banned Books Week and the Freedom to Read after events at my library were forbidden by the board without a public meeting or a public vote, I saw again the work of my local library board of trustees when the announcement was made that the State Library Commission voted to remove the educational requirement for directors of libraries serving our larger communities in Montana. I immediately knew who was at the core of this push: David Ingram, Heidi Roedel, Doug Adams, and of course, book challenger extraordinaire Carmen Cutherson, all of whom currently "serve" on my community's library board. Gov. Gianforte carefully packed the State Commission board so it now reflects the extreme ideas of those like Carmen Cutherson, who firmly desires the right to tell citizens in my town what books they can check out at our public library. The decision to push the terrible idea of lower educational standards comes from our county's loss of state funding because our board voted to lower the standard for the director at Imagine If library system, against all advice from the excellent professional librarians who used to work for our libraries. They followed up the loss of funding that naturally ensued from this bad decision with a very embarrassing trip to Helena to present to the State Commission their pleas of "hardship" (a blatant lie), and other humiliating evidence that tried to sway the board at the time. I was there at this board meeting, and remember the embarrassment I felt that these folks were from my library, whining about the consequences of their own actions. As the meeting took a break, they clustered around Elsie Arntzen, and it was clear what the future held for library excellence across our great state. The only motivation I can understand by this action is to get the funding they lost without taking any responsibility for their own actions. They see themselves as continual victims; of public perception, the media, the state commission, etc. etc. Not once in the two years of board meetings I have attended have I ever heard this board take responsibility for their own terrible decisions, own up to them, and apologise to our community.

Lowering standards never increases excellence. I wonder how Dr. Ingram would feel in the operating room if only one person there had a medical degree, especially if he was the patient. That's good enough, according to his reasoning. Maybe only a few teachers in a district should have full credentials. Perhaps a firm of lawyers only needs one person who actually went to law school. This is obviously ludicrous, and their contempt for the professionalism of librarianship is on full display. I urge this commission in the strongest possible terms to restore this educational requirement. Respect the education that library directors need in our larger communities to truly serve the public in this community space that is so vital to free thought and discussion in our communities. I have seen a steady degradation of my library's commitment to free speech under the tenure of this board, and it got worse with a well meaning but untrained library director. The board should work in tandem with the director to protect our freedom to read. I hope those days return to our communities in Flathead County.

Sincerely,

Valeri McGarvey, [mccgarvey779@gmail.com](mailto:mccgarvey779@gmail.com)

Kalispell, MT



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I am writing to you with considerable angst about a recent decision to eliminate the longstanding professional requirement for becoming a director of one of the larger (25,000 population plus) libraries in Montana to qualify for state funding. I ask why we would wish to “dumb down” reasonable professional expectations of our library employees other than to seek more administrative control over these employees. Master’s degrees equip graduates with advanced information management, access, and dissemination principles, expanding upon knowledge of library science and all that the field entails, including collection, research, archiving, and preservation. The advanced degree integrates classroom and experiential learning to help librarians understand the purpose of libraries and the roles of librarians. It also provides extensive insight into librarianship across various settings, including how librarians interact within the workplace and with the public. These professional expectations should remain the standard of excellence for all our librarians within the state.

Respectfully,  
Leland Walbruch

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Please maintain professional standards for our Montana State Library system. Do not jeopardize our state library reputation and quality for political reasons. Listen to Ben Franklin on the reason and goal for the creation of libraries.

Thula Weisel, [thulaweil@gmail.com](mailto:thulaweil@gmail.com)

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Hello,

My name is Ashley Cummins. I’m sure at this point in the process, most of you have heard my name and have likely read news articles about my library – ImagineIF. What you may not have heard is my story. I’d like to share that with you now and follow up with my thoughts recommendations on the decision you will be making today in regards to the library standards for accreditation.

As a lifelong library patron, I spent many hours in the library as a child. Initially, I was a delayed reader. I actually didn’t learn to read until I was in the 3rd grade and became a hooked-on phonics kid at the recommendation of my elementary school counselor. However, once I learned to read I developed an insatiable appetite for literature of all kinds and started riding my bike to the local public library after school. While at times I was utilizing the library’s resources for schoolwork - more often than not, I was deliberately escaping to one of the numerous, fictitious worlds that could

only be found inside of the local library. The library became my second home, a magical place that didn't come with the same stressors I so often found at home. The library became my safe place.

I held the safe place that was the library in my heart throughout all of my teens years and when I became a parent at a very young age, the library once again came to my rescue. While I couldn't afford cable television, home internet, or to even purchase books for myself or my child – the library was just down the road and I could always find what I needed without fear of judgment. I taught my son the alphabet and he learned letter sounds using a library sing a long CD. I taught my son phonetic reading before he started preschool by devouring the early readers available on the shelf and by attending preschool story time.

When I made the decision to go back to college part time, I used the library for research assistance, resume help, and much needed math tutoring. More than that, I also proudly used the library to feed a serious young adult, dystopian fiction addiction that helped me cope with the stressors of daily life as a new parent living in poverty conditions. Every day that I came in to the library for a program or to use the public access computers to submit a homework assignment, I was actively working towards elevating myself and my children's future by utilizing the collections and services that only a public library provides. It made a lasting impact on me.

When my local library ran an ad looking for volunteers, I was in a scary place. My oldest son had just started school, my youngest child was just 6 months old, and I was in a state of flux. The music education degree I had been pursuing, no longer appealed to me. I was lost and floundering under the weight of an uncertain future. I made the decision to volunteer at the library and hopefully pay back some of the goodwill that had been poured in to me throughout my lifetime as a library patron.

Volunteering at the library was exactly what I needed. Not only was it a distraction from all of the worries of home, but I found the work to be fascinating. My first task was to clean up after a library weeding project. The librarian explained to me the process of weeding the collection and the criteria for choosing which items to remove from the collection. I was absolutely enthralled in the process. I didn't realize all of the thought, research, and work that went in to selecting materials and maintaining a robust library collection. She explained to me the basic library principles of intellectual freedom and the right to read. She showed me the collection development policy that guided her work. I worked diligently to remove all of the weeded materials from the library cataloging system with the care for details that was taught to me by a professional librarian.

My next project was to work on readers advisory, shelf reading, and to assist on the circulation desk. Turns out that I was actually well suited for the job. My love of reading and my willingness to help people led to numerous interactions with library patrons and even some long-lasting friendships with people in the community. Working at the library never felt like work. It brought me joy and made me feel like I was truly making a difference in people's daily lives. I increased my volunteer work days and eventually was asked to apply for a position with the library. I'll never forget the joy that I felt on my first day as a paid library employee. I vividly remember my grandfather telling me how proud he was. He said, "Well, I'll be dog. You oughtta stick with this library thing... that could turn in to a real good job someday." Boy, was he right. I made the commitment to public libraries and I never looked back.

Eventually, the library director began to entrust me with additional library responsibilities such as cataloging, program planning, and recommending materials for purchase. I started to do online training, signed up for continuing education classes that would help me with my work such as grant writing, professional ethics, and diversity, equity and inclusion in public libraries. I began attending meetings of the Alabama Library Association. The more I learned about library service – the more I wanted to learn. I took a keen interest in multicultural information studies and intellectual freedom, eventually serving in officer positions for the roundtables of ALLA and as the Member at Large for 22 counties in North Alabama. Additionally, I served on the programming committee and Obolier book award committee for the Office of Intellectual Freedom with the ALA. Over time, and with the continual addition of new responsibilities, I was asked to work as the library assistant and the director notified me of her intent to retire. This lit a fire within me. I began to work towards that potential future with a sense of urgency I'd never known previously.

I applied for numerous cohorts to expand my library knowledge while continuing with my college education. I settled on a major of Community Studies and Leadership at the University of Alabama – as it would set the stage for a future Masters degree in Library Science. I applied for numerous scholarships to attend library conferences and was awarded many. I was blessed to be able to attend conferences of the Alabama Library Association, the Association of Rural and Small Libraries, the American Library Association, the Public Library Association, and the Medical Library Association. With each conference, I gained a wealth of information and a renewed sense of enthusiasm for library service to the community.

Ultimately, the library director did retire and I was hired as the Director of Russellville Public Library on a probationary period. I'm happy to report that I survived the probationary term and went on to lead the Russellville Public Library for 8 ½ years. During my time as library director, I continued to pursue my bachelor's degree as time and finances allowed and was accepted in to the University of Alabama's Sustainable Training for Alabama Public Library Employees program that was sponsored by the American Library Association and led by Stephen Yates, Associate Dean and previous head of the School of Library and Information Science.

During my tenure at the Russellville Public Library in Alabama, I had many a crash course in library work. I worked diligently to grow my library and to solidify its place in the community. I'm proud to say that I took my library to new heights. Working collaboratively with local government and community partners, we were able to see the budget nearly doubled in my time there. I went from a staff of 2 to a staff of 5. We saw the donation of land for a new library that is currently being built and we were awarded the Bronze, then Silver award for excellence in libraries from the State Library Association. I also had the privilege of seeing a library employee that I trained be recognized for extensive contributions towards library service in the State of Alabama. When I attended the ARSL Conference in October of 2021, I never dreamed of leaving my hometown library – but the universe had other plans.

When I was approached by a recruiter about applying for the Director position at ImagineIF Libraries, I originally dismissed it entirely due to my lack of a MLIS from an ALA accredited institution. However, upon reading the recruitment brochure, I saw that the requirement had been removed from the listing. I jumped at the opportunity to further my career and potentially build a better future for my children. Before applying for the position, I did a fair amount of research. Of course, I checked the usual information such as cost of living, housing situation, school ratings, etc. But I also dug in to the library and its history. I saw that ImagineIF was doing innovative programming to expand its services to the community and had quite the

following. I saw that the previous director had left under not the best of circumstances and that the library was making waves in the local news due to challenges to library materials.

Immediately, I was struck by two things:

1. This sounds exactly like some of the things I've been through in my current position, and
2. I believe I could do a better job at handling the issues that this library is currently facing.

I made the decision to apply for the job and went on to survive a long and arduous interview process that culminated in a competitive, extremely awkward onsite open house for the 2 final candidates. I left Montana feeling pretty good about my prospects for the position.

Eventually, I received a call from the recruiter explaining that while I was the library board's choice, the library was at risk of losing accreditation and state funding if I was selected as Director. I presumed there would be an option for compliance plan within a specified timeframe or possibly consideration of the fact that I have 128 credit hours of college education, numerous library certifications and 12 years of library experience as an alternative to the MLIS degree. Though, that was not the case. I began to see news stories of my candidacy popping up outside of the local news. I saw articles on yahoo news, on social media, and in national library groups. The comment sections were absolutely horrendous.

The comments that I read on the Montana Library Association's facebook page, the Flathead 411 information group, and the ALA think tank were enough to make me physically sick. I was being billed as an uneducated, inexperienced, backwoods, book burning bigot. There was ample innuendo as to what I must have done to even be considered for the position. Library professionals that I had previously presented to at library conferences and worked with on collaborative projects were calling for my resignation before I ever stepped foot in to the Director's office. I felt deflated, at best.

Ultimately, the library board decided to go ahead with my hire and accept the responsibility for the choice. I made arrangements to move 2,167 miles away from the only town I had ever known, a library that I loved, all of my friends and family, and I accepted the position of Director of ImagineIF Libraries of Flathead County. I had hope that, with time, things would settle to a dull roar and I would be able to do the work that I was being hired to do.

What should have been a life changing experience that I looked forward to quickly became my own personal nightmare. Every library board meeting was standing room only. I'd sit through 45 minutes of public comment restating what an absolutely awful choice the board had made in hiring me - before ever having the opportunity to address the library board on issues of library business. I had community members publicly ask for my resignation and for me to allow my chosen assistant to run the library in my stead. Every single decision that I made from day one was heavily scrutinized and publicly shamed. Every mistake was published in the news and spread far and wide with reckless abandon. Though, that's all water under the bridge at this point.

What I learned during my time here, was that most of the people in this community just want their voices to be heard. I also learned that previous library administration took the time to hear only a select few while rejecting others outright. Library professionals were being viewed as arrogant,

dismissive, and uncooperative. The people of Flathead County were sick of being talked down to. On this, I could absolutely relate. So, I took the time to listen – really listen. I took the time to explain – really explain – not just regurgitate elevator speeches to masses of people that came to my office with a bone to pick.

Over time, I was able to take what I learned from listening and apply it in ways that improved library operations and mended some relationships that were long fractured in the community. I was able to listen to the library staffs needs and advocate for them in ways that made their jobs more rewarding, manageable, and hopefully enjoyable. I was able to listen to the community's concerns and address them in a way that made them more comfortable with decisions coming out of the library.

I was able to listen to the county commissioners desire for responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars and show them that all of our purchases were prudent and in the best interest of the community. We received budget increases, additional FTE, and a place in the Capital Improvement Plan for future library facilities as a result. I was able to listen to the library foundation and local donors about their concerns over policy decisions being made in the library and assuage their fears while assisting with the resurrection of what was thought to be a “dead” capital campaign for a new library in Bigfork. I didn't do anything innovative or monumental. Honestly, I hardly did anything at all. I learned to listen and then I listened to learn.

In my honest opinion, library standards are a general guideline for success. While the Master's degree in library science is a valuable tool in a library directors' arsenal, it doesn't come close to covering the numerous intricacies that are involved in the successful management of a public library – much less a larger, more complex library system. By not allowing for an alternative pathway to accreditation, the Montana State Library Commission is limiting Montana Library's potential. By publicly shaming professionals that have committed their lives to library service, Librarians are discouraging avid library supporters, advocates, and damn good potential librarians from continuing down their chosen career path. Now, that's a crying shame.

I don't know what the solution is for libraries in the future. All I know is that if those who have a hand in the decision-making process continue down the current path – that future of libraries looks pretty bleak. We don't have an organizational problem. We don't have a political problem. We don't have a management problem. We have a communication problem. Until the people involved in the decision making and day to day operations are willing and able to communicate with authenticity and mutual respect, that problem will remain unsolved.

Now that you know a little more about me and my experience. I'd like to ask that you offer an alternative to the requirement that Library Directors in a service area of >25,000 are required to have a Masters Degree in Library Science. What that alternative looks like is solely at your discretion. However, the standard as is, does a huge disservice to library professionals that have committed their lives to library service to the community and wish to further their career. The current standard does not account for non-traditional pathways to education, experience, or leadership. The current standard does not ensure diversity, inclusion and equity in library services to all Montanans - which I know is a core value of the Montana State Library and libraries all across this state/ country.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Ashley Cummins  
Director  
ImagineIF Libraries of Flathead County

## **FORM**

**Shaun Gant, [slgant@mcpsmt.org](mailto:slgant@mcpsmt.org)**

Missoula

Do not water down the requirements for hiring directors of libraries, despite it being the opinion of your commission to do so. To remove of the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree means you do not value the profession. Short-sighted populist sentiment like this says that smaller, rural libraries don't deserve the best leadership, experience, intellectual power, and expertise in the profession.

**Evan Vernon, [evernon@bresnan.net](mailto:evernon@bresnan.net)**

Missoula

I am worried that the proposed rule change would result in the hiring of unqualified staff with extremist views. Having a professional standard for librarians would likely prevent the situation where an under qualified librarian with extremists view decides to remove all scientific material because it doesn't align with certain religious views. Are there rules in place to prevent such local control from limiting or removing materials that are deemed meaningful or scientifically important by the general population?

**Kelley Rischke, [kelley\\_lynne@hotmail.com](mailto:kelley_lynne@hotmail.com)**

Bozeman

I am opposed to the changes to ARM 10.102.1160. In order to maintain quality libraries, quality leadership is required. The state should keep the minimum qualification to hold a Master's degree in library science. Removing this requirement will result in lower quality programming. I am generally supportive of local control, but there is no need to remove this reasonable minimum requirement and decrease the professional qualifications in these critical positions that serve our communities.

**Emily Bolam, [ebolam@imagineiflibraries.org](mailto:ebolam@imagineiflibraries.org)**

Kalispell

The proposed change to remove the requirement that library directors have a Master of Library Science degree or equivalent is wrongheaded. Such a change undermines the profession of librarianship and would expose Montana public libraries to potential political exploitation by elected officials (or trustees appointed by elected officials). MLIS degree holders have a deep knowledge of all levels of librarianship which predicated success and adherence to library mandates, such as understanding First Amendment protections in public libraries. State funding ought to be reserved for libraries which take every available avenue (since exceptions based on hardship already exist) towards meeting simple, reliable, and time-tested standards of professional librarianship.

**Colleen Brommer, [harlemlib@live.com](mailto:harlemlib@live.com)**

Harlem, MT

Harlem Public Library

I believe it is important for library directors of communities with 25,000 people or more to have a Master of Library Science degree. This training and knowledge is necessary to serve the patrons and to lead the staff in the best way possible. The library director position is one that requires professionalism and leadership skills. This includes developing relationships within the library community as well as with governmental entities and community partners. The director must have a vision for how the library can best service the community and build plans to carry out that vision making wise use of resources. I think it would be a mistake to change the requirement of Master of Library Science for directors of libraries in communities with 25,000 people or more.

**Hannah McKelvey, [hannah.vidrich@gmail.com](mailto:hannah.vidrich@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

"If the commission votes to pass the changes to the requirements for MLIS degrees for librarians, they will have demonstrated their complete and utter ignorance about the vast and complex facets of information management.

If the commission votes to pass these changes, they will be in direct conflict with the Superintendent of Public Instruction's mission of putting Montana students first, specifically, these two points:

- Montana Learn, which focuses on academic achievement.
- Montana Ready, which prepares students to be community, college, and career ready.

Learning does not stop when you're no longer in school; learning is a lifelong endeavor.

Why would anyone advocate against education – especially those that are in roles that serve to advance education? How does that benefit the state of Montana and its citizens?

Forget that you are doing the library profession a disservice, but you are doing a disservice to every single citizen of this state, including yourselves.

As a fourth-generation Montanan and a professional librarian for over a decade, having worked in both Montana public and academic libraries, I am absolutely appalled to see state resources even going towards such a topic.

Please allow me to reiterate my point that learning is a lifelong endeavor.

Commissioners, if you do not know what librarians do, besides overseeing books, please take the time to learn the importance of their work and how it benefits you and those around you before making such drastic decisions to a profession that you, frankly, know nothing about.

I encourage you to open your minds to conversations and dialogues to learn and advocate for ways that we can work together to benefit this state rather than ways to harm it.

“What we don’t understand, we fear. What we fear, we judge as evil. What we judge as evil, we attempt to control. And what we cannot control...we attack”. (Author Unknown)

With all due respect,  
Hannah McKelvey

**Stephanie Minter**, [stephanie7486@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie7486@gmail.com)

Bozeman

Absolutely ridiculous. Montana has made some incredibly bad decisions regarding its withdrawal from the American Library Association as well as disavowing the validity and necessity of a Masters in Library/Information Science to head a large library. I would even propose that for a small population the requirement could be dropped, but for a town over 25,000? The state will become the laughingstock of the country, the nadir of library development, and just as with teachers and librarians in over-regulated schools, no qualified candidates will consider working or living here. I am vehemently opposed to the idea that anyone with a college degree can manage a library well!

**Jonna Ward**, [jonna.ward@gmail.com](mailto:jonna.ward@gmail.com)

Seattle

We are facing a time when the principle of intellectual freedom and First Amendment rights are at risk. Degreed librarians receive unique training to uphold these principles while operating a library. I believe it's even more important in the smallest libraries to have a degreed librarian.

**Judy Meadows**, [65judymeadows@gmail.com](mailto:65judymeadows@gmail.com)

Helena

The M.L.S. is the very minimum that should be required of a library director for a town of 25,000+. Other credentials could also be sought, such as an M.B.A. , or experience such as personnel management, financial and budgetary acumen, etc. The local library board can certainly add to the minimum. It should not demean the quality and resourcefulness of the library.

Library Commissioners are appointed by politicians and are neither required to profess support or understanding of what is required to manage a complex organization. To take away the requirement that Library Directors should know how to effectively and efficiently administer a town’s expensive resource is insulting to the citizens of the town and the libraries’ employees

**Ellie Newell**, [ellie.newell@gmail.com](mailto:ellie.newell@gmail.com)

Bozeman

I am employed at the Bozeman Public Library but I speak for myself only. "I urge the Commission to retain the current Public Library Standards regarding State Aid and not remove the MLS/MLIS requirement for directors of public libraries serving larger communities.

Librarianship is a complex profession built on a century and a half of work towards shared professional ethics, values, and best practices. When our library leaders are trained in these professional practices, they lead dynamic teams of library staff to provide excellent library services to Montanans. We need steady and trained hands at the wheel, and the nationwide professional standard of an ALA-accredited MLS/MLIS degree equips our library leaders for this work.

Leading a library takes more than business management skills. Libraries defend all Montanans' First Amendment rights and provide the foundation for us all to participate in our democracy. Our library leaders' abilities to uphold our rights depends upon their fluency in library professional values



and skills. Simply put, this work deserves the best trained people possible, and MLS/MLIS degrees are essential for library leaders in our larger communities.

The Commission has the responsibility to ensure that all Montanans receive the library services we need. The long-standing Public Library Standards support excellence in Montana libraries.

**Victoria York, [vjreads@icloud.com](mailto:vjreads@icloud.com)**

Bozeman

This standard has served the Montana library community well for years and there is no need to amend it. Professional occupations require a set of standards, ex. CPAs, nurses, teachers, etc. Librarians are professionals and the Master's in Library/Information Science from an ALA accredited school is accepted as the standard for the profession. Library directors, especially, need this degree and the understanding of the principles of librarianship, and the knowledge of cataloging, collection development, electronic resources, resource allocation, and intellectual freedom that comes with it. Montana's libraries are enhanced and better able to serve their communities when they are led by accredited professionals.

**Shari Curtis, [shari.curtis123@gmail.com](mailto:shari.curtis123@gmail.com)**

Butte

By negating the master degree for library directors, the Commission is merely dumbing down the professionalism of Montana librarians and subsequently undermining their pay. Paying librarians less and ruining their profession is a culture war move to undermine the public's confidence in librarians. These people are public servants who work for their communities. By even suggesting this change, the commission is showing their hatred of people who selflessly work for the people in their communities.

**Kathleen Ralph, [k.a.ralph@gmail.com](mailto:k.a.ralph@gmail.com)**

Columbus

"I am a trustee at Stillwater County Library. Over the past 20 years, I have served as trustee working with five directors. Based on my experience, I believe it is very important to keep the regulation requiring directors of public libraries serving populations over 25,000 to have an MLS. Our current director is the first we have had who has an MLS and the difference in our library is remarkable. While our library serves a population of less than 10,000 and an MLS is not required, I believe having an MLS would be essential to serve a larger population with a larger staff, more programs, etc.

This standard has been required and met for many years and the only reason the change is being proposed now is to suit one library. This is not a good reason to change standards. I believe standards are important and that this one is needed to meet the challenges of today's world. Libraries are more important than ever and we need to ensure that our libraries are staffed to meet the needs of our citizens.

I urge the Commission to follow the advice of the task force and to keep the current standard."

**Linda Halstead-Acharya, [Bacha76070@aol.com](mailto:Bacha76070@aol.com)**

Columbus

Stillwater County Library Board Trustee

I ask that the State Library Commission NOT change the standard requiring that a library director for a library serving a population of more than 25,000 have a masters degree in library science or similar. Our smaller library (serving a county of 10,000) has had a number of directors with limited education in the library sciences. But our current director, who has a masters, has made ALL the difference in establishing a professional,

welcoming atmosphere in our library. She knows how and where to seek funding, to collaborate with organizations and to tap resources that provide our extensive program offerings. Our previous directors did not have this expertise and it was a loss for the population we serve. I fear that this change was suggested as a way to address one specific library situation and I do not think that justifies lowering our standards. Please DO NOT change the standard.  
Thank you.

**Jane Wheeler, [virginiajane@bigsky.net](mailto:virginiajane@bigsky.net)**

Kalispell

The rule change should not go into effect. The recommendation of the Task Force to retain the requirement for a MLIS in large libraries in Montana should be honored. Local Boards of Trustees have the choice to hire a director without those qualifications, and in doing to decline the state funding. Giving trustees discretion in hiring as an argument for eliminating this requirement is spurious. The earning of an MLIS degree demonstrates a dedication to the profession and a serious commitment to library leadership.

**Sierra Benjamin, [sbenjamin@imagineiflibraries.org](mailto:sbenjamin@imagineiflibraries.org)**

Kalispell

ImagineIF Libraries

"From my firsthand experience, a large library runs best when the director has an MLS. As we have seen, a director without this education is unprepared for the exacting task of running a library and negotiating controversy. The resignation of ImagineIF's former director (who did not have an MLS) after only one year in the position should demonstrate this. ImagineIF is the only library that has an issue with this rule. The library board knew of the requirements for state funding, intentionally ignored those requirements, then asked for a hardship consideration. Denied that, our board asked to change the rules, and fortunately for them, a board member from ImagineIF now has the influence to help make those changes. This change to the requirement for state funding will not benefit library staff, library patrons, or the community at large. Instead, it will incentivize board members to cut director salaries (which the ImagineIF board has already done) and hire directors that will burn out quickly because they're out of their depth. Please do not lower the standards for library directors in our state."

**Melinda Steed, [steeddog@gmail.com](mailto:steeddog@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

At minimum, a Masters Degree in Library Science should be a prerequisite for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people.

**Martha Thayer, [mlbtmontana@gmail.com](mailto:mlbtmontana@gmail.com)**

Missoula

"I think the rule should stay as it is. There are many things learned when getting an MLS that other kinds of managers do not know. Here are some examples:

1. Management and licensing of electronic resources - online databases (journal indexes), e-books, etc.
2. How public libraries and their boards and foundations function.
3. The many parts of integrated library system software, from circulation to book purchasing to cataloging.
4. The importance of intellectual freedom and patron privacy.

These are things that a manager of a large public library should not have to learn on the job, but should know coming into the job. "

**Joan Gates, [gatesj136@gmail.com](mailto:gatesj136@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

The Commission's choice for this standard is outrageous at best and extremely negligent as well. As a retired certified library media specialist, I can attest to the need for a strong and intense depth of knowledge in order to function as a librarian. The job is about more than shelving books in ABC order! The budgetary process is more than complicated, as is the ability to carefully gain public support. Professionalism is gained from experience but it must be backed by strong and complete education. The Commission's apparent failure to recognize the rigor and demand of a library director position is astounding. Please work better to support those who need you to understand the work they (try to) do.

**Crystel Thompson, [crystal203@gmail.com](mailto:crystal203@gmail.com)**

Helena

"In regards to Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel.. are you planning on refunding the 25,000 people in those positions that have spent upwards to 50k on Masters Degrees or equivalent degrees? When people have spent decades honing skills and have all that experience dedicated to a Field this is absolutely disgusting to hear you want to simply remove it. You might as well try to remove degrees from other professions like Doctors, Educators, and Lawyers. Putting unexperienced people into these positions is outright imbecilic and should be frowned upon.

**Andrew Coggins, [apdcoggins@gmail.com](mailto:apdcoggins@gmail.com)**

Butte

"Local boards should not be given the right to set the academic requirements for directors. If this is left to local boards this will no doubt be the start of a cost cutting exercise that could end up anywhere? With libraries being closed?

Libraries everywhere are a fundamental necessity for the good of society, as are parks, state parks and National parks and should be maintained at any cost, and not judged on anything but this criteria. As such, staff who work in all these areas should be paid decent salaries to keep them all maintained."

**Nancy Schmidt, [nschmidt@mtlib.org](mailto:nschmidt@mtlib.org)**

Laurel

Laurel Public Library

I am not in favor of the rule change. Yes, my community is small enough that a master's degree may not be required but I'm not comfortable stating that a much larger community shouldn't be required to have that advanced degree. I have a BS in business administration AND 28 years experience at my library 14 of them as the director. I am 100% sure this would not qualify me to run a library that employs dozens of people, rather than my 6, just because I have so much experience working in a library. A master's degree should be required for directors of larger libraries.

**Anya Helsel, [anyahelsel@gmail.com](mailto:anyahelsel@gmail.com)**

Columbia Falls

I do not think the requirement for holding an MLIS degree should be removed for library directors of larger libraries. I have worked in the library field 15 years and while I was able to learn a lot on the job, earning my MLIS degree was key in helping me understand the foundations of library and information science and the principles underlying how libraries function. Without the requirement for having an MLIS degree, I fear that library directorships could become political positions rather than positions that uphold the values and tenets of librarianship. Professional librarianship has been increasingly devalued over the years as cheaper paraprofessionals take their place. Requiring the MLIS degree for library directors would

ensure that at least someone on the library staff understands the principles of the library field, which could then trickle down to day-to-day operations and the training of paraprofessional staff. Please reconsider this ammendment.

**Susan Larson, [sblarson@gmail.com](mailto:sblarson@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Library directors need the education not only in running a library and a non-profit, but they also need skills required to lead staff and forward the community. Leadership is earned through hard work, education and dedication.

**Thomas Carlson, [406tcarlson@gmail.com](mailto:406tcarlson@gmail.com)**

Somers Family

"We are against changing the rules to allow less qualified leadership for libraries serving 25000 people or more. We believe a masters prepared librarian should be required to receive funds from the state.

Today more than ever we need professionally trained librarians to help the public access information required to maintain our democracy."

**Ann Brooks, [Agoodbrooks@gmail.com](mailto:Agoodbrooks@gmail.com)**

Columbia Falls

I would like to state that I feel it is wrong to remove the current MLS requirement for library directors serving our larger communities. It is very important to me that I know that the people directing our libraries have studied library best practices for years and received advanced degrees from accredited institutions. I actually think we should be requiring more education of our board members too, requiring them to attend library conferences and earning continuing education credits in Library Services to the Public, one of the CE tracks available for all library staff members, so the board members can make wiser decisions. I also believe that it is completely self serving for Carmen Cuthbertson specifically to vote on this issue since it will financially directly benefit the ImagineIF library. In addition, some continuing education credits in Roberts Rules of Order for holding public meetings would not be amiss for the state board and especially the ImagineIF library board members. Thank you.

**Desiree Funston, [desireef@missoulapubliclibrary.org](mailto:desireef@missoulapubliclibrary.org)**

Missoula

"I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed rule change (Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel) that would remove the requirement for directors of libraries serving over 25,000 people to hold a Master in Library Science or equivalent. As a professional, degreed librarian who has served in Montana libraries for more than fifteen years, I firmly believe that maintaining this requirement is essential for the effective and professional management of our state's libraries.

The MLIS degree is not just a piece of paper; it represents a rigorous education and training in the field of library and information science. Library directors play a pivotal role in ensuring that libraries provide high-quality services to their communities, and they must possess the knowledge, skills, and expertise that come with an MLIS degree.

An MLIS degree equips individuals with the necessary knowledge to manage library collections, navigate information technologies, and offer effective reference services. Without this background, library directors may lack the skills and understanding needed to meet the diverse needs of their patrons.

I, like most professional librarians in Montana, adhere to the American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics, which underscores the importance of professional librarianship and promoting intellectual freedom. An MLIS degree includes training in these ethical principles, which are vital in upholding the core values of libraries.

Communities trust that their libraries are being managed by qualified professionals. Removing the MLIS requirement could erode that trust, potentially diminishing public support and usage of library resources.

Libraries are vital to education, research, and community development. To ensure the highest quality of services, directors should possess a deep understanding of library science, best practices, and the evolving role of libraries in the digital age.

I strongly urge the Montana State Library Commission to reconsider this proposed rule change and maintain the existing requirement for library directors who serve communities of 25,000+ to hold an MLIS degree or its equivalent. Doing so will help ensure that our libraries continue to provide outstanding services to our communities and maintain the highest professional standards.

**Sally Cameron-Russell, [sallycameronrussell@gmail.com](mailto:sallycameronrussell@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am opposed to lowering the standards for library directors in cities with 25,000 or more people. This poorly conceived rule change undermines our public libraries by failing to staff them with qualified professional librarians with the education and training to meet the demands of a 21st century library. We expect physicians, educators, lawyers, therapists and other professions to have the proper education and expertise for their respective professions. This is no different. This is a very short sighted rule which is being proposed in reaction to one specific Montana library's problems (Flathead County Public Library) with recruiting a qualified director, related to resistance to paying a fair salary and longstanding conflict with the Board of Trustees.

**Starla Rice, [prestonhotspringslibrary@yahoo.com](mailto:prestonhotspringslibrary@yahoo.com)**

Hot Springs

This rule change puts the trustees in charge of running the library. Trustees are often swayed by special interests, and personal interests, and they don't work for the library so they aren't bound by the rules. Library Directors are not. The library director runs the library the board keeps the doors open. My concern is that a director without proper training might not be able to manage the large budget and policies of a library that's budget is a quarter million or more. There is no time for a learning curve like there is when your budget is 70,000 or less. The goal should be to have a longtime qualified director who runs the library, not a board that isn't hired and has only a 4 or 5 year term. Library continuity is through the director not the board. The board is ever changing. A good board will try to fill the director position with someone who is qualified for the job. Handing a quarter million dollars over to a high school graduate isn't what most would call good business.

**Margaret S Davis, [blems@aol.com](mailto:blems@aol.com)**

Lakeside

"TO: Montana State Library Commission, public comment, Montana Library Commission meeting, Dec 1, 2023.

FROM: Margaret S Davis, Lakeside MT 59922

6 Nov 2023

NEW RULE 1 DEFINITIONS [Apparently this replaces 10.102.4003, Sections (a) through (e)]

Does the proposed Rule 1 work for counties like Flathead County where there is one separate city Library (Whitefish) that is not a part of the county library system, two county libraries in municipalities (Kalispell and Columbia Falls), and one county library in an unincorporated, county community (Bigfork)? If in the future, Whitefish City Library chose to rejoin the Flathead County Library system, could it do so under these rules?

Does (3) “Leftover square miles” include non-county public (state and federal) lands? That would be about 90% of Flathead County. There residents in some of these areas. In counties with reservations, are these lands “leftover” or “tribal” lands?

What about using the words “remaining, non-municipal population” for county population?

AMENDED RULE 10.102.1158 (7), Library Board, Governance...

This attempt to clarify library budgeting and inform the public and local government leaders on “financial needs” has some merit. However, it is also subjective in regards to “adequate library services” and “community needs”. It avoids mention of any data-supported growth of services, maintenance or expansion of hours, facility improvements, programming demands, or other factors affecting library budgets. In Montana’s fastest growing county with a flat-line (inflation-adjusted) library budget and no adequate facilities, the Flathead County Library Board has been reluctant to broach realistic funding issues with elected officials and often defers to the County.

RULE 10.102.1160 PERSONNEL.

While libraries serving over 25,000 people no longer must have a Library Director with an MLS or equivalent degree, there is sufficient reason to have at least one library staff member with such a degree. This is a cost-effective, administrative requirement that underpins modern library practices and protects taxpayers from wasteful spending on do-overs, unneeded reorganizations, and other misdirected initiatives that may require professional consultants to rectify. When a larger library serves a library district or partner libraries, the consequences of it having no qualified librarians could negatively affect other smaller libraries. Service to library patrons is paramount; and cost-savings at the expense of in-house expertise is not. The rules should stipulate that libraries serving a population of 25,000+ should have one or more qualified librarians on staff.

**John Moore, [jcm@bresnan.net](mailto:jcm@bresnan.net)**

Helena

The proposed repeal of subsection 10.102.1160 PERSONNEL reflects a short-sighted view of maintaining beneficial library service in Montana's large communities. To reduce the qualifications for library directors due to one library board's intransigence does a disservice to all libraries, including the one that said board oversees. Please retain subsection 10.102.1160 as it now stands.

**Jodi Allison-Bunnell, [jodi@allison-bunnell.net](mailto:jodi@allison-bunnell.net)**

Bozeman

I am an information professional but am not representing my employing organization. I am writing to oppose eliminating the requirement for a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree for libraries that serve 25,000 people or more. In our increasingly complex information environment, a library degree is an important qualification that ensures that the director is fully aware of professional practices of ethics and responsibilities in a rapidly changing information environment. To allow candidates who lack this credential to take these leadership roles is irresponsible to our citizenry.

**Barbara Hvizdak, [bhvizdak@lincolncountylibraries.com](mailto:bhvizdak@lincolncountylibraries.com)**

Eureka Board Chair, Lincoln County Libraries

"I would like to urge MSL commissioners to reconsider their recommendation to eliminate the education requirement from MSL Standards. There are many solid reasons to retain the standard that requires directors of the state's largest libraries, only eight, to have completed an MLS or MLIS program. Professional librarians have specialized knowledge, skills, and a set of professional ethics to guide management of a library. As the demands of today's world have grown, so has the need for advanced skills and training. Information has gained in educational, occupational, and economic importance, now more than ever before. Libraries are a community's door to this new world of information and require expert leadership. It's the Library Commission's responsibility and obligation to require a trained professional lead the largest libraries. These institutions may have dozens of specialized staff, thousands of patrons in their service area, and millions of dollars in taxpayer money at stake, not to mention they also serve as a resource for smaller libraries within their area.

At the MSL Commission's October meeting I heard no good reason to eliminate this standard. One commissioner stated it was arrogant to set a standard and against her philosophical position; another commissioner pointed to the 30 remaining standards as good enough. While there may be dozens of other standards there are only two that speak to education. Eliminating one of them leaves the minimal expectation of 'encouraging librarians and library board members to commit to continuing education' as the remaining standard. As to arrogant, I would ask who could possibly be a better authority? Various state boards set standards for doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, teachers, and a host of other professions. The Montana Office of Public Instruction requires public school librarians have a bachelor degree and library science endorsement. Why would MSL Commissioners expect less for libraries that serve the general public?

Lastly, I implore you to remove the politics; remove the labels of 'liberal' and 'conservative'; and remove whatever personal bias you are bound to have from this most crucial decision. One responsibility of a Montana State Library Commissioner, among others, is to ""... advocate for the State Library and Montana library and information communities whenever possible."" Failure to do so means you have failed in your role as a Commissioner as well as failed the library patrons and taxpayers of Montana."

**Laura Stainbrook, [dentonlib@itstriangle.com](mailto:dentonlib@itstriangle.com)**

Denton

I believe it's good to allow individual cities and communities to decide what the standard should be in regards to education requirements for their library.

**Stephen Vantassel, [stephenvantassel@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenvantassel@hotmail.com)**

Lewistown

I would like to add my support for the removal of the degree requirement for librarians. There are lots of individuals whose experience fully makes them qualified to manage a library. We need to resist the "credentialing" trend that has put so many people in debt and frankly too often disappointed regarding their quality.

**Ruth Barefoot, [ruthbarefoot@gmail.com](mailto:ruthbarefoot@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

"10.102.1158

1) ok



7) Do not support at all!! Responsibility needs to be budget driven and community driven. The rewrite smacks of party politics instead of community driven data.

10.102.1160

Do Not Agree with the Library Director no longer being required to hold an MLIS or masters degree. The MLIS degree prepares the individual to understand a broad range of community discussions and encounters. A non-masters library director is then set up to erode the trust that young people have in the adults in their lives and pushes them to secrecy. It undermines the studied opinion of professional librarians and educators that are providing a broad range of ideas rather than promotion of one version that is acceptable.

10.102.9101

OK

10.102.9104

The proposed changes are constricting and will cause more trouble.

10.102.9102

Too much big government. I am not in favor of the changes overall.

10.102.9101

OK

**Peter Saunders, [petersaunders1957@gmail.com](mailto:petersaunders1957@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am OPPOSED to any rule changes that reduce the education standards of library staff, and still permit funding from the state. Library's are not to be dumbed down, but need rigorous improvement to standards, to assure the highest possible results.

**CHERI BERGERON, [CHERIB6100@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CHERIB6100@GMAIL.COM)**

Helena

Please retain the requirement for an MLS for public libraries. The MLS is the absolute BASIC foundation needed to lead a library. I truly value the services and programs of Montana's libraries. Let's keep up the high standards that got us here.

**Wendy & Mike Lauman, [mwlauman@montanasky.us](mailto:mwlauman@montanasky.us)**

Kalispell

"A librarian with a Masters Degree in Library Science is proficient in courses that include, collection management, information systems and technology, research methods, information literacy, cataloging, preservation reference, statistics management, and promotion of literacy. Imaginelf Library deserves to have a Library Director with this background. Just as teachers, engineers, architects, and lawyers have degree requirements, MLS librarians have impressive knowledge of their field. To remove the MLS requirement gives a Library Board too much power over library authority and library policies. Imaginelf Library deserves a librarian with an MLS degree, not an office manager.

Libraries are a vital of communities and the professional qualifications of an MLS degree is needed to meet the changes and challenges of the future.

**Denise Ard, [denisea@northvalleylibrary.org](mailto:denisea@northvalleylibrary.org)**



Stevensville

North Valley Public Library that serves a population of 11,923

"The educational MLS or equivalent requirement for Directors serving 25,000 patrons should remain. The standards and Montana libraries should strive to go forward and not backwards. An MLS is a way to ensure a minimum of qualifications and familiarity with cataloging, OPACS, OCLC, ILS, professional standards, library law, and a variety of other technical expertise that a master's in library science provide.

The reasoning the Commission gave for this change was to give local boards control. So why do you not give local boards the responsibility to set the board's CE qualifications? Current library standards require, "the board receives at least three hours of continuing education each year." Why not remove the unreasonable burdensome requirement of the board members to attend yearly CE, and trust their local judgement to make that decision for themselves, and instead make sure that Montana directors at large libraries have educational qualifications? Those in the profession that have attained acceptance into an accredited degree, and then attained the degree thorough work, time, and tuition find the proposal ill conceived. All libraries should strive to hire a director with an MLS, but at the very least large population libraries should have a standard to do so. I work at a Montana library and my board was unhappy about the CE burden put on them. Board members are not paid and volunteer their time, but directors are paid employees, paid by tax dollars. Standards should be upheld for those being paid with tax dollar funds rather than volunteers. North Valley Public Library, serving a population of 11,923, hired a director with an MLS. The larger libraries can and should do the same. The standard already said, "or equivalent degree" so if someone had a master's in education or business that could be an equivalent. The change to eliminate the requirement was requested by ImaginE. The same 7-person State Library Commission includes a board member from ImaginE, so the Commission's decision appears weighted towards this one library's desires.

**Noreen Breeding, [rog7nor@gmail.com](mailto:rog7nor@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

"Montana State Library Commission's decision to no longer require professional library or information science degrees for public library directors in cities larger than 25,000 in population is arbitrary, incomprehensibly wrong, and shortsighted. Not only does it remove the professional degree requirement, it provides no standard at all for library director. State regulations should encourage every public library to hire a director with a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree.

The "commission's opinion that local boards should be given responsibility to set library director qualifications as the size of the community may require a different skillset or knowledge base for the library director" demonstrates ignorance of public library operations. Local boards often know little about the details of library operations or the best qualifications for a library director and need guidance in selecting a qualified library director. All excellent public libraries rely on the same set of principles of good library service no matter the size of the community. For example, they all arrange books according to a standard classification system and list them in a searchable catalog so that patrons can find them. Community size has nothing to do with the necessary skills.

This decision will deprive many citizens of the best library services possible. Like you, many public officials do not understand what librarians do and what they are capable of doing. Profession training enables librarian to imagine services beyond what are offered locally and to provide new services tailored to local needs. They can build new programs from scratch without direct experience. Experience is not an adequate substitute for professional training.

Would you use an accountant or attorney not trained and certified in accounting or law? Would you trust a non-professional to manage and spend wisely millions of budget dollars? Managing a public library is complicated and involves important decisions regarding materials, such as books,

videos, sound recordings; use of electronic devices; digital information searching; provision of customer services, such as in-person programs, access to the latest technology, such as 3-D printers; budget management; personnel management; interaction with the public; and more.

Your earlier decision to cancel membership in the ALA coupled with this decision to reject the value of professional librarian training will lead to low educational standards and harm the citizens of Montana. Without professional librarians working at the largest public libraries in this state, who will train and advise directors of smaller libraries?

**Don McBurney, [burnjj@charter.net](mailto:burnjj@charter.net)**

Whitefish

Local is always better. Advice from a parent organization can be helpful but it should not be determinative.

**Nancy Powell, [nnpisp@gmail.com](mailto:nnpisp@gmail.com)**

Conrad

Conrad Public Library

"Public Comment: MSL Administrative Rules Changes: 1. Proposed changes to the public library standards: Amendment of administrative rule 10.102.1160 Personnel: This amendment to remove of the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree...."

In order for a community to have a functional democracy and a strong economy, the public needs to be educated and have access to accurate, factual information.

Professional education for public library directors such as the Master of Library Science, provides the tools necessary to determine how best to gather the information that best serves their community.

They learn how to access and acquire information about the diversity of their community in terms of population, information, and technology needs of the community. They also have the skills to determine the age, depth and breadth of the collection, for instance, what percentage of the collection is older than the age of the County Commissioners? Does the percentage of the collection correlate with the ages of the children and youth of the community? What percentage of the collection correlates to the information, education, and technology needs of the collection?

The professional Librarian also learns about recommended, appropriate book, magazine and computer databases to serve their community. Professional Librarians recognize the need to guide their patrons, both young and older to accurate internet websites.

They learn how to use budgeting skills to coordinate the needs of the facility (for instance how to budget for building maintenance, changing government code regulations, etc.), the demands of circulation statistics with the moneys allocated by the various funding agencies, personnel requirements, such as salary, and benefits, and open hour needs to match the demographics of their community.

Professional librarians recognize and lobby for continuing education for themselves and their staff in order to stay abreast of changing trends in the world of public librarianship, for instance, new opportunities for grant funding, the need for liability insurance for staff and volunteers in a suit-happy environment, new reliable sources of information in the form of both print and online, new opportunities to save money via cooperative ventures with other libraries to share materials and participate in document delivery.

A Master of Library Science for public library directors provides the librarian with the education and confidence necessary to work with community leaders to foster democracy and economic development for their community.

**Alba Pimentel, [Albareyes406@gmail.com](mailto:Albareyes406@gmail.com)**

Billings

"Dear Montana State Library Commissioners,

I am writing to you as a tax payer, and resident in the state of Montana. I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situations. I believe local power has the best representation for its community and we should allow those powers to operate representing their constituents in this free sovereign state.

Thank you all for your hard work,  
In Liberty,

Alba Pimentel

**Gladys Rayhill, [beltlib@3rivers.net](mailto:beltlib@3rivers.net)**

Belt

Belt Public Library

"I believe that larger libraries should still be required to hire a director with an MLIS for many reasons. Sizeable libraries serve a more diverse population and therefore should be able to assist their patrons with any request. Being a librarian is a lot more than checking out books.

I think ImagineIF libraries had an amazing director and the board set out to destroy her and the library. All because she wanted the library to be for everyone, not just people who agreed with the board or the director. The reason ImagineIF couldn't find a qualified director with an MLIS is because the library community isn't that big and word got around how awful the board is to work for. There was a lot of talk on social media sites about the issues that IF was experiencing and directors were talking about it. I saw a full-page ad for IF at a conference in Reno and people who aren't even connected to Montana were talking about how they treated the former director and how they were having a challenging time getting anyone to apply. It's pretty telling when qualified people within the organization don't even want to apply for the job.

The service population I work for is about one thousand people. I have a teaching degree and a library endorsement as well as many years of experience. I cannot imagine doing my job for my tiny town with anything less than what I currently have. If I were in a more diverse community, I am sure I would flounder because so much more is needed and expected. Please do not change the standards to suit the IF board just because they are working against the library and librarians. It is important that the community get what their taxes are paying for, a qualified, knowledgeable leader. They knew what was expected of them, yet they just wanted a director they could manipulate. Don't let them manipulate the commission. The board still maintains local control by hiring a qualified candidate.

Please do not change the standard. All libraries over a service population of 25,000 should still require MLIS for directors. There are qualified candidates looking for jobs."

**Carol Bibler, [carol@springbrookranch.com](mailto:carol@springbrookranch.com)**

Kalispell

"I am against the Commission's proposal to eliminate the requirement for the MLIS degree for directors of Montana's eight largest libraries.

This requirement is there for a reason: Libraries serving large communities should be directed by a person with an advanced degree specifically focused on management of libraries. The rationale for this proposed change is flawed--it is driven by the actions of library trustees in one community (mine). Licensing requirements--whether they are for teachers, doctors, plumbers, or electricians--serve a valuable purpose and we owe it to our communities to uphold standards and practices that have served Montana and other states well for decades. Please stop wasting my tax dollars on a political agenda.

**Alan Wilson, [acwilson@acwei.com](mailto:acwilson@acwei.com)**

Kila

I would like to see the Master's Degree requirement removed from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local people with experience and talent, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**David Passieri, [david.passieri@gmail.com](mailto:david.passieri@gmail.com)**

St Ignatous

David Allen Real Estate

"The 7th richest man in the world, Bill Gates, does not have a mastets degree. His competitive edge and free market enterprising mind realized that a college certificate was not necessary in defining a candidates ability to perform exvllence. Please support the removal to removal of requiring a college Masters Degree in the hiring process which will greatly enhance free market enterprising applicants to interview.

**Susie Larson, [Sbplarson@gmail.com](mailto:Sbplarson@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

A library Director must be completely educated, competent, experienced and agreeable to all facets of a library. This begins with an MLS.

**terry falk, [terryfalk@blackdiamondmortgage.com](mailto:terryfalk@blackdiamondmortgage.com)**

kalispell

This comment is from me personally. With respect to the "Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel" i firmly believe the boards of directors of local libraries in MT of all sizes should be given the right, responsibility and freedom to hire directors for their individual libraries at their discretion which means dropping the requirement that library directors have a Masters in Library Science in order to receive funding from the MT State Library. I believe this rule change you've proposed is a solid one and that our library quality will not be diminished as a result.

**Theresa Solomon, [tsolomon13@aol.com](mailto:tsolomon13@aol.com)**

Kaispell

Library client "1) The decision to lower the educational requirement for library directors statewide risks lowering the quality of library services statewide, and seems to have been made solely because Kalispell decided to ignore the requirement, and then didn't like the funding consequences they knew would result.

2) The decision also directly contradicts the State Commission's own Task Force recommendation and is clearly a political move to disempower the quality of institutions that provide resources and education to the entire population.

- 3) Carmen Cuthbertson has a clear conflict of interest in this matter and should not have been allowed to vote,  
4) The requirements of modern librarianship at a library of any size are complex and constantly evolving. The requirement for a graduate degree is reasonable and necessary if we are to entrust our librarians with the management, guidance, and growth of our libraries. Montanans who complain about the perception of our state as backwards and unsupportive of education, and driven by narrow political interests, need only look at this decision for confirmation of their bias."

**Shari Curtis, [shari.curtis123@gmail.com](mailto:shari.curtis123@gmail.com)**

Butte

This change is a "solution" in search of a problem. By allowing the misbehavior of 1 library, when they chose to defy the rules, you will be encouraging other anti-library forces to do this throughout the state. Imagine if library board made the to hire an undereducated director in defiance of the rules and our now seeking to have their cake and eat it too. Administrative rules should be used to help local libraries not incentivize this destructive behavior across the state. Library boards who choose not to follow the rules should be held accountable for their behavior, not forgiven. Public libraries should serve their local communities and not be the places for culture wars.

**Connie Ciabaton, [ConstanceDale@yahoo.com](mailto:ConstanceDale@yahoo.com)**

Bigfork

Local Flathead Citizen, voter and taxpayer.

"I am in support of REMOVING the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science. The local library board should be able to hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have. Please make this rule change ASAP. Thank you."

**Albert Olszewski, [oz@reagan.com](mailto:oz@reagan.com)**

Kalispell

personal representation I support my local library board to determine the proper qualifications for our local library director. Please remove the requirement for a Masters degree in Library Science from the state regulations governing our libraries.

**Sharon Dunn, [sharondunnbooks@gmail.com](mailto:sharondunnbooks@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I support amendment 10.102.1160 to do away with the requirement that the library director for towns over 25,000 has to have a master's in library science. It would be far better to let each community decide what would best meet their needs for a library director. Someone who was a long time member of the community and had worked at the library for years might be just as qualified even if they had no degree at all. Also, other degrees (business, management, history etc) might better serve that specific community.

**Connie Akers, [montana.girl@protonmail.com](mailto:montana.girl@protonmail.com)**

Kalispell

"I agree with the rule change concerning the requirement of a Master's degree in Library Science. Also, I would like librarians to be elected so their ideology is open to all residents of a town. I would like to see statewide guidelines stating that no sexually deviant materials will be placed in public libraries, and that no sexual content directed at children will be placed in public libraries. Libraries have become battlefields for the hearts and minds of patrons. The local library doesn't need to purchase a book just because it is new and edgy. Patrons can go spend their own money on that.

As a former school librarian in Alaska, I can say that information in the courses required for a master's degree are very important, but that they are also becoming more and more oriented to DEI, thus my position of support for no longer requiring the degree. This DEI push is offensive to students who have conservative leanings, and it reinforces misconceptions in students who have accepted these Marxist beliefs. Many libraries are run by ""progressives"" who buy all the latest books about Michelle Obama or Gavin Newsome or the latest race-baiting author but will not buy pro-America titles such as Mark Levin's or Jesse Kelly's new books (i.e. Democrats Hate America and the Anti-Communist Manifesto).

Thank you for adressing this issue. I celebrated the ouster of the ALA and hope to see Montana libraries stand for good literature and access to information that boosts a town's literacy and love for their beautiful country.

**Patrick Webb, [Ptwebb15@gmail.com](mailto:Ptwebb15@gmail.com)**

East Helena

As someone who believes in the importance of work that brings fulfillment, I am opposed to the requirement of having to have a Masters in Library Science for the small select number of positions in the State. Individuals should be able to be hired based on their own merit and not a paper they paid extraordinary sums of money for. While a degree can be a good indicator of knowledge, in today's world more and more people are opting out for more affordable methods of acquiring knowledge. By keeping this requirement in, we are undercutting the potential contribution that individuals have to bring to their communities simple because they don't have the paper. Further, it is ridiculous that we would require such a degree that to my understanding is not even available to be earned in Montana. I ask that you please remove this requirement and empower Montanans to fill these positions based on their merit. Lastly, I would ask that you consider the difficult financial times we are living in and the burdens many households are facing in just making ends meet. Are we really going to require that individuals fork over tens of thousands of dollars to fill these positions when they may be able to be just as qualified if not more without the paper? Thank you for your consideration.

**Robin Sertell, [info@robinsertell.com](mailto:info@robinsertell.com)**

Hamilton

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Jana Bornhoft, [fangelow@gmail.com](mailto:fangelow@gmail.com)**

Billings

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Cynthia Marble, [cynthiamarble@gmail.com](mailto:cynthiamarble@gmail.com)**

Red Lodge

I would like to see Montana libraries be able to hire directors from a larger talent pool than just those with a Master's degree in Library Science, especially when that degree is not easy to get in Montana. Please remove this Master's degree requirement from your standards. Thank you.

**Connie Kvilhaug, [conniekvilhaug@yahoo.com](mailto:conniekvilhaug@yahoo.com)**

Billings

"Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that citizens can make a hiring decision locally. This just makes better sense for Montanans.

Thank you."

**James Buterbaugh, [kmikbaugh@gmail.com](mailto:kmikbaugh@gmail.com)**

Whitehall

"I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards.

Library boards should be able to hire who they deem fit to do the job, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science. "

**Margaret Juneman, [jamjuneman@montana.com](mailto:jamjuneman@montana.com)**

Thompson Falls

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Timothy Kittle, [bigforkelectric@gmail.com](mailto:bigforkelectric@gmail.com)**

Essex

"Please remove the requirement for applicants to have a MSL degree. This only hamstrings the budget of the library. Applicants within the system with greater experience may be better equipped to handle this position. Actual knowledge in a field vs a degree but no knowledge in the field makes no sense. This would also make the position more available for local applicants.

**Carmen Leach, [Dualagents1227@gmail.com](mailto:Dualagents1227@gmail.com)**

Billings Yellowstone County citizen

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Marlene McCluskey, [mmcc@bresnan.net](mailto:mmcc@bresnan.net)**

Clancy

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**mary reed, [hossyreed@gmail.com](mailto:hossyreed@gmail.com)**

"I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Elizabeth Jonkel, [ejonkel@hotmail.com](mailto:ejonkel@hotmail.com)**

Missoula

Self - but I am employed by Missoula County at the City/County Library "I am writing with regards to the proposed change that strips away the longstanding requirement that Montana directors serving populations of 25,000 or more must hold an MLIS degree.



I am strongly opposed to changing this requirement. Your role as commissioners is to guarantee that professional standards and measures exist which will ensure library leaders are providing the highest level of professionalism and expertise to their communities. It has been a longstanding practice that directors of Montana's large libraries hold the professional qualifications and appropriate education to demonstrate their ability and capacity to manage their organizations.

Most other professional bodies (e.g., pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, and engineers) have requirements to practice their profession. The education and training that comes with securing a library and information science degree ensures that library leaders have the requisite skills to manage a complicated organization with unique services, drivers and impacts. I would ask you if you had confidence in a pharmacy manager who did not hold the right qualifications was making decisions regarding your access to and use of the pharmaceuticals necessary to your health. Would you be satisfied if someone with a business degree was determining adverse drug reactions or counseling you on dosages? You must extend an expectation of skill, value and vitalness to Montana's librarians and recognize they have the expertise and skills specific to their profession needed to manage, operate and guide library service in their communities.

It is my understanding that your Task Force has strongly recommended these changes to qualifications NOT be adopted. It is your role to follow the recommendations of the professionals who are most knowledgeable about the industry and profession of librarianship. It is incumbent on you to follow the recommendations of those who are better positioned to advise and counsel on how librarianship is shaped in the state of Montana.

I believe there is a reactive, partisan motive behind altering these standards, stemming from the very public actions of the Flathead County library board. The presence of affiliated Flathead County library board members on your commission reinforces this belief. Their refusal to recuse themselves was not appropriate. There is an implication that the proposed changes are politically motivated and reflective of a personal bias originating from a single location in Montana.

It is my hope that as commissioners you will recognize the seriousness of your actions should you decide to change MLIS requirements for directors of large libraries in Montana. You risk undermining the entire profession. You risk undermining professional standards that have been in place, for good reason, for many years. You will introduce bureaucratic complications to a process that has worked well for Montana Libraries until now. You will act in defiance of your own Task Force and library professionals across the state. You will prioritize personal, biased perspectives over what is beneficial to communities, libraries and library workers across all of Montana.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Jonkel

**Caro Brenner, [brennercd@gmail.com](mailto:brennercd@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Susie Burch, [superbean835@gmail.com](mailto:superbean835@gmail.com)**

Kalispell



I strongly oppose the proposed reduction in Montana's public library director educational requirements. Maintaining high standards in Montana's public institutions is essential if we are to fully participate in the opportunities the future offers. Let's not make Montana a laughingstock by ignoring the professional skills and knowledge required to direct a public library that serves as an effective resources and treasure for all.

Flathead County's experience over the last two years is a good example of willfully hiring a smart person with inadequate experience and training. Taxpayer dollars and time have been wasted as this pathetic drama played out while ImagineIF Library trustees made one egregious decision after another and micro-managed library operations. To see the State of Montana consider embracing this kind of willful regression in standards is disheartening."

**Pam Lucashu, [lucashupmb@gmail.com](mailto:lucashupmb@gmail.com)**

Stevensville

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. The remaining requirements are sufficient in guiding local boards to hire the best person for the position.

**Roger Koopman, [rogerannkoopman@gmail.com](mailto:rogerannkoopman@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I represent my individual self I am in full and strong support of the proposed ARM amendment, allowing local jurisdictions with 25K-plus populations to establish their own hiring standards and minimum qualifications for their library director, consistent with the goals, values and consumer demands of those unique communities they represent. Requiring a Masters in Library Science is not only an ill-conceived and antiquated rule, it is patently absurd -- reflecting an elitist attitude of a professional class, unwilling to relinquish control to local accountability, to open-access recruiting and to the democratic process. As the owner of a career placement and employee recruiting agency for 37 years in Bozeman, I can attest to the fact that the very worst approach to hiring is to arbitrarily limit the number of qualified candidates for consideration. To those who sincerely believe an MLS degree is an important qualification for the director position, let them -- and their favored candidates -- make their case in a free and open process. Let them rely on persuasion, not coercion. Inclusion, not exclusion. Diversity, not uniformity. Trusting in freedom and the democratic process will always yield the best hiring results.

**Kathy Butterfield, [hikerpawz7@icloud.com](mailto:hikerpawz7@icloud.com)**

West Glacier

I support the removal of a Masters in Library Science degree requirement for directors of large libraries. Thank you

**Pat Plowman, [Partplowman@hotmail.com](mailto:Partplowman@hotmail.com)**

Boyd

Wow. This is so important! Please support the removal of this requirement and return this important hiring decision to local control.

**Joi Gratny, [jgratny@gmail.com](mailto:jgratny@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Every library has a unique situation. Our experience here in Flathead Valley proved that a library can run very well without the director having that degree. The current woman who is taking that place has many years of experience/hands on training and will continue to run the library professionally.

By removing the Master's Degree requirement decisions for a new director can be made case by case. "

**JJ Hunsekker, [xrthompsonfalls@hotmail.com](mailto:xrthompsonfalls@hotmail.com)**

Thompson Falls

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Mary Garner, [Mary.garner@comcast.net](mailto:Mary.garner@comcast.net)**

Kalispell

Librarians need to be well versed in modern media and information technology to be a good resource for their community . Our niece has a Master's in Library Science and I believe that designation should be retained for libraries in our larger cities of 25,000.

**Virginia Raines, [Vsraines@protonmail.com](mailto:Vsraines@protonmail.com)**

Billings

Please vote to remove the requirement of a master's degree in library science for our librarians. Thank you.

**Paul Madigan, [Pauljmadigan@gmail.com](mailto:Pauljmadigan@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I support the removal of this requirement and the hiring for this position should be returned to local control

Thomas Milletsimplytom65@yahoo.com Marion Self "Please support the REMOVAL of the degree requirement for library directors.

This decision is best made at the LOCAL level in alignment with LOCAL needs."

**Thomas Millett, [simplytom65@yahoo.com](mailto:simplytom65@yahoo.com)**

Marion

"Please support the REMOVAL of the degree requirement for library directors.

This decision is best made at the LOCAL level in alignment with LOCAL needs."

**Rene Flynn, [rflynnbelgrade@gmail.com](mailto:rflynnbelgrade@gmail.com)**

Belgrade

My husband & I totally support the proposed new ARM Amendment.

Local towns & cities with over 25,000 population should be able to have their own requirements for hiring a Library Director. To find someone who already lives in the area with a Masters in Library Science is a very high standard. That translates into folks from out of the area being recruited for local jobs. They are unfamiliar with the lifestyle and habits of Montana folks.

Thank you. God Bless America.

**Sharon Nason, [rsnason3875@gmail.com](mailto:rsnason3875@gmail.com)**

Clancy

I am writing to express my support for the removal of the Master's in Library Science degree requirement for directors of large libraries from the list of Montana Public Library Standards. As I understand it, this is not even a degree currently offered in Montana which immediately limits the pool of candidates that can be considered for a director position. Additionally, there may very well be other combinations of education and experience which would also qualify a candidate for a director position so removing this requirement would allow local library boards the freedom to hire the person they feel is best qualified for the position being considered. Thank you for your time and attention to this very important matter.

**Rebecca Harvey, [rcm23wolf@gmail.com](mailto:rcm23wolf@gmail.com)**

Helena

This seriously undermines the professionalism and standards of the field and dangerously opens the door to the possibility of political appointees controlling knowledge based solely on partisan goals. It undermines our democracy.

**Dianne Hansen, [diannedave2@gmail.com](mailto:diannedave2@gmail.com)**

Eureka

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. It applies only to a few libraries in the state, and that's not fair.

**Krys Holmes, [krys.holmes@themyrnaoy.com](mailto:krys.holmes@themyrnaoy.com)**

Helena

The Myrna Loy

"I write in opposition to the proposal to remove professional/educational requirements from librarians in communities of 25,000 or more. Library Science is a profession. Information management is a discipline critical to the preservation of our nation's intellectual identity and freedoms. Intellectual freedom is an inherent right of U.S. citizenship, and its guardianship should not be left to amateurs, no matter how well-intentioned or devoted they may be.

Requiring library directors to have a degree in the discipline they practice is neither obstructive nor onerous, but acknowledges the rigor and heritage of this important profession. Libraries fulfill multiple critical needs in communities large and small - especially in rural Montana. I fervently urge you not to demean the importance of their role by removing basic professional requirements of the job. Thank you for your consideration."

**Arieanna Ramage, [Arieanna.ramage@gmail.com](mailto:Arieanna.ramage@gmail.com)**

Billings

"Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

I support REMOVING the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that citizens can make a hiring decision locally."

**John Lee, [Ga2mt89@gmail.com](mailto:Ga2mt89@gmail.com)**

Billings

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Rene Roth, [Jraroht@gmail.com](mailto:Jraroht@gmail.com)**

Laurel "To Whom it may concern;

Please remove the Masters level requirement from the library director positions in our state. It is not necessary and is unduly burdensome for local library boards. These boards are made of local citizens who should have local control to hire the best candidate for their library's needs. The association of this degree with the ALA is concerning considering the leader of that organization is a confessed socialist.

I hold a masters degree and that does not and should not automatically make me qualified for any position. It is merely a point for consideration when hiring.

Sincerely,  
Rene Roth

**Lisa Vance, [lavance33@gmail.com](mailto:lavance33@gmail.com)**

Billings

A mother who uses our public library often. support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

There is no problem with the standards that have existed until now. They were implemented for a reason and that reason has not changed. "Local control" already exists when hiring directors. Why wouldn't they want someone who is knowledgeable and trained extensively in their field? Why wouldn't the Commissioners also support that? The real problem here is one library's board, something that needs to be addressed and acted upon without the rest of the state being involved.

I don't understand why so many people who don't understand libraries are in charge of what librarians can and can't do. Oh, right. Disinformation. Maybe you should contact a local librarian to help separate the facts from the lies.

**Don Spritzer, [montanaspritzers@q.com](mailto:montanaspritzers@q.com)**

Missoula

"Based on my 30 years' experience working at the Missoula Public Library (I'm long-since retired) I hereby state my unqualified 100% support for removing the MLS requirement for directors of larger public libraries. During my years at Missoula's library I worked for six different directors. All had an MLS. Three of my bosses were terrible administrators. Apparently library school taught them nothing about running a library, supervising staff, developing a budget, promoting the library in the community, working with government officials, and so many other skills needed to be an effective library director. Two others were slightly above average at their job and things ran fairly smoothly. Only one, Honore Bray, the last boss I had, was a truly excellent administrator, a top-notch library director and Missoula's first-rate new library is just one very suitable monument to her many years as a great administrator, and just a joy to work for. But I truly believe she was a great library director in spite of rather than because of what she learned in library school. Certainly library school programs can teach many important skills that certain librarians must have--collection development, cataloguing, reference work, becoming technology savvy, etc. But people skills? Administrative skills? Not so much. Removing this requirement would grant local boards the leeway they need to hire the best person for the job. And given my experience with MLS directors, it would not diminish the overall quality of library service in any given community one bit.

**Sandra Graham, [sandygraham@live.com](mailto:sandygraham@live.com)**

Billings

Personal, family and tax payer

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Chad Huff, [chadhuff@gmail.com](mailto:chadhuff@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

When presented with the option to reduce the educational requirements for large public libraries in the state of Montana, I ask the question, why? The library is a place where people go to learn, engage in experiences, and better themselves. Some of those people need a lot of assistance in those endeavors. The library is a place that needs to be directed by a professional. People that are trained in library science stand a much better chance of being able to adequately direct a place in which all of this public education takes place. Do we ask to reduce the requirements of our other professional jobs? What if we chose to no longer require our state attorneys to have passed the bar exam? What if we asked our nurses to perform surgery on us instead of trained doctors? I would offer that if we were to reduce requirements for our professional services and only required instead that the person applying for the job is, in fact, a person, that our experiences engaging with those services would be diminished greatly. Library Science is a professional position that should be respected as such. Reducing the requirements to direct a library will most certainly reduce our ability to help our citizens in bettering themselves. That is a disservice to our great state.

**Julie Edwards, [juliee2@missoulapubliclibrary.org](mailto:juliee2@missoulapubliclibrary.org)**

Missoula

Trustee, Missoula Public Library

I am opposed to the change of standards, which I believe has been brought forth in bad faith and under dubious reasoning. The argument that this change gives boards local control is a red herring. Boards have local control, and boards that have exercised that control to choose directors without the degree, thus forfeiting state funding, should not be pushing through standards changes to get that funding back under the guise of "local control." The MSLIS is grounded in ethical and professional principles that are a benefit to both larger communities and, in a state like Montana, smaller libraries where the director might not have the degree and rely on others who do for mentorship, advice, and guidance. Again - boards are free to choose whomever they would like for their libraries, but retroactively changing the rules because of the financial consequences of those choices is an unfair burden on the rest of the state.

**Tobin Shearer, [tobin.shearer@gmail.com](mailto:tobin.shearer@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am opposed to this change. Credentials are essential for professional maintenance of library standards.

**Katie Heckert, [kmbiando148@gmail.com](mailto:kmbiando148@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I oppose this proposed rule

**Linda Biando, [lbando@gmail.com](mailto:lbando@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am against the ammendment to remove the requirement for directors to have a masters degree.

**Carl Siroky, [carlsiroky@hotmail.com](mailto:carlsiroky@hotmail.com)**

Billings

"I don't support this rule requiring Masters of Library Science or an equivalent degree for Directors of Libraries. Stop putting foolish things like this into play. You're limiting the available candidate pool for people available to fill the vacancies. And the rule does NOTHING to ensure the best candidate gets hired for the job. In my experience some of the best directors have been people who have a masters in common sense and a diverse background of life experiences.

As a taxpayer who is paying for the ridiculous overhead created local, state, and federal government I ask you to consider doing things that cut costs and reduce regulations, instead of continuing to make things more bureaucratic and expensive. "

**Jean Riley, [jriley@mt.gov](mailto:jriley@mt.gov)**

Helena

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) staff have reviewed the proposed rules, we have no comments or concerns.

**Laura Lee O'Neil, [lauralee22@protonmail.com](mailto:lauralee22@protonmail.com)**

Kalispell

"I write in support of removing the Master's Degree requirement for library director from the Montana Public Library Standards. The vast majority of Montana libraries don't have to satisfy this requirement, since this requirement only applies to libraries who serve more than 25,000 people, and these libraries are functioning just fine.

Consider this: you can run for President of the United States if you are 35 years old or older, born in US and a US resident for at least 14 years. To run for Montana Governor, Lieutenant Governor or Secretary of State you need only be at least 25 years old, a citizen of the US and a Montana resident for a mere two years preceding election. Want to run for the Montana legislature? You only need be 18 years or older and a resident of Montana for one year. You don't even have to be a high school graduate! NO DEGREES REQUIRED!

Please eliminate this unwarranted and unreasonable constraint. Leave this decision to our excellent local library board so they may hire the person best qualified to serve our community.

**Morgan Ray, [morganelaineray@gmail.com](mailto:morganelaineray@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

"To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the recent decision by the Montana State Library Commission to change the public library standards. This decision appears to run counter to the overwhelming public support for maintaining the existing standards and raises several issues that warrant careful reconsideration.

The role of the Commission is fundamental in encouraging measurable excellence within public libraries. Local boards have control when they decide to meet or not meet the standards.

The requirement for an MLIS degree for libraries serving populations over 25,000 was initially established to recognize the financial challenges faced by smaller libraries. Despite this, many smaller libraries in Montana have successfully hired degreed librarians as directors. Exceptions to this requirement have always existed. The challenge to this standard is not financially motivated and works to erode the profession as a whole.

Public Library Standards are intricately tied to public financial investment in libraries, serving as an incentive for local investment in staffing and services. Eliminating standards at the request of one library could undermine the purpose of standards for libraries of all sizes, potentially affecting the accessibility and quality of library services across the state.

Rules and regulations serve as essential standards to uphold competency and best practices within a community. Much like traffic laws set speed limits on roads, these regulations are established to ensure the well-being of the community at large. If an individual is pulled over for speeding, arguing for a change in the speed limit based on their preferences is not a valid justification. The existence of rules is rooted in the collective interest of promoting order and protecting the community. If there is a willful disregard of the rules, a fine (or withholding of funding) for those who violate these regulations appropriately reinforces the importance of adherence, fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability. Changes to administrative rules should not be employed to excuse the behavior of a single library or library board. This sets a concerning precedent and has the potential to reduce accountability within the broader library system.

It is disconcerting to note that the Commission, which appointed a diverse Task Force, is now acting in defiance of its own Task Force recommendations. Such actions raise questions about the Commission's commitment to inclusivity, transparent decision-making, and the consideration of public opinion.

I respectfully urge the Montana State Library Commission to reconsider this decision, taking into account the significant concerns raised by the public, the potential impact on libraries of all sizes, and the recommendations of its own Task Force.

Sincerely,

Morgan Ray, MSLS

**Wendy Whitehorn, [waw4dogs@aol.com](mailto:waw4dogs@aol.com)**

Dutton

Very bad idea to dumb down the requirement for a library director to have a Master's degree in Library or Information Science for libraries that serve larger population areas. This is a professional position and should be treated as such. I am a Montana citizen concerned that our libraries are becoming political footballs, and by eliminating this requirement you are continuing that trend. Keep this Master's requirement in place!

**Anne Schumacher, [annebenschumacher](mailto:annebenschumacher)**

Bozeman

The proposed Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree denigrates the standing of Montana's library professionals and puts the future of library services in Montana at risk. Local control is, of course, important, but must be applied within the framework of the highest standards of professionalism and education to best serve the public.

**Kim Anderson, [anderson.ka@live.com](mailto:anderson.ka@live.com)**

Kalispell

Please retain the standard as it is. The commission's attempt to remove it reeks of unnecessary bureaucratic interference, a tactic frequently used as of late to trick people into thinking they will have more local control. In effect, all it actually does is dilute the expectation of excellence in our professional public servants. Waging war on higher ed isn't the answer...getting yourself an education is.

**Jessie Browning, [Barrettiess03@msn.com](mailto:Barrettiess03@msn.com)**

Billings

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from Public Library standards so that citizens can make hiring decisions locally.

**Dianna Linder**

512 16th St W Billings

I believe the requirement for a Master's degree for directors of large libraries should be RETAINED. A Master's degree is standard for library directors and has been for many years. In your own survey, 80% of respondents stated "a master's degree in library or information science is



necessary” for library directors serving more than 25,000 people. The 127 individuals surveyed comprised 28 library directors, 74 library staff, five library trustees and 20 members of the public. You appear to be seeking a 'solution' to a non-problem. Under the current rules, local library boards have, and will continue to have, local control to select from qualified applicants.

**Allison Decamera, [Allisondecamera@gmail.com](mailto:Allisondecamera@gmail.com)**

Butte

Lots of states across the US, both red and blue, are undoing unnecessary credential requirements. This seems like a good opportunity for Montana to do the same. No one ever died from visiting a library directed by a person without an MLS.

**Jill Carlberg, [jillmt60@gmail.com](mailto:jillmt60@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am against removing the educational standard for executive directors of larger library systems in Montana. As with any professional job and leadership role, the appropriate educational background serves to equip the person with the broader knowledge and institutional skills to lead effectively. Experience is important and builds over time. We need leaders who have invested time and passion into studying their profession before undertaking a leadership role, especially that of executive director. By removing the standard for our public library, the Commission is denigrating the importance of the profession and public libraries in general, which will serve to erode the status and impact of the public library in our community. Most professional roles have standards which serve as an important guide for what is needed to manage a job effectively and successfully—for both the institution being served and the individual who is taking the role. This standard uses collective wisdom to protect both—maximizing the possibility of future success and minimizing risk.

**William Carlberg, [beano1458@gmail.com](mailto:beano1458@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am against removing the educational standard for executive directors of larger library systems in Montana. As with any professional job and leadership role, the appropriate educational background serves to equip the person with the broader knowledge and institutional skills to lead effectively. Experience is important and builds over time. We need leaders who have invested time and passion into studying their profession before undertaking a leadership role, especially that of executive director. By removing the standard for our public library, the Commission is denigrating the importance of the profession and public libraries in general, which will serve to erode the status and impact of the public library in our community. Most professional roles have standards which serve as an important guide for what is needed to manage a job effectively and successfully—for both the institution being served and the individual who is taking the role. This standard uses collective wisdom to protect both—maximizing the possibility of future success and minimizing risk.

**Julie Mason, [masonjmdl@gmail.com](mailto:masonjmdl@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Libraries must remain open to all with hours that accommodate working parents and their children. Library cards must be readily accessible. Library curators must be highly qualified, with MA degrees and books must not be banned. READ

**Leslie Budewitz, [leslie@lesliebudewitz.com](mailto:leslie@lesliebudewitz.com)**

Bigfork

I strongly oppose the proposed change to eliminate the requirement of a master's degree in library science or equivalent for libraries serving communities with populations over 25,000. Larger libraries are complex systems involving many moving parts, including collections management, human resources, facilities management, public communication, working with board and county commissioners and other organizations, and much more. Running a modern library requires the full array of skills and experiences that only comes with professional education. It is completely appropriate for the state system to establish such a requirement, rather than to allow individual counties to establish their own lesser requirements, to ensure that residents and library users get the services they deserve, that staffs get the management and direction they need, and that all of us get the benefit of a well-run, innovative, modern library system. As a regular user of ImagineIt in Flathead County, I have been deeply disturbed by the lack of respect and understanding shown by the county commissioners and some board members for what a professional librarian is and does and the education needed to keep the system functioning at a high level. Please reconsider your recommendation and retain the education requirement.

**Janet Hess-Herbert, [janet.hessherbert@gmail.com](mailto:janet.hessherbert@gmail.com)**

Helena

Shame on you to even consider this idea. Your decisions, along with many other organizations as well as representatives, are being influenced by bullying tactics that are being used around our state at numerous governmental levels. This has been a long standing standard and libraries that do not adhere should suffer an appropriate consequence. You know better than anyone the situation at imagineIt in Kalispell. Past and current board members appear to be doing everything in their power, including questioning materials in the library and creating a hostile working environment, to shut this library down. Support your libraries, support the people that run these libraries and do not loosen your standards. In this situation, even with a loosened standard, the work environment was such this director left as well.

**Roger Mitchell, [zinsser@protonmail.com](mailto:zinsser@protonmail.com)**

Stevensville

Please remove the Masters Degree requirement. There is no justification for insisting that a candidate have a certain level of "education" before he or she is "qualified" to manage a local library branch, regardless of the size. Knowledge of the industry and good management skills are essential. The fact that someone has spent at least five years in an institution of "higher learning" does not mean anything except that they spent five years there and received certification in a field. It does not prove that they can manage the operation.

Thank you,  
Roger Mitchell

**Dustn Ogdin, [dustinogdin@gmail.com](mailto:dustinogdin@gmail.com)**

Billings

Montana should not alter standards for our public libraries. Ensuring we have qualified professionals and standards of excellence is essential to maintaining this fundamental pillar of democracy. All public libraries are important to giving citizens access to ideas and information that keep our communities thriving, prosperous, interesting, and innovative. Montana is a rural state, and libraries serve an even more important role to many who have limited access to other knowledge resources. It ain't broke, so don't fix it. Leave it alone and, frankly, leave US alone. Altering these standards is another example of government butting in with a social and political agenda that only serves the interests of a small minority while harming the greater good.

**Steve Faherty, [montanaspf@gmail.com](mailto:montanaspf@gmail.com)**

Helena

I am opposed to this rule change. I believe a master in library science should remain as a required qualification.

**Elizabeth Madden, [bethmadden64@gmail.com](mailto:bethmadden64@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

As a former library employee, and a client of libraries in more than 5 communities I have lived in around Montana, I respectfully ask that the Montana State Library Commission keep the current standard of requiring a Master of Library Science for library directors at our larger libraries. Please uphold the standard of excellence in leadership for these important positions! We need accountability and stability in our Montana library network - there is no reason to lower our current standards. Our libraries are a beacon of support and education to all our communities. Keep them strong and do not lower our standards. Thank you for considering my comments.

**Wade Carroll, [carroll.wade@gmail.com](mailto:carroll.wade@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

We approve of the removal of the degree requirements. The local libraries should have the autonomy to make all such hiring decisions from here forward.

**Evelyn Cahalen, [cahalene@att.net](mailto:cahalene@att.net)**

Marion

As someone who holds a Masters degree, I support higher education. However, education does not replace experience. Requiring a Masters degree limits the candidate pool, and prevents local jurisdictions from being able to hire candidates that meet their needs and hiring standards for the size of their community. I therefore support removing the requirement of a Masters degree from the public library standards.

**Marko Capoferri, [markocapoferri@gmail.com](mailto:markocapoferri@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am firmly opposed to the proposed change that would remove the requirement of a MLIS degree to run a library serving 25,000 or more people. It's a standard that we must maintain in order to preserve the quality of our larger libraries and the services they provide to all. The library is the last

truly egalitarian space in our society, where everything else is a commodity. Things work fine with the current rule. Just because some yahoos up in the Flathead screwed things up for their library, don't punish the rest of us.

**Nina Jackson, [njackson4257@yahoo.com](mailto:njackson4257@yahoo.com)**

Billings

Please do not make any rule changes to the public library standards. As a patron of our libraries I feel it's ever so important that partisanship does not come into play here. Thank you.

**Douglas Turner, [Boyuse@aol.com](mailto:Boyuse@aol.com)**

Red Lodge

I am opposed to this rule change. I support keeping the same high standards in place.

**BARBARA STEVENS,**

[brbrstv4@aol.com](mailto:brbrstv4@aol.com)

GREAT FALLS

I am totally opposed to lowering the academic requirements for the entire state simply because one library, for whatever reason, has difficulty hiring one qualified individual. One of Montana's treasures is our public library system. Let's keep it to its current standard of excellence. Thank you.

**Susan Lee, [suelee000@gmail.com](mailto:suelee000@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

I oppose the change to the rules. Why is the Board trying to dumb down the requirements for running a library? A master's in library science (MLS) degree provides the education necessary to successfully run most libraries. While a Board of Trustees has overall authority, the librarian with an MLS has the education and the skill set to run the library on a day to day basis. Board members are usually not librarians and don't know how libraries work. They depend on the librarian to provide them with the information they need to make appropriate decisions about the library. I've worked for organizations who try to "think outside the box" to find someone because they can't or won't get someone with the experience and training to do the job. It never ended well. The person that they put in charge was clueless on how to make the job work since they didn't know how to run the organization.

**Pamela Haggerty, [wphaggerty@gmail.com](mailto:wphaggerty@gmail.com)**

Billings

I am an Montana native who has used the Montana public library system extensively throughout my life for reading materials, for education, for my children and grandchildren. I also volunteer my time to my library because I believe strongly in the purpose of a public library for all the citizens it serves. I am NOT in favor of the changes that are being proposed by the State Library Commission. In my opinion that would be moving backwards in the standards of excellence needed to ensure that our libraries are the very best they can possibly be for all the people they faithfully serve.

**Doug James, [Doug.James@MoultonBellingham.com](mailto:Doug.James@MoultonBellingham.com)**

Billings

"Subject: Opposition to Proposed Amendment 10.102.1160 Personnel

Dear Members of the Montana Library Commission:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed amendment to Rule 10.102.1160 Personnel, which seeks to eliminate the requirement for directors of libraries serving over 25,000 people to have a Master's in Library Science or equivalent degree. As a dedicated supporter of libraries and having served on the Billings Public Library Foundation Board for many years, I believe it is crucial to maintain the existing standards for library professionals.

Libraries play a pivotal role in our communities, serving as invaluable resources that promote literacy, education, and community engagement. The expertise and knowledge possessed by librarians are fundamental in ensuring that our libraries continue to uphold the highest standards and effectively serve the diverse needs of our communities.

The proposed amendment suggests that local boards should determine library director qualifications based on the size of the community, citing a potential variance in skillsets or knowledge bases required for the position. While recognizing the importance of local autonomy, it is imperative to uphold a minimum standard of education and expertise for library directors, particularly in larger communities.

As someone who actively supported the construction of the new Billings library and has advocated for libraries both nationally and internationally, I firmly believe that librarians deserve our unwavering support and respect. A Master's in Library Science or equivalent degree is a crucial foundation that ensures directors possess the necessary skills to manage complex library systems, navigate evolving information technologies, and provide effective leadership to library staff.

The proposed amendment, if adopted, risks compromising the integrity of our libraries and may result in a decline in the quality of library services offered to our communities. Instead of relinquishing the educational requirements, I urge the Montana Library Commission to explore ways to enhance professional development opportunities for librarians while maintaining the high educational standards that are essential for the effective functioning of our libraries.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I trust that the Commission will carefully weigh the potential consequences of this proposed amendment and continue to prioritize the excellence and integrity of our libraries.

Sincerely,  
Doug James  
1570 Westridge Circle

Billings, MT 59102

**Jim Bonnet, [jbonnet@gmail.com](mailto:jbonnet@gmail.com)**

Kalispell, MT

I support the removal of the "Master of Library Science" mandated by the ALA accreditation. In large urban areas and Universities, there may be a case to be made, but in Montana cities and rural areas, being forced to hire MLS degrees is incompatible with budgets already strained. Montana needs devoted managers with appropriate work resumes in its libraries regardless of the degree.

**Keith Regier, [keithregier@gmail.com](mailto:keithregier@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. It applies to only a few libraries in the state making the rule discriminatory. Let local library boards hire the best candidate they see fit for the community.

**Raymond Mark Rice, [mr2600050@gmail.com](mailto:mr2600050@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Dear Montana State Library Commission, please vote on December 6 to remove the Master's Degree requirement from the Montana Public Library Standards. Also, please retain the 30 other standards that remain.

**Melanie Swenson, [melanies@bresnan.net](mailto:melanies@bresnan.net)**

Kalispell

I feel strongly that a masters degree is an appropriate requirement for a library director, in the same way that many other professions require degrees and education in order to meet state licensure requirements. I believe our libraries are a resource for the community and in support of education for all ages. We need to invest in education and in our libraries and this resolution is a major step back from this much needed investment.

This change is also a reckless step in the wrong direction. What next? Medical licensures not needed? Realtors with no licensing? Lawyers with no need to pass the bar?

I use our library frequently and would greatly prefer a Director with focused masters level education to support the ongoing viability of this service. Please consider before making this change.

**Kenneth Parker, [phule@montana.com](mailto:phule@montana.com)**

Kalispell

I am in favor of the changes to the education requirements for library directors. Times have changed and it is time to bring administrator's down from the crowds.

**Susan Votapka, [suevotapka@gmail.com](mailto:suevotapka@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best decision for their unique situation.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Susan Votapka

**Cliff Tucker, [ctucker8179@gmail.com](mailto:ctucker8179@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support these changes, and appreciate the commission's willingness to make the changes needed to create a better library system. A masters degree does not make someone qualified to run a library in this day and age. Unfortunately it probably does the opposite and means they are saddled with debt and a very specific ideology that doesn't represent a large portion of the communities in this state.

**Jolene Regier, [Regierjolene@gmail.com](mailto:Regierjolene@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Masters Degree requirement for Public Library directors. Those libraries currently without one are proving it is not necessary for a quality program. It is inconsistent to require it of only some. Hiring decisions should be made locally.

Thank you.

**amy brown, [brownfam87@gmail.com](mailto:brownfam87@gmail.com)**

billings

Please do not eliminate the requirement of an MLS for library directors. It is vital that library directors have the skills and knowledge to lead their institutions.

**Marie Celeste Modrow, [lesliemodrow@gmail.com](mailto:lesliemodrow@gmail.com)**

Billings

I am against this amendment change of lowering the accreditation standard for librarians. The "library world" is dynamic, always reflecting the ever changing needs of their community. Being able to understand and address these community needs takes an educated person. Please, don't lower standards!

**John York, [yorkie\\_mt@hotmail.com](mailto:yorkie_mt@hotmail.com)**

Billings

"Dropping the Master's in Library Science from these standards is a huge mistake. I worked as a School Library Media Specialist in Montana schools for 36 years and we depended on these MLS certified specialist as leaders in developing and improving school library media programs and standards throughout our state. This change will detrimentally affect all libraries and the services provided within our state. The events and what has happened in Kalispell with the Imagine If system are the perfect example of the damage that can and will happen.

I encourage you to not make this change.

(Herbert) John York , Jr.  
Billings

**Mary Anne Fowells, [mafowells@hotmail.com](mailto:mafowells@hotmail.com)**

Plentywood

If I go to a hospital for brain surgery, I don't want just any person who works in the facility. I absolutely want the most qualified brain surgeon with the knowledge and experience to provide an outcome that is a success. I do not want to settle for anything less. Qualifications and expertise truly matter. In that vein, I do not understand why in the case of the SLC there is such a push to go backwards and dummy-down the qualifications established for library directors. Do we really want less qualified individuals at the helm of our library system? I certainly hope that is not the case! We are in a time when libraries are under siege and challenged for how they are to be operated and what they can offer. The fairness and openness of our libraries has been a hallmark of American life for generations. There is no reason now to slide backwards and demand less, for whatever reason be it for mere convenience or promotion of one singular ideology over another. That is not what our libraries are about.

**Keith Blaylock, [kblay211@gmail.com](mailto:kblay211@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

"Hello, I oppose any changes to the current Public Library Standards. I do not concur with the proposed changes, and I believe the Montana Library system is perfect the way it is. I also believe the new direction the Public Library System is heading is antithetical to the purpose of Montana libraries serving all Montanan's in every community. A handful of Trustees must not be allowed to foist their ideology ridden ideas onto a system designed for all Montanan's, as not all Montanan's believe the same ideology.

Thank you for allowing comments, and thank you for your time and effort considering this very important issue before you."

**Rod Kuntz, [warpalliance@gmail.com](mailto:warpalliance@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Young Entrepreneur Syndicate

Please support the removal of this degree requirement and empower local library boards to hire a library director that fits our local needs.



Opponents advocate that large libraries need the expertise of a degreed librarian, yet the degree requirement only applies to the director position, and ignores degreed librarians working in other roles. Your large library may have several degreed librarians working as department heads, but their expertise does not count towards fulfilling the state standard.

Further, as someone who consults with businesses of all sizes, I can assure you that degreed candidates, and well credentialed candidates are often NOT the best candidates to actually achieve the best results. This is evidenced by several large corporations including Google, Amazon, and Walmart that have removed degree requirements for managerial candidates. Quite simply, degrees and classroom studies are no substitute from real work and life experience.

It is well past time that government sectors begin to keep pace with their private sector counterparts. Please don't disappoint the local boards by crippling them with unnecessary requirements.

Thank you.

**Jack Hanson, [JackHanson414@gmail.com](mailto:JackHanson414@gmail.com)**

Billings

I urge the Commission to maintain the current administrative rule requiring that directors of libraries serving more than 25,000 people have an advanced degree in library science (or equivalent). Overseeing a large library requires familiarity with complex issues in information science and skill in managing multiple interrelated issues. Advanced training in library science provides that familiarity and develops that skill. Requiring such advanced training for library directors is a basic, necessary -- but certainly not sufficient -- means for us to ensure that our largest public libraries are top notch resources that serve a broad range of community interests. Democracy requires public libraries, and large public libraries require professionally-trained and well-prepared leaders.

**J A Johnston, [mtskeeter@botmail.com](mailto:mtskeeter@botmail.com)**

Whitefish

In regards to the December 2023 hearing on Ammendment10.102.1160 Personnel:

State Library Commissioners:

It is necessary for all libraries to be administered in a professional manner. The larger libraries, those in populous of 25, 000 +, require the additional level of professionalism in administration to meet the needs of all the citizens. The Master of Library and Information Science (MILS) degree of a library director is a necessity to ensure that all the citizens of the populous are served with the highest level of professionalism in the library system.

The library director position isn't all about looking at which books would serve the community best or which authors would be good to have a book talk. The director with a MILS has been specially trained and educated to serve the populous in all aspects of information: its dissemination and of literacy, among other important administrative skills, consisting of, but not limited to:

Accounting, funding, fund raising, board and foundation practices, budget and fiscal management. The U.S. Constitutional rights and amendments and constitutional law, sociology, psychology. Computer science and technology. Library planning, design, building and management. Public safety and available resources. Human resources and personnel management and development.

The MILS program is an intense study of everything informational.

Those are just some of the skill set elements that the library director with a MILS has. Anything short of this extensive training is inadequate to successfully manage a community entity such as a library in a populous exceeding 20,000.

To find out how much the larger town professional librarian, or even the small town director, one with a MILS, has studied, ask one! Find out what their course load contained. How long did it run and what they may have wanted to study further. It is mind blowing. This isn't Meredith Willson's 'Marian the Librarian' from the early 20th century librarian. The MILS librarian is not a manager or wrangler.

I volunteered and then worked for a large library system for many years. The professional librarians (those with the MILS certifications) in many different sections that I worked with knew what they were doing and we had an extremely popular and successful community library for many, many years. We served all walks of life in our library:

children, teens, elders, the marginalized, professionals, volunteer groups, public service meetings. One would say it was one of the jewels in the crown of Montana's public libraries. We also had a 'strong director' formula that worked here. The board members, as members of the community, worked to SUPPORT the library director, not run the library by themselves and override the forward vision held by the director and the staff. I have always said that politics does not belong in the library. This, lowering the standards of leadership in larger libraries, is a political issue.

Please take the time for due diligence in reviewing this amendment.

With respect,

JA Johnston  
Whitefish

**Virginia Waples, [waplesv@yahoo.com](mailto:waplesv@yahoo.com)**

Billings

I am commenting as a now-retired librarian who earned a Master's Degree in Library Science. The degree was not a requirement for managing a school library, but that education made me a much better librarian and library manager than I would have been without it.

I am not sure what David Ingram meant by desiring a “manager with straight business experience...without any agenda except customer service” (Flathead Beacon 10/12/23), but it is hard to figure how a LACK of the skills and knowledge gained in an MLS program can enhance “customer service.”

I worked in Montana libraries for 37 years. It is sad to see the State Library Commission now proposing to lower standards. The people of Montana deserve better.

**Amy Sweet, [amylarasweet@gmail.com](mailto:amylarasweet@gmail.com)**

Red Lodge

Red Lodge Library Trustee

I am writing to say I am not in support of your proposed Amendment to 10.102.1160 for Personnel. Large libraries in Montana already have the flexibility of having someone with a Master in Library Science "or equivalent degree", instead of requiring the MLS. I believe removing the requirement of a Masters degree is opening us up to having underqualified people in the important role of Director. Since this is not a requirement of all employees at a library, just the Director, I feel we should keep the current requirement the way it is.

**Janet Thomson, [jannyt2162@gmail.com](mailto:jannyt2162@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

I am representing myself as a concerned citizen of Montana. Libraries must be appropriately administered by library science professionals, schooled in appropriate curricula.

Please do not change the standard concerning Library Directors in towns of over 25,000 required to have a Master's in Library Science/equivalent. The curriculum for a Master's in Library Science is based on carefully-constructed national standards--the Master's program outlines the basic skills and learnings demanded for library director. This curriculum is the minimum, so that city/county entities are assured that a prospective library director has the basic skills needed for the job. Examine the extremely specific curricula for each library science class, and you will see the knowledge and skills demanded of this highly-trained professional position. With today's demands on libraries for ever-increasing sets of knowledge, a professionally-trained library director is a necessity. Do not amend or change the requirements--they are there to protect Montanans! As a retired curriculum professional I am concerned that national standards are followed so that we have the best library professionals.

**Jim Watson, [Jim@SpringBrookRanch.com](mailto:Jim@SpringBrookRanch.com)**

Kalispell

I am opposed to eliminating the requirement for an MLIS degree for the largest libraries in Montana. ImagineIF library is the only library in the state that is out of compliance with this current, long standing and sensible requirement. Flathead County politicians actively politicized ImagineIF, appointed individuals to the library board that are hostile to the library's mission, and proceeded well aware of the consequences of their actions. Now they want to beg forgiveness by asking for a rule change. Do Not Bail Them Out. The rest of Montana should not backslide because of the failings of one county. Please do not reward this bad behavior. Treat them like grownups, they must live with the consequences of their decisions. ImagineIF has strong community support and an engaged Foundation, in the long run it will survive and prosper.

**Anna Kratz, [annapenner.ray@gmail.com](mailto:annapenner.ray@gmail.com)**

Helena

I respectfully would like to show each Commissioner a MARC Record (please Google it, MACHine Readable Cataloging Record) and ask them each to decipher it. It makes my head spin. Each code means something different. MARC records are just one piece that makes just one of the library databases tick, and it's only one of the things a librarian learns during the first year as they pursue a Masters in Library Sciences or Information Sciences. This specific masters degree makes library directors competent to run every aspect of a library, not just be managers that shelve books. Please, please, reconsider this terrible change to Library Standards, and vote against it, or 'place it back on the shelf'. I agree with the Montana Library Association that this proposal "has denigrated the standing of Montana's library professionals and put the future of library services in Montana at risk. Thank you.

**Colleen O'Brien, [colleen.obrien0@gmail.com](mailto:colleen.obrien0@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please keep the requirement that directors of large libraries in our state hold a Masters of Library Science. Librarians are professionals. The curriculum in library school teaches how to serve the public, develop and maintain collections and uphold the constitution. Libraries are an example of our society at its best--everyone is welcome, materials are available to all regardless of income, social status, politics, race, sexual orientation or personal opinions. Running such an institution, especially one that serves over 25,000 patrons requires diverse skills--skills acquired in library school and on the job.

Flathead County's ImagineIF libraries have been undermined by library board members attempting to further their personal political agendas and force the resignations of librarians against whom they held personal grudges. Please do not allow this insidious, backward-thinking, back-stabbing, anti-first amendment, anti-freedom sentiment to infiltrate and infect our entire state and all of its libraries.

Our freedoms are at risk. The first amendment is at risk. Keep our librarians educated professionals and pay them a living wage. Please, for the good of all of us, stand up to tyranny and maintain the standard that has served our state and its library users well.

I thank you for your time and consideration and the opportunity to comment. I love libraries, please don't undermine them by undermining their standards for professionalism.

Colleen O'Brien

Kalispell, MT

**Jennifer Ball, [jball@mtlib.org](mailto:jball@mtlib.org)**

Columbus

"This comment refers to Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel.

The recent discussions regarding the MSL requirement for a director of a library serving over 25,000 people have landed on the fact that library boards carry the responsibility of determining the educational need of directors they hire. What is not discussed is how well a board understands the operations of a library and the duties a director carries out. While trustees generally have excellent skills and knowledge, unless they have themselves been employed in a library, the full scope of duties and nuances of a library director's responsibilities will be beyond their realm of knowledge. In my library, my board and I work very well together; however, there have been time when the board has proposed a decision that would negatively impact library operations. These decisions arise simply because they do not know the intricacies of my job or library operations. Thankfully, my board is willing to listen, learn, and adjust to best serve patrons.

I have a perspective that is less common because I was hired for my first director position with the agreement that I would obtain my MLIS. I ran two libraries while earning my MLIS. While I did the best I could prior to having library-specific training, my skills in best serving patrons increased exponentially with each class I completed. Library science programs are designed to equip librarians with a variety of skills to include administrative and management duties. The first library budget I completed was a part of my core education. My English degree and my previous business skills were certainly helpful, but it was my Masters of Library and Information Science degree that made the most impact in my success as a director.

If we want Library Directors to succeed, then they must have skills that pertain to their field just as we expect medical professionals to have education appropriate for their positions. I wholeheartedly believe, primarily due to my personal growth as a director as my education was furthered, that an MLIS vital, especially in larger organizations, in running a public service agency such as a library. I think a disservice was done to library patrons when the code regarding an MLS was relaxed in 1990, and I think a larger mistake is about to be made if the MLS requirement is done away with completely.

I understand that it seems as if the larger libraries are targeted, and I would offer that the MSL Commission consider expanding rather than eliminating the MSL/MLIS requirement to include all libraries that can afford a wage sufficient for a degreed library director. It is a fact that library jobs are difficult to find, even more so for those who hold a MLS/MLIS. I was hired on as a director of a library serving just over 9,000 people at \$45,760 with an increase after six months and a positive performance review to \$49,920. My wage has increased significantly since then, but only due to the leaps and bounds by which our library has moved forward. Most of my board members have already sent feedback noting how different their experience was between having non-degreed and degreed directors.

Data from the Public Library Survey just completed would provide the complete picture for the pay range of various degreed librarians to determine a sufficient bottom range to determine what a "sufficient" would be. I ask that you table this issue to allow more time to review the results of the public library survey with the thought that you might increase rather than decrease the MLS/MLIS requirements. Thank you for your service to Montana libraries and your consideration in doing what is best for the patrons we serve.

**Jan Kransky, [jkransky@gmail.com](mailto:jkransky@gmail.com)**  
Billings

I was shocked to read that you are considering lowering the standard for Library Directors' education level. Please remember that there is actually no B.S. or B.A. in Library Science. There are many credits to be taken, creating a minor when majors can be anything from English to Microbiology. A Library Director without the Masters in Library Science would be woefully inadequate at running a public library, because they won't know a thing about it.

Now, I'm not so naive that I don't know there are people who hope all our libraries fail miserably and fade away. I would hope, however, that none of them are making this crucial decision.

Thank you,

Jan Kransky, Retired Montana School Librarian

**Amy Maggio, [Amya723@yahoo.com](mailto:Amya723@yahoo.com)**

Billings

Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

Thank you.

Amy Maggio

**Audra Loyal, [audraloyal@gmail.com](mailto:audraloyal@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Regarding 10.102.1160 - I am opposed to this change. It is vital to have the head of the library (of any size!) have professional training in that field.

Removing this requirement will only deprofessionalize this institution.

**Honore Bray, [beyondstacks@gmail.com](mailto:beyondstacks@gmail.com)**

Hall

Library Directors need a specific skill set learned in a Masters Program. Libraries are a place where citizens, all citizens have an opportunity to be educated. The Masters Degree prepares one for providing this opportunity. It also prepares one for budgets, and all aspects of management.

Please do not change this aspect of the standards. Library Boards have a wide variety of qualified people to choose from. When funding is attached to standards communities should be required to step up or forfeit the funding. Do not lower the quality of public libraries.

**Lynn Allison, [riclynallison@msn.com](mailto:riclynallison@msn.com)**

Great Falls

I am opposed to the rule change that would eliminate the Master's Degree requirement for library directors in Montana cities. The library in Kalispell is the only library which has been unable to attract a qualified candidate for the director's position, due largely to the library board's actions and

actions by community members. Heading up a modern library is a complex and demanding profession and involves more than checking out books. It requires oversight of budgetary matters, technology innovations, community interaction and outreach, legal matters, managing staffing, interaction with all community populations, including homeless and mentally ill individuals. Public libraries have become community centers where services such as legal, medical and even tax preparation take place. Libraries provide a bridge for those who have no access to technology and will fall even further behind without library assistance. It is imperative that Montana continues to retain this standard and assure Montanans have strong, vibrant libraries able to respond to the community's changing needs.

**Jared Sibbitt, [jared\\_sibbitt@hotmail.com](mailto:jared_sibbitt@hotmail.com)**

Bigfork

I write to express opposition to the proposed change of standards related to Directors of libraries in larger communities, Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel. The requirement to have a MLS or equivalent degree is fully appropriate, indeed it is the reason such degrees exist in the first place, to prepare professionals for the unique challenges and to possess them of the needed knowledge and skills to run these unique public institutions. A desire to lower the standard to make it easier to find a candidate that will accept a lower wage or be more malleable to the desires of a local library board is insufficient reason to change the rule. As so many of these board members and members of this Commission also lack a degree in Library Science, I would like to remind them that ignorance of the type of expertise involved does not mean that there is no expertise involved. Instead, a wise Commissioner would seek the advice of experts in the field of Library Science who are qualified to speak to such issues. A task force, such as the one appointed to this matter, and who published their recommendation to NOT change the rule, would be precisely the type of advice a wise Commissioner might follow.

**Kelly Berkram, [kberkram@yahoo.com](mailto:kberkram@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

Please do NOT change the public library standards. We should not lower our standards—we should strive for excellence!

**Brian Friess, [bmfriess@charter.net](mailto:bmfriess@charter.net)**

Kalispell

I support the rule changes to the public library standards to allow for local libraries to choose anyone they feel is qualified to fill the library director position. Just as MLA left the ALA with good reason, local libraries should be free from unnecessary entanglement and state-level over-sight or control. Local libraries will function best when under local control and oversight to protect the interest of their community.

**Wade Loyning, [Loyningwade@gmail.com](mailto:Loyningwade@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Don't change the requirements for a graduate degree to be a library director. Mediocre candidates will lead to mediocre libraries. Striving for mediocrity is not what we want, this standard proposal is a ridiculous excuse to make someone's job easier. Keepers of knowledge is one of histories most important positions and it should be treated with the respect it deserves.

**Debra Bernardi, [debbernardimontana@gmail.com](mailto:debbernardimontana@gmail.com)**

Helena

I am horrified that the state would consider hiring people to direct libraries that have do not have the professional training (including the professional education) needed to do so. The rampant suspicion of higher education in our state must be stopped. What's next? Doctors without degrees can practice medicine? (If the community likes their politics??) Is that where we going? Keep the professional requirements for library directorships as they are.

**Marilyn Trevino, [Bigskydancer4@gmail.com](mailto:Bigskydancer4@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I support removal of the MLS degree requirement and leaving it as a consideration in the hiring process. Montana libraries should select the proper candidate the meets the needs of the business and such a requirement hinders libraries.

**Randa Froebel, [Racosh@msn.com](mailto:Racosh@msn.com)**

Lakeside

I strongly encourage the State Library Board to vote NO on this resolution. Standards need to be maintained not lowered. The patron use at our Montana libraries is higher than ever and their role is our communities is so very important. Please retain the highest standards for these vital, public and inclusive community institutions.

**Glenda Skeim, [Glenda.skeim@gmail.com](mailto:Glenda.skeim@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please keep the high standards requiring library directors to have a masters degree. The additional education of a director is essential in helping to keep a community healthy and not short sighted. Imagine If library has been in chaos for the past few years due to the direction the board of trustees has moved. Please don't let their lower standards affect the rest of Montana's library system.

Glenda Skeim

**Bruce Guthrie, [guthrie.kalispell@fmail.com](mailto:guthrie.kalispell@fmail.com)**

Kalispell

I believe if would be a grave mistake to change this standard. People who direct libraries should have the training and expertise that a Masters degree brings. Lowering this standard would create far reaching negative consequences across the state. Please maintain the status quo.

**Katie Peterman, [kpmcdougall@gmail.com](mailto:kpmcdougall@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I oppose the rule change that the commission has proposed, and I deeply question the commission's motivation for the rule change. It seems obvious to me that a library director be an expert in library science and hold at least a masters degree in this specialty.



I agree with the MT Library Association executive board that eliminating the current standard ""denigrated the standing of Montana's library professionals and put the future of library services in Montana at risk.""

OUR public libraries are multifaceted, continually changing environments for learning and we need experts—real experts with actual education in this field—at the helm.

I feel very suspicious now of the Montana State Library Commission, as I feel this move has undertones of controlling what Montanans learn and have access to.

Thank you,  
Katie Peterman, DVM  
Missoula, MT

**Trish Schreiber, [Schreibered@gmail.com](mailto:Schreibered@gmail.com)**

Helmville

Local control is especially important in matters of hiring. The current, rigid requirements are holding our state back rather than helping us project into the future. I support the Commission's proposal to allow local libraries, regardless of size, to make their own decisions about who to hire to run the library. If there is one thing human beings are good at, it's adaptation. It's time to adapt the rules.

**Elise Strong, [Elisestrong@yahoo.com](mailto:Elisestrong@yahoo.com)**

Bozeman

I oppose changes to the existing requirements. I believe that a MS in library science is essential and I believe that people not educated in this cannot know what they don't know. Please hold

High our value of education and learning standards- do not allow people uneducated in library science to change this important institution & standard.

**Sally Behr Schendel, [sbehraschendel@gmail.com](mailto:sbehraschendel@gmail.com)**

Sheridan

I do not support dropping the requirement for a master's degree for library directors in Montana. As a retired k-12 public school librarian, I firmly believe we must maintain this professional standard while supporting local library boards' ability to manage their libraries so as to be responsive to their own community needs.

**Jeanie Alderson, [jeaniealderson@gmail.com](mailto:jeaniealderson@gmail.com)**

Birney

To Whom it May Concern:

Our state's library's are a vital resource to our communities and or state. ALL libraries should be directed by qualified, educated and trained directors. It is imperative that our libraries remain vibrant and healthy. Montanans deserve libraries. We deserve to have our libraries compete with those around the country. This amendment to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in

Library Science or equivalent degree is reckless and dangerous and does not serve the best interest of Montanans. Please do not allow this amendment to pass or to stand.

Sincerely,  
Jeanie Alderson

**Mark Brady, [mbrady18@me.com](mailto:mbrady18@me.com)**

Bigfork

I support your decision to allow the towns and counties to decide who they choose to hire in their libraries. I base this on two reasons:

I believe in Montana we cherish the right to make local decisions locally.

The primary source of funding for libraries is counties and cities. Those local bodies should choose the employees spending their dollars.

Thank you,  
Mark Brady

**Kathy McKay, [onewave111@yahoo.com](mailto:onewave111@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I am strongly opposed to the proposed amendment that would drop the requirement of a graduate degree for library directors in communities of 25,000 or less. Requiring an MLA degree is an important way to ensure excellence in library staffing as well as strong collections that serve all residents. I have been an active patron of the Kalispell library (and the Flathead County library system) since 1987, and I greatly appreciate the work of past library directors to serve the county. Please do not lower the standards for our library system.

**Ben Mason, [bjm1764@outlook.com](mailto:bjm1764@outlook.com)**

Missoula

DO NOT remove this requirement for large libraries in Montana. Librarians do not want this and most Montanan's don't either. Please do not sacrifice the Montana library system on the altar of brief political momentum.

**Tanya Cunningham, [tanya.cunningham@mac.com](mailto:tanya.cunningham@mac.com)**

Bozeman

I am opposed to the new rule change .

**Linda Jones, 1615 Hauser Blvd**

Helena

Myself and my granddaughters

I'm against these rule changes. A library scientist is trained in all areas of a library. They have studied literature for all different ages and interests. They understand the Dewey Decimal System and use of computers to file and find books. They're able to help anyone to enter the library with a question. Please don't dumb down our libraries! They are such an asset to our communities.

**Pamela Murnion, [pamelamurnion@gmail.com](mailto:pamelamurnion@gmail.com)**

Helena

As a retired educator, I realize the importance of highly skilled professionals in positions of leadership. I urge the State Library Commission to leave the current Public Library Standards unchanged, requiring library directors to have a Master degree in Library Science.

**Judy Hay, [hayjudyl@gmail.com](mailto:hayjudyl@gmail.com)**

Helena

Please leave the current library standards as they are. The proposed changes eat at the integrity of our libraries across the state and erode the quality of publicly accessible knowledge so important to a free society. Do not change the standards.

**Jody Olmstead, [tomandjody6@gmail.com](mailto:tomandjody6@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Leave the Public Library standards unchanged.

**Linda Sarver-Addington, [laddingtoncpa@gmail.com](mailto:laddingtoncpa@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I implore you to keep the education requirements (masters degree) for our state library directors. Please do not "dumb down" to the common denominator by reducing education requirements. We need directors with advanced education to not only navigate the complexities that modern libraries face regarding various mediums but also we need educated directors who will fight against censorship and false narratives that permeate from a minority of community members. A well-educated director will help provide a community asset for all to enjoy and learn, creating a better educated community as a result. It seems that the easy answer these days is to just reduce any education requirement that use to be a standard, so that an easy result can be achieved. The results of these actions will be an ignorant populace, easily led by the nose, who barely understand their community and have no idea about the big wide world and other human beings not like them. To try and achieve what has been lost at that point, will take decades to reclaim. All actions have ripple effects, and this seems to be the first step of getting rid of libraries all together. Please keep the masters degree standard for library directors of communities over 25k.

**Julie Mitchell, [schoolsurvey@hotmail.com](mailto:schoolsurvey@hotmail.com)**

Bigfork

My husband and I love the Imagine If public library system and are active and longtime customers. It is essential to maintain the standards currently in place in order for library leadership to maintain the accountability and excellence that citizens in Montana who use the library have come to expect from a publicly funded institution designed to meet the reading interests of the community. Library science is a rigorous academic pursuit

and Montanans deserve library leadership who have undertaken the academic training to continue to offer high quality library services to communities across Montana. Please maintain the standards which are currently in place — lowering standards does not represent who we are as Montanans.

**John Myers, [jmyers@missoulacounty.us](mailto:jmyers@missoulacounty.us)**

Missoula

**Directors of such large libraries should be required to have a Master's degree in Library Science.**

**Brian Putnam, [blp59901@gmail.com](mailto:blp59901@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Former Montana State Legislator

Regarding "Amendment to 10.102.1160", I am against this proposal. I believe that it is very reasonable to require the director of a large library to have a Masters in a field related to libraries. This helps to keep the professionalism at a high level, and I believe that is best for the community and patrons of the libraries.

**Elizabeth Sheafor, [bsheafor@gmail.com](mailto:bsheafor@gmail.com)**

Helena

Removing the requirement for a Master in Library Science for directors will directly impact the ability of a library to function properly. A librarian with an MLS has been specifically trained to manage and organize collections in a way that benefits users.

**Adrian Utsch, [utschy@yahoo.com](mailto:utschy@yahoo.com)**

Bozeman

Please do not change educational requirement rules for librarians in cities over 25,000. I would like MT to continue having well educated librarians who are trained in the history, purpose and management of libraries for all citizens.

**Deborah Tilden, [deborah@lifevictory.com](mailto:deborah@lifevictory.com)**

Stevensville

The healthy, clear minds of future generations are at stake. I personally represent the children. Enhancing a healthy mind. LifeVictory Enterprises LLC promotes healthy, unique, purpose driven mindsets and resources.

I support REMOVING the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation and community. The need for good literature and local control is vital to providing a high quality library learning environment.

**Barb Olsen, [barbolsen50@gmail.com](mailto:barbolsen50@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please don't change the existing standards for our Public Libraries. They have served public interests well for many years and should not be tweaked to support the current wave of thought spewing up throughout our state or country. Everyone, whether adult or young people, with their parents consent, should be free to choose and read the literature they choose. That's what a free country allows and what we, as free citizens, should expect. No one small body of people, regardless of their position, should hold sway over the freedom of others to choose literature, books, magazines, publications that their neighbors value and hold important. We may not agree with the thoughts and opinions of others, but we should not, as outsiders, make those selections or limit those selections, for them. Please choose to let what has worked well in the past remain in place! Our Public Libraries are a treasured and sacred place for each citizen and should be allowed to remain exactly that.

Thank you.

**Matthew Brake, [mbrakemt@gmail.com](mailto:mbrakemt@gmail.com)**

East Glacier Park

I believe the Public Library Standards should remain as they are and that a graduate degree should be a minimum qualification. In times where disinformation and propaganda is ever present, we highly qualified individuals safe guarding our libraries.

**Elizabeth Corbin, [ecorbin610@gmail.com](mailto:ecorbin610@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Requiring an advanced degree for a library Director is ridiculous in Montana. We have many libraries in rural areas who cannot afford the salary for someone with an advanced degree. Additionally, academia turns out people with one viewpoint. We need more than one viewpoint in leadership.

**Amy Conrey Andreas, [amyconreyandreas@gmail.com](mailto:amyconreyandreas@gmail.com)**

East Glacier Park

As a high school librarian and an enthusiastic supporter of public libraries, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel, which suggests a modification to the educational requirements for directors of Montana Public Libraries. The current standard, requiring a Master's in Library Science or an equivalent degree, is a crucial criterion that ensures the highest level of professionalism, expertise, and service for the benefit of Montana's communities.

Maintaining this basic educational standard is of paramount importance in light of current research that underscores the critical role library directors play in fostering literacy, community engagement, and information access. Studies consistently show that library directors with advanced degrees in Library Science are better equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of information and technology, leading to more effective and innovative library services.

Libraries are not merely repositories of books; they are dynamic hubs that provide a wide array of services, including digital literacy programs, community outreach initiatives, and technology access. Library directors serve as the driving force behind these endeavors, requiring a deep understanding of library management, information science, and community development.

Dropping the Masters level educational requirements for library directors would be a disservice to the people of Montana for several reasons. Firstly, it risks compromising the quality of library services, hindering the ability of libraries to adapt to emerging technologies and changing community needs. Secondly, it could diminish the credibility of public libraries in the eyes of funding organizations, policymakers, and the public, potentially leading to reduced support for these essential community institutions.

Moreover, maintaining a high educational standard for library directors aligns with the broader national trend of recognizing the critical role that libraries play in promoting education, information access, and community development. Across the country, many states are moving towards strengthening educational requirements for library professionals, acknowledging the complex and multifaceted nature of modern library services.

In conclusion, I urge the Montana State Library Commission to reconsider the proposed amendment and to maintain the current educational requirements for directors of Montana Public Libraries. Doing so will safeguard the integrity of library services, ensuring that communities across the state continue to benefit from the expertise and dedication of qualified professionals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that you will consider the long-term implications of this proposed change and make a decision that prioritizes the educational needs of our communities.

**Judy Olsen, [judester@gmail.com](mailto:judester@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Teacher for 40 years

DO NOT REMOVE THE MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIANS FROM MONTANA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES! Going backward is not progress.

**Taalyr Claridge, [taalyr@yahoo.com](mailto:taalyr@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I firmly support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their particular area, while continuing to maintain other important standards for optimal hiring practices.

Libraries offer a local service, and those directing the actions of our local libraries should not be encumbered by a state dictated standard that excludes well rounded, experienced candidates who's expertise may be uniquely suited to the area where they wish to work.

Moreover, as only a few libraries in the state of Montana are subject to these standards, it would behoove the commission to ensure continuity across all library organizations.

**Laura Rhodes, [laurapointearbor@live.com](mailto:laurapointearbor@live.com)**

Kalispell

Hiring the person most fit for a position does not necessarily mean that a specific degree has been conferred on the applicant. Please remove the requirement of a Masters in Library Science from the job description of a Library Director in Montana. This obligation is not the only way to prepare for directing a library.

**Susan Sanders, [sanders@interbel.net](mailto:sanders@interbel.net)**

Kalispell

I am solidly AGAINST changing the education requirements for library directors in the larger population areas of Montana. Requiring a master's degree for these important library director positions is key to maintaining the high quality of libraries in this state. Please keep the current high standards and not bend to the negative views of a small partisan group.

**Tom Finkle, [jabsog002@gmail.com](mailto:jabsog002@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Jana Goodman, [janamontana@live.com](mailto:janamontana@live.com)**

Kalispell

I am opposed to the proposed changes.

There is no need to lower the standards. We need to strive for excellence in our libraries.

**Richard Edelen, [mobyrik@gmail.com](mailto:mobyrik@gmail.com)**

Helena

Please leave the Public Library Standards administrative rules as they are. Do not weaken them. You are familiar with all the talking points. I will not repeat them. Keep the standards high.

**Lynn Havens, [lhavens@montanasky.net](mailto:lhavens@montanasky.net)**

Kalispell

I was an educator in the Kalispell Public Schools for 20 years and an educational consultant for about 10 years after that. I value our library system both in Kalispell and in the state of Montana. Libraries are a critical and extremely valuable resource for all citizens. For this reason, I urge you to keep the existing requirements for library directors. The Master's degree requirement will assure and maintain quality in our library systems.

**Sheila Ann Shapiro, [sheshapiro@centurytel.net](mailto:sheshapiro@centurytel.net)**

Whitefish

I do NOT support eliminating a Master's degree. This seems to be a step backwards instead of forwards. Doesn't make any sense. We want the best qualified personnel for higher standards.

**Charles Wheeler, [sagebrushgoldens@earthlink.net](mailto:sagebrushgoldens@earthlink.net)**

Ronan

The current standards should not be changed! In particular eliminating the requirement for a Masters Degree in Library Science is foolish, limiting, and unwarranted. Libraries are incredibly important public repositories and this attempt to water down requirements reeks of politics rather than care for the preservation and curation of information as well as the provide accesibility.

**Diane Bagby, [dbagby413@gmail.com](mailto:dbagby413@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Leave the rules as they stand. The library provides public access to a wide range of information. Selection and distribution should be under the guidance of a knowledgeable librarian.

**Gianna Savoie, [Giannasavoie@gmail.com](mailto:Giannasavoie@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I strongly oppose altering the standards on public libraries. Head librarians should absolutely have a Masters or equivalent in Library Science. As an educator and CEO of a Montana based business, it is CRITICAL to have those positions filled by those who have been trained in library science. This NOT at all just about checking out books. Removing this standard will lead to the dumbing down of Montana and leave us behind. Those roles involve research and a specialized depth of knowledge and should be led by those with proper training and skills.

**STEPHANIE WALLS, [tcswalls@yahoo.com](mailto:tcswalls@yahoo.com)**

Whitefish

I do not support this amendment. Sufficient education, qualifications and well thought out standards are important to keep in place for heading up our libraries in as many communities as possible in Montana. Local whims or power grabs have no place in this domain.

Thank you for considering my point of view.

**Aaron Pitman, [pitman76@gmail.com](mailto:pitman76@gmail.com)**

Whitefish

I oppose any change regarding a library director's education requirements. Operating a large library is a complex process that requires significant education and training as would be expected with any high level specialized job. Libraries are an incredibly important resource for a community and having high standards for employment helps ensure adequate individuals are staffing these positions.

**Anne Kish, [annekish@gmail.com](mailto:annekish@gmail.com)**

Butte, MT

The Montana Chapter of the ACRL



Montana's Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) supports the Administrative Rules of Montana 10.102.1160 (7) as it stands. The MT ACRL recognizes the Master of Library Science Degree and the Master of Library and Information Science degree as the appropriate professional terminal degrees for Library Directors.

During the rigorous process of earning an MLS (or related terminal degree), future Library Directors study the philosophies and theories of library and information science. As Library Directors, that foundational understanding of concepts such as information behavior and information ethics serves as the bedrock of knowledge on which Library Directors conduct staff training and on which they base strategic decisions about the library operation as a whole as well as day-to-day decisions. The ACRL opposes any erosion to the current professional qualifications required of Library Directors.

As with all professions in Montana, librarians rely on one another for knowledge-sharing, mentorship, and support. Montana's Professional Library Directors with appropriate degrees provide critical services to the communities in which the Library Directors serve and they provide state-wide support to Teacher Librarians and Public Library Staff who haven't had the opportunity to engage in the work of earning an advanced library degree.

Fostering the profession is a major tenet of librarianship. Library Directors can't foster the profession if they lack the education necessary to foster the profession. The mentorship provided by these qualified library leaders are invaluable to the well-being of the state-wide library community.

This comment is familiar because it is very similar to the MT ACRL comment recently provided to the Public Library Standards Task Force. The MT ACRL supports the conclusion of the Public Library Standards Task Force, appointed by the Montana State Library Commission, to continue to support achievable professional standards in Montana's public libraries. The MT ACRL commends the good work of the Commission-appointed Task Force members and urges the State Library Commission to heed the advice of the experts in the field.

Anne Kish, MLIS  
Chair, Montana Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries

**Renal Lind, [drlind14@gmail.com](mailto:drlind14@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support to remove the masters degree requirement. I want my local library board to hire the best candidate for the job.

**Jeff Gutierrez, [jeff.gutie79@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.gutie79@gmail.com)**

Missoula

While I recognize that communities are all unique, this effort at local control goes too far. The requirement of an MLS/MLIS degree is to ensure thorough knowledge of what is realistically required to run a library for a larger population. Removing the requirement serves no practical purpose and will actually harm the operations of these libraries. No other skillset or knowledge base better prepares an individual for such a position, and setting the stage for unqualified people to take the helm is immensely impractical.

**Douglas Nicholson, [douglas.nicholson@gmail.com](mailto:douglas.nicholson@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

As someone who holds a Master's degree, I know firsthand that in itself, the Masters Degree is somewhat meaningless. It only means you have learnt obtained an academic qualification. It does not speak to competency or knowledge.

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that citizens can make a hiring decision locally, so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have, so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Vicki Hoyt, [mtvicki58@yahoo.com](mailto:mtvicki58@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I am writing to add my voice to those that are respectfully requesting the commission NOT change the requirement for a Library Director serving over 25,000 people to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree. Would we lower the standard for a Police or Fire Dept Chief? City Manager? There are many positions where the education and degree are necessary and important. Library Director is in that category as well. Please leave the requirement in place and not change it especially due to \* insert reason/excuse here \* as an easy way out to fill the position. How would you feel as a Library Director who has done the work and invested the money in their education to see someone hired without having done the same? Unfair at the very least comes to mind. Libraries need strong and steady leadership which will in turn energize the staff and the communities they serve. Thank you.

**Trista Moody, [wisetr10@gmail.com](mailto:wisetr10@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Good afternoon, I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. This will allow my local library board to hire the best candidate for the position, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have strat to their name. I personally hold a degree and see the value in one, but not as it applies to this situation. Thank you.

**Jim Wickel, [jimwickel@yahoo.com](mailto:jimwickel@yahoo.com)**

Missoula

Please leave the rules as they were. We have an excellent library system.

**Jackie Jones, [jackiejonesdmd@yahoo.com](mailto:jackiejonesdmd@yahoo.com)**

Missoula

Please do not change the rules. Our public libraries are too important to our communities to allow the standards to be lowered.

**Greg Notess, [greg@notess.com](mailto:greg@notess.com)**

Columbia Falls

I do NOT support this change. All public libraries that can afford to hire a professional library director (one with a Masters in Library Science) should do so. If anything, the requirement should be expanded to more of the larger public library systems. As in any profession, a few individuals without the degree may possess some of the background and knowledge, that is a rare case. Instead, getting rid of such a degree requirement seems to clearly being pushed by those who would rather hire less qualified directors who match library board members politics or philosophy. I have unfortunately seen this mismanagement by the board here in Flathead County. The board had driven out knowledgeable, qualified, and talented directors in what appears to be a petty power play. Now there is a push to expand that to other library districts. Imagine IF could have hired and kept librarians with an MLS. Instead, the board chose not to and expressed that they were willing to lose state support. Now that director is leaving. The example here in the Flathead should cause the state commission to consider expanding the requirement rather than doing away with it.

**Ashley Noonan, [ashley.noonan20@gmail.com](mailto:ashley.noonan20@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

**Connie Ciabaton, [ConstanceDale@yahoo.com](mailto:ConstanceDale@yahoo.com)**

Bigfork

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

**Nevin Graves, [nevin.k.graves@gmail.com](mailto:nevin.k.graves@gmail.com)**

Missoula

This rule change is a disgrace and a disservice to our publicly-funded libraries. The standards of educational accomplishment currently in place are important safeguards that ensure library guests receive competent professional administration of public resources.

**Chany Ockert, [Chany@servingnonprofits.com](mailto:Chany@servingnonprofits.com)**

Bigfork

Prior to finalizing the change to the educational requirements of Library Directors, I request that you consider and vote on what standards, other than educational requirements, that the Commission will enforce to ensure our tax dollars are stewarded wisely.

When ImagineIF Libraries trustees chose to hire a director without meeting the educational requirements, they expressly noted that they wanted a director with a business management perspective. Yet, they did not follow standard business practice in providing professional development funds and time, executive coaching, or business mentorship to enable the library director to be successful.

Yes, prior to her hire, I was opposed because I felt the leap to ImagineIF Libraries in the complexity of the position was too large AND, if the ImagineIF Libraries position was too overwhelming, it would be challenging for her to find a lower level position.

Once Ashley Cummins was hired as library director, I sought, as a private citizen, to help her be successful. One of my clients is a library system with 19 branches in another state. The library director of that out-of-state system was hired under similar circumstances of community pushback - unqualified, a personal friend of the mayor, and lacking the educational requirements. Over the course of 10 years, that director engaged the community and is now a beloved, award-winning library director. As a personal favor to me, this client, this library director, was willing to mentor Ashley in her role as ImagineIF Library Director. (It wasn't through lack of trying on my end or the mentor's end that the mentorship didn't happen.) Our libraries are too important to rely on personal favors from private citizens to help library directors be successful.

The ImagineIF Libraries trustees didn't provide Ashley the time or funds to receive outside support or continue classes to obtain her degree. They did not assist her in building relationships in the community. They hung her out to dry and then blamed the community. Instead, they could have worked to help her be successful. They could have followed standard business practices, but they didn't provide her with the tools to be successful.

I am concerned that, if the educational requirements are removed, then other Montana library systems will do the same - hire library directors far beyond their skill levels and then neglect professional development, executive coaching or business mentorship needs. When that happens, turnover will increase and taxpayer dollars will be wasted.

Please keep the educational requirements in place.

If you are unwilling, then please require that the professional development, executive coaching or business mentorship be provided along with a professional development plan for the library director to attain success in their position.

**Anna Galindo, [annajgalindo@yahoo.com](mailto:annajgalindo@yahoo.com)**

Bozeman

Please do not remove this requirement. the public benefits by having trained, specifically educated professionals to provide this critical service.

**Heidi Lauman, [lauman.heidi@outlook.com](mailto:lauman.heidi@outlook.com)**

Columbia Falls

Is anyone actually pretending we don't know the true agenda behind these proposed changes? It's clearly a way to cut corners. It's clearly a plan to put unqualified people in library positions to be manipulated and pressured into following the narrow and restrictive political agenda of certain Board

of Trustee members. Can we stop the madness, please? The library system in Montana and the legacy of libraries in general deserve better. Expecting excellence and proper educational degrees from our librarians leads to excellence and the ideal functioning of our libraries. It shows a lack of respect for the profession to suggest that a library should be run by folks who do not possess the traditionally required educational background.

**Sandra Graham, 3608 Kiowa Trail**

Billings

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

**George Graham, [georgeagraham@live.com](mailto:georgeagraham@live.com)**

Billings

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

**Heather Higgs, [heatherhiggs@hotmail.com](mailto:heatherhiggs@hotmail.com)**

Bozeman

I support the changes proposed by the Montana Library Commission. A Library Director's duties do not necessitate an MLS degree as these duties are oriented toward human resources, financial management, and building operations.

**Susan Brown, [brownjs2@bresnan.net](mailto:brownjs2@bresnan.net)**

Missoula

I am definitely against the proposal to eliminate the requirement of a Master's Degree for library directors. We need continued accountability, stability and excellence that we have enjoyed from our library directors. We invest a great deal of tax money to assure continuing education in our community. I feel so blessed to be able to access such a wonderful library network in the state of Montana.

**Linda Harmon, [Harmonlinda0@gmail.com](mailto:Harmonlinda0@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

The best candidate should be reviewed by the board with public input. It is quite obvious that having a Masters degree in any program does not necessarily make you the best candidate. It just means you have a degree, I too hold a degree but that doesn't make me the best because of it.

**Eileen Melby, [Immelbs@midrivers.com](mailto:Immelbs@midrivers.com)**

Glendive

retired high school librarian

Please do not lower your standards in regard to library training. A community of over 25,000 certainly deserves a librarian with a masters in library science. If the community wants other specialized qualifications or specialties, they can add those to their requirements. We live in a world where false information is easily spread, and we need well-trained librarians who can identify and provide valid information sources and teach students and patrons to do the same. Good librarians know how to organize information in a tech environment, manage tax dollars to benefit the community they serve, work with staff successfully, to select materials for a wide variety of patrons, and those are just some of the important abilities needed for the job.

Libraries are every bit as important today as they were in the past. Don't lower the bar!

Thank you,  
Eileen Melby

**Michael Marino, [mjmarino30@gmail.com](mailto:mjmarino30@gmail.com)**

Billings

I am a journalist. I did not have to have a master's degree in journalism to enter into this profession. I simply had to have the right passion for it, and a willingness to learn the job and everything that goes along with it.

**Joan D'Aoust, [jcdaoust406@gmail.com](mailto:jcdaoust406@gmail.com)**

Helena

I strongly urge that the qualifications for library directors continue to include a degree in library science. It is essential that a library director have the vision and skills gained in a graduate studies and a degree in library science. Do we want a person who has never studied accounting to be a government accountant or a person with no legal degree to be working as an attorney for any government body? Why should standards be lowered for any profession? Please consider this response and make no changes.

**Lynne Brett, [dc4life99@hotmail.com](mailto:dc4life99@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Keep the requirement for library directors to hold Master's degree in Library Science. We want library professionals in charge of our libraries so they can make informed and intelligent decisions regarding their library, just as we want our physicians to have a medical degree or our teachers to have teaching certificates, etc.

**Mellissa Wood, [Mrosie21@gmail.com](mailto:Mrosie21@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I oppose the proposed changes to the public library standard. As a resident of Kalispell I have followed and have participated in many board meetings at the Kalispell Imaginelf Library and surrounds satellites in the valley. I'm a mother of three who uses the library weekly for materials for my children at home and also as material for my child's preschool class. Children's story time is a favorite for my children.

I hold a unique perspective that can help inform this standard because the current interim Director and previous formal Director for our library don't and didn't meet the state qualifications. The "problems" the Kalispell library system has in finding and keeping a Director with a master's degree in library science, and their decision to hire someone without this standard and qualification, has nothing to do with choosing a better fit for our community. Even with our local boards decision to hire someone without these qualifications, and forego state funding for our library, they still struggle to find someone to hold this position. Their lack of qualified applicants for library director is a result of partisanship attitudes on the part of the board and the hostility they've created at the library due to their actions and blatant lack of support for the library Director and staff. There are qualified applicants within our valley and even who work at the library currently, but they don't have any desire to be hired or fired on the whim of board members and value job stability for themselves and their families. They can't risk having to find a new job based on partisan whims and mismanagement by the board. The state of Montana is at risk of giving more power to partisan boards to make decisions on library Directors that don't serve the community as best they can with education and experience in library science, but served agendas of boards.

If this standard is changed, it will continue to negatively affect the community in which I live, degrading the quality of Montana libraries and leading to potential mismanagement with inexperienced applicants. Library boards should work with and support library staff so they attract qualified candidates that have strong leadership and education to lead the library programs, budgets, and community relationships in an educated and non-partisan way. Part of attracting qualified applicants is paying library directors a competitive and living wage for the area in which they live, and this needs to be supported by local boards and communities. Library boards and directors should be held to the highest standard to best serve the people of Montana and better the future of our children. Putting more power in the hands of local boards doesn't help maintain high standards, in my experience in Kalispell, it degrades them by creating an attitude of mistrust of education and of directors who actually use their skills and education to make well-informed decisions for the best management of their libraries.

I encourage you to keep the current library standards in place to continue to produce high quality libraries for our communities. The education qualifications should be kept in place to help guide libraries by the science and best management practices that are standard throughout our nation, instead of changing them to fit partisan agendas of local library boards.

**Reuben Cochran, [Reuben\\_office@yahoo.com](mailto:Reuben_office@yahoo.com)**

Twin Bridges

There is zero reason for a librarian to be required to have a Masters in Library Science at libraries that service over 25,000 people. For that matter, there's no reason for a librarian to be required to have a college degree. My wife is not a college grad but is one of the most well read people in Montana. She has a passion for reading and books and our personal library reflects that. That she can't be a librarian but likely could work a minimum wage job in a library shows the exclusivity that librarians have built for themselves. If training to be a librarian is truly required, it should be a 2 year degree offered at community colleges. Anything more is self aggrandizing.

Eliminate the requirement of having a Masters in Library Science. Any effective manager should be able to properly run a library. And any personable, smart, even keeled person with a passion for books and people should be able to be a librarian.

**Laura Bovard, [lbovard@aol.com](mailto:lbovard@aol.com)**

Missoula

Retired school librarian for the Missoula International School

I am opposed to the proposed changes. I was a school librarian for a independent school in Missoula. I worked with the Montana Shared Catalog for over 15 years (which is an outstanding organization). I do not have an advanced degree in library science as it was not required in an independent school, so I relied heavily on my colleagues in the profession for cataloging, reporting and other administrative functions. While so much in a library is now automated, the basic understanding of the role of librarians and how to best serve their communities is important. I believe a director should possess an advanced degree that reflects their commitment to the science and art of library management. In fact, they should probably also have a advanced degree in business management or public administration also. Lowering the standards so that anyone can apply will dilute and threaten the integrity of the library system. A director should demonstrate their knowledge through the pursuit of a library science degree. We should be creating avenues for more people to get this degree rather than diminish the importance.

**Verne & Nancy House, [house.vw@gmail.com](mailto:house.vw@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. Nancy and I are most thankful for our family, but libraries are near the top of our list. The rule changes proposed should be rejected, all of them. They serve no good purpose and for sure they will harm our libraries. Our libraries should continue to be professionally managed, and financial support should be strong, just like community support. Please focus on what libraries can do for all Montana communities and seek ways to support their mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**April Vomfell, [april.lirpa@gmail.com](mailto:april.lirpa@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

As a former public librarian with an MLIS degree, I strongly oppose changing the guidelines that currently require a masters degree for directors of large public libraries in Montana. This educational requirement is not just an acronym; it serves as a strong base for understanding the history, purpose and intellectual foundation of libraries. Now more than ever, when information is easy to find but extremely difficult to validate, librarians and especially library leaders need a solid framework from which to serve their communities.

**Marca Gibson, [marcaqibson@msn.com](mailto:marcaqibson@msn.com)**

Fairfield

The credentials of professional librarians should be held to high standards for our state's largest libraries. The requirement for a master's degree should remain! Librarians need to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate statewide. Members of the public often seek information from libraries in other communities. Our largest libraries are not just a local resource to be totally controlled locally. It is a huge inefficiency if some head librarians do not have the depth and breadth of understanding evidenced by masters' education. Montana should continue to strive for and celebrate excellence in our library system!!



Marca Robbin Gibson, CPA, CMA, MBA  
BS Montana State University  
MBA Pacific Lutheran University

**Abby Moscatel, 37 Shelter Cv.**

Lakeside

I support removing the requirement for a master's degree in library science to be a library director. This degree should not be tied to funding for the library. Removing the requirement will allow the libraries to hire a director that fits their needs. Also, if you keep the requirement, the state has to be tied to the American Library Association, and the state has already decided it does not want to be linked to that organization.

**Christine Hubley, [bittner.christine@gmail.com](mailto:bittner.christine@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I'm opposed to the proposed amendments. A qualified director is important to keep the library running smoothly and gives us access to more state funds. The library is barely funded as it is, keep the qualification.

**Denis Thane, [dptmsla@gmail.com](mailto:dptmsla@gmail.com)**

Missoula

concerned citizen and library user

We should retain current standards for library directors. This is just another attempt by right wing conservatives to control public media. People who control professions should be highly trained in those professions.

**Fran Penner-Ray, [fpr555@hotmail.com](mailto:fpr555@hotmail.com)**

Helena

I object to diminishing the library director standards for large Montana libraries. This proposal is moving in the wrong direction for managing complex information systems. Libraries provide access to a world of knowledge beyond their shelves of books. The professional requirements for a Masters degree are reasonable and attainable. Please vote NO on the proposed Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel: This amendment to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree

**Joseph Murphy, [jmurphy1207@gmail.com](mailto:jmurphy1207@gmail.com)**

Helena

It is disingenuous to claim this is in support of local control; the one county not meeting the standard is doing exactly that by choosing not to meet the standard. That is their choice but local control is NOT a standard.

Please vote to retain existing standards

**Katherine Cordes, [k t did30@hotmail.com](mailto:k_t_did30@hotmail.com)**

Joliet

I am a teacher in Billings Public Schools, and after listening to a number of Billings community members explain just two days ago how they believe there's very little oversight when it comes to librarians in our state, I cannot imagine how lowering Standards would benefit anybody. Certainly, it would not benefit those librarians currently serving in our communities and schools, and it would only serve to erode the trust and transparency parents and community members are demanding. Furthermore, people cannot argue that they want greater accountability for our librarians while also being a proponent of lowered Standards. The dissonant expectations betray a certain level of hypocrisy at worst and an ignorance at best.

Please uphold the professionalism and expectations of librarians in our state by maintaining high academic and certification Standards.

**THOMAS HICKS, [tahlaw55@gmail.com](mailto:tahlaw55@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**LINDA HICKS, [scruffchk@gmail.com](mailto:scruffchk@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Carol Haverlandt, [chaverlandt@3riversdbs.net](mailto:chaverlandt@3riversdbs.net)**

Great Falls

I urge the commission to retain the requirement that public libraries in our largest cities employ a director with a graduate degree in library or information science. This is a job that requires extensive knowledge and experience. The current state standard supports the professionalism required by that position. Please do not lower our state standards!

**Mark Good, [mgood\\_91700@gmail.com](mailto:mgood_91700@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

I urge the commission to retain the requirement that public libraries in our largest cities employ a director with a graduate degree in library or information science. This is a job that requires extensive knowledge and experience. The current state standard supports the professionalism required by that position. Please do not lower our state standards!

**JAY VOORHIES, [poppajay@bikerider.com](mailto:poppajay@bikerider.com)**

ANACONDA

LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE. DON'T MAKE CHANGES THAT IN ANY WAY LESSEN ONE'S ABILITY TO RESEARCH OR READ ANY MATERIAL. FREEDOM OF SPEECH SHOULD REMAIN SACROSANCT

**Joanne Morrow, [morrowjoanne5@gmail.com](mailto:morrowjoanne5@gmail.com)**

Niarada

Please do not change the master's degree requirement for chief librarians of libraries in communities with at least 25,000 residents. I feel this is a very important criterion in maintaining the professional and ethical quality of our libraries.

**Gretchen Edelen, [goedelen@gmail.com](mailto:goedelen@gmail.com)**

Helena

As a professional educator and user of public libraries, I am writing to urge you to ""retain current standards and not undermine the professionalism of [Montana's] librarians.""

Apparently, the quest for ""local control"" is supposedly at the heart of this movement. In fact, ""it is disingenuous to claim [that this proposed diminishment of the professionalism of librarians] is in support of local control; the one county not meeting the standard is doing exactly that by choosing not to meet the standard. That is their choice but local control is NOT a standard.""

That the lowering of our long-standing protocols is a solution in search of a problem was amply demonstrated by fervent public comment at your October meeting was overwhelmingly against lowering the standards.

Finally, as educated, thoughtful people, I expect that you would ask yourselves what is accomplished or gained by lowering a standard that maintains the high quality and welcoming nature of Montana's many terrific libraries? With librarians and available book choices under constant negative scrutiny, I would ask that you find ways to support the vital work done in our libraries and vote to uphold the current standard that is critical to the success of our most important community resource - our public libraries.

**Jennifer Howell, [Bearcrazy.jh@gmail.com](mailto:Bearcrazy.jh@gmail.com)**

Butte

Drop the Masters degree for public library positions please

**Sharon Patton-Griffin, [pattongriffin@yahoo.com](mailto:pattongriffin@yahoo.com)**

Great Falls

retired teacher

Any administrator of a million+ dollar publically-funded enterprise should be required to have at least a Master's degree. The attempt by a certain faction of one party to de-emphasize the importance of education is a glaring example of their continually putting fiction over fact to the detriment of

our Democracy. There is NO valid reason for lessening this accreditation standard. In fact, it should be increased - along with their salaries - given the increasing demands for public accountability placed on them.

**Julie Hippler, [hipplerju@gmail.com](mailto:hipplerju@gmail.com)**

Billings, MT

I am writing to ask you to retain current standards for librarians in Montana so that we do not undermine the professionalism of our librarians.

Updated standards were adopted two years ago and no one questioned this standard. We are now wasting taxpayer dollars trying to change the standard based solely on the request of a minority of people from one county."

**Barbara Lange, [blange1407@gmail.com](mailto:blange1407@gmail.com)**

Livingston

Please do not lower the education requirements for our librarians. "Local Control" should not dictate slackened intellectual support for community members that want educated management of our public information resource. We do not need to "dumb down" our requirements to service some confused agenda.

These standards were put in place after significant consideration two years ago. The opportunity to push for lower standards was available. Why are we spending more taxpayer money to revisit this? Because some people are threatened by informed decision making? Isn't repression of literature and journalism actually censorship? Isn't Freedom of Speech important any more, or is it only important if it matches someone else's ideals?"

**Kerry Krebill, [kerrykrebill@aol.com](mailto:kerrykrebill@aol.com)**

Clancy

Please do not undermine the professionalism and excellence of our public librarians by lowering the current standards. Keep the requirements in place. Thank you.

**Jim Heckel, [jheckel8@msn.com](mailto:jheckel8@msn.com)**

Great Falls

Libraries are vital to their communities. Libraries are complex organizations, requiring specific skill sets and management skills. It is also vital that libraries be seen as neutral providers of information and activities for all ages and needs. This requires a high level administrator.

There is no wide desire to change current standards and the law not be changed to accommodate a small group of people with a narrow political or religious view."

**Ann Ingram, [anningram58@yahoo.com](mailto:anningram58@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I support the removal of the MLS degree requirement for directors of large libraries from the list of Montana Public Library Standards. Please give us back local control and ensure we can hire the most qualified candidate for our community. Thank you.

**Stephen Goheen, [ssgoheen@gmail.com](mailto:ssgoheen@gmail.com)**

Corvallis

My children!

As a past Bitterroot Public Library board member, I worked to improve staff pay and educational standards. Please do not modify the updated standards for large library directors. That would be a move in the wrong direction. (And it should not be painted as a 'local control' issue.

Thank you for considering my input.

Stephen Goheen

**Steffany Earll, [s\\_loganb@yahoo.com](mailto:s_loganb@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

More than anything, the masters degree requirement should be REMOVED so that hiring decisions can remain at a local level with local control.

Each local situation is unique and should not be regulated by a general, blanket requirement that omits the individual specifications/needs/desires of each county and city.

**Cherie Bowman-Lyons, [Cheriebowmanlyons@gmail.com](mailto:Cheriebowmanlyons@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

I am against rule change item 10.102.1160 . A masters in library science or similar degree should be an expected level of education for a library director position in a community of 25000 or greater. The standard is reasonable to assure an appropriate level of knowledge for success in the position. Lowering the standard to benefit a single community that does not wish to adhere to the standard would be a reckless decision. It would be akin to not requiring appropriate medical degrees to practice medicine because one community wants to hire an individual who hasn't taken the time to get a medical education. That's all bad medicine.

**stef johnson, [stejo.mt@gmail.com](mailto:stejo.mt@gmail.com)**

Butte

Flathead County Library System

why so sudden? where was this concern during the recent review?

Is it your job to lower standards throughout the state or just for the Flathead?"

**David Ingram, [dli1957@yahoo.com](mailto:dli1957@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I support the Commission's decision to remove the MLS degree requirement for directors in Libraries over 25,000 population areas from the State Library Standards. Thank you for returning that decision to the Local Library boards while not preventing any library from choosing a director with this training if they find it advantageous.

**Elizabeth Quinn, [belovedamma@gmail.com](mailto:belovedamma@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Two years ago, when the updated standards were adopted, no one questioned this standard. We are now wasting taxpayer dollars trying to change the standard based solely on the request of a minority of people from one county.

It is disingenuous to claim this is in support of local control; the one county not meeting the standard is doing exactly that by choosing not to meet the standard. That is their choice but local control is NOT a standard.

Public comment at the October meeting when this amendment was proposed was overwhelmingly against lowering the standards."

**Carl Foster, [cfosteresq@gmail.com](mailto:cfosteresq@gmail.com)**

Coram

I would like MLA to end the master's requirement. I am a teacher, writer, bookstore employee, ranger, journalist... I always wanted to work up the library line, but found it blocked by an academic hurdle, one which would require me to get a 5th college degree. After going deep in debt to become a teacher, I've felt some resentment here. I have always loved libraries as the beacon saying anyone can achieve anything if they sit down and learn how to do it. Or if they have a natural spark of genius. The inventors of the internet, of dynamic public spaces for expression and institutional knowledge--none of them likely had library sciences degrees, but they could have changed the bedrock of information exchange. Barring such people from running libraries is erecting a wall that libraries are meant to erode: Privilege, based on money, based on tuition-bought degrees, based on having a carefree youth with an open schedule and randomly choosing a life career in libraries at the right time.

**Tyler Hope, [tylerhope@hotmail.com](mailto:tylerhope@hotmail.com)**

Whitefish

This is a personal comment by a concerned member of the public.

I am against the proposed rule. I favor keeping the requirements as they are.

**R. Bastasz, [bastasz@bresnan.net](mailto:bastasz@bresnan.net)**

Missoula

Amendment to 10.102.1160 is an attack on professional standards under the guise of local control. Shall we allow localities to credential doctors and attorneys? Statewide standards provide a means to ensure people are qualified for their occupation. Removing such standards simply degrades the profession. Degree-holding librarians are professionals who have invested much time and effort to obtain the skills and knowledge

needed to successfully and ethically administer libraries serving a large population. Band-aids to cover the unfortunate mismanagement of the Kalispell library are an astoundingly bad idea. Keep the MLS requirement in place!

**Nancy Ross, [nsross93@gmail.com](mailto:nsross93@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

While I do think requiring a master's of library science degree limits our pool of people, I DO feel that there needs to be a bachelor's degree or equivalent to be in charge of a library. Hiring someone with just business experience or years of serving on a board, does not, in my mind, translate to the equivalency of being hired for this position. Someone with specific training is one I feel is best for the job. If you eliminate the current rule, I would like to see some specific proposal inserted concerning the appropriate training like I have mentioned above. Thank you."

**Michael Lauman, 210 McWeneger Dr.**

Kalispell

I object to eliminating the educational requirements for a library director for a large city in the state of Montana. I expect my doctor and dentist to be trained and qualified in their fields. I expect my tax accountant to be qualified. Based on the population and continued growth of Flathead County, I request that our local library director have a Masters Degree in Library Science, MLS. A MLS is required in most major cities across the United States, it's not just a Montana requirement.

An education in library science provides training in just a few of the following areas: Proper cataloging and classification systems. What references are available besides books. Privacy rights of patrons. Balancing the needs of the public. Development of children and teen programs.

In Kalispell we have a prime example of not following the Montana State Library's requirement for library directors MLS certification. The ImagineiF Library Board of Trustees bypassed the guide lines, cut the salary of the director so they could hire someone without even a college degree. As a result our local library has gone thru three directors in the last two years.

**Paul Schmaltz, [smutz1952@gmail.com](mailto:smutz1952@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Patricia Corry, [pat\\_corry@yahoo.com](mailto:pat_corry@yahoo.com)**

Helena

To the Montana Library Commission:

I am writing to oppose the proposed Amendment to 10.102.1160 (Personnel) that would eliminate the requirement for a Master's degree for the directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people. I am a geologist and biologist (BS, MS, PhD), but when I was young and working my way

through college (FVCC, at that point), I worked at the Flathead County Library—what I assume is now the Imagine IF. Even though I was just a technician, working closely with the staff librarians gave me an appreciation of the complexity, professionalism, and depth of knowledge their work required—and that was in the days before internet and other digital technology.

Changing the standards for libraries in all of Montana's major cities to meet the demands of one entity is the opposite of local control. Please do not diminish the quality of our major population centers' libraries by caving to the demands of one library board.

Patricia Corry, Ph.D.

**Stephanie Brown, [stephanie.gardner@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.gardner@gmail.com)**

Kalispell, MT

All library systems in Montana that serve over 25,000 residents should have a qualified director who has a master's degree (or higher) in library sciences. Libraries are far more than just borrowing a book, the services that libraries offer to towns and cities should require a professional, unbiased leader who facilitates the needs of those the library serves. A bachelor's degree for a library's top leader is not sufficient.

**Margaret Davis, [manau913@aol.com](mailto:manau913@aol.com)**

Kalispell

Please keep the standard for the director of the library to have a master's degree. In my community, where conflict regularly occurs around censorship and proposed book banning, it is essential the director have the higher education and commensurate ability to manage that conflict and stand strong for beloved, long-held constitutional freedoms. The decision to hire a director who did not meet the qualifications turned out badly for all involved: the candidate who risked a lot to take the position; the community that hoped the candidate would have staying power and the ability to navigate the conflict and stand up to bullying behavior in order to chart a positive course; and the taxpaying public, which absolutely deserves a system that both meets their needs and satisfies the recommended standards (not to mention the funding that comes with meeting those standards). This community unfortunately opted for the experiment and finds itself in a rebuilding mode soon after making the last hire, who did not last long due to the toxic atmosphere engendered by the trustees who seem bent on micromanaging director decisions in their desire to destroy the institution they were supposed to serve. Shame on us for allowing that to happen, but it's not too late for this standard to survive and become a guiding light for our library system's next steps.

**Nancy Mehaffie and Bruce Hunn, [hunn.mehaffie@gmail.com](mailto:hunn.mehaffie@gmail.com)**

Thompson Falls

We support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science. It is quite obvious that our country's universities now are training people with biases towards programs which are not supported by the majority of the state citizens. Having a degree or 2 degrees does not guarantee you get an educated person but maybe an indoctrinated person. Open up the eligible field, especially in these times when it is hard to fill positions to: No Master Degree Required.



**Amy Regier, [regiermt@gmail.com](mailto:regiermt@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my library board can hire the best candidate for the job, based on talent and experience. Advanced degrees don't always produce the most qualified candidate and unfairly narrows the pool of candidates.

**Jerry Stephens, [jerryss2019@gmail.com](mailto:jerryss2019@gmail.com)**

Missoula

The role of libraries and the general management of information resources is becoming more and more complex. Montana taxpayer investment in our larger libraries will be best served with appropriately trained individuals involved. Thus please keep in place the requirement of a masters degree in library science or equivalent for directors of libraries in communities with 25,000 or more persons.

**Barbara Boorman, [barbboorman@yahoo.com](mailto:barbboorman@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I urge you to retain the current Public Library Standards. Do not lower the standards for Library Directors. "Local control" is not a standard.

**Bobbie Hafer, [Bkhafer@gmail.com](mailto:Bkhafer@gmail.com)**

Polson

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Philip Williams, [pfwms@juno.com](mailto:pfwms@juno.com)**

Bozeman

I am opposed to lowering or watering down the public library standards for staffing. Two years ago, when the updated standards were adopted, no one questioned this standard. We are now wasting Montanans' taxpayer dollars trying to change the standard based solely on the request of a minority of people from merely one county in the state.

It is disingenuous to claim that lowered standards for staffing public libraries somehow ""supports local control."" The one and only county that is not meeting the standard is doing exactly that by choosing not to meet the standard. That is their choice; but local control is not a standard.

Public comment at the October meeting when this amendment was proposed was overwhelmingly against lowering the standards for staffing public libraries in Montana.

Please maintain the existing and long-standing standards for staffing public librarians in the state. A Masters degree in Library Science is not too much to ask for a qualified librarian."

**Rozlyn Haley, [rozlyn\\_h@msn.com](mailto:rozlyn_h@msn.com)**

Missoula

Montana has a rich history of valuing independent thought and higher education. Politics should not govern access to information. How this doesn't make your skin crawl as you think about book burning is beyond me.

As a citizen of Montana, I want QUALITY libraries that adhere to the HIGHEST STANDARDS and 100% oppose the following:

Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel: This amendment to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree is proposed to reflect the Commission's opinion that local boards should be given responsibility to set library director qualifications as the size of the community may require a different skillset or knowledge base for the library director.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE. THIS OPPOSES THE FOUNDATIONAL VALUES OF OUR STATE."

**Asta Bowen, [news@astabowen.com](mailto:news@astabowen.com)**

Somers

In today's "Information Age," where content and technology are changing at unprecedented speed, the state should be refining rather than relaxing standards for the professionals who serve the public through our libraries.

The purpose of a state agency is to assure that the needs of the public are fully met, now and in the future, and to protect our interests across all communities. As technologies become even more complex and vulnerable, we need local administrators who are more, not less, trained and prepared to serve the public as a whole.

Please UPHOLD the standard currently in place for library directors serving communities larger than 25,000 citizens.

Thank you."

**John Bioard, [jcboard54@gmail.com](mailto:jcboard54@gmail.com)**

Helena

A free society requires the free exchange of ideas. Public school libraries are the bedrock for the teaching of the fundamentals of democracy. As a consequence, those libraries should contain a broad spectrum of information and ideas, some of which we may like or may not like. Do not tamper with the existing standards. There is no credible reason to do so.

Sincerely,

John C. Board"

**Mait Board, [mightb@bresnan.net](mailto:mightb@bresnan.net)**

Helena

I am opposed to any changes in the standards for public libraries.

Mait Board

**Janet Childress, [ocicinmt@aol.com](mailto:ocicinmt@aol.com)**

Helena

Public Library Standards are tied to public financial investment in public libraries of all sizes - they exist to incentivize local investment in staffing and services so that all Montanans can access quality library services.

Eliminating standards at the request of one library undermines libraries of ALL sizes.

The Commission appointed a diverse Task Force, including a member of the ImagineIF Board of Trustees, to explore, discuss, and recommend action.

The Commission is acting in defiance of their own Task Force, simply because they take personal issue with its recommendations.

This change is a “solution” in search of a problem

Changes to Administrative Rules should not be used to excuse the behavior of a single Library or Library Board.

This change would reward and incentivize similar behavior across the state,

This change eliminates accountability for destructive behavior of Library Boards.

**Gerry Stearns, [gsmontana2@gmail.com](mailto:gsmontana2@gmail.com)**

Kalispell, MT

Public libraries play such an important role in promoting understanding of the real world and help students improve reading skills. Reading helps people form educated opinions. Please do not change the rules.

**Kara Basko, [familybrusko@gmail.com](mailto:familybrusko@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Because I live in Kalispell and have witnessed first hand the harm done to public libraries when standards of education and professionalism in our libraries are relaxed, I oppose changes to the Montana Public Library Standards that deprofessionalize libraries and reduce their ability to meet the needs of patrons. Please keep the requirement that directors of libraries serving over 25,000 patrons have a Master in Library Science degree or equivalent. Imagine If has proved that dropping this requirement is not worth it.

**Vicki Brown, [ybrown1205@gmail.com](mailto:ybrown1205@gmail.com)**

Superior

Self, member of Friends of Imagineif in the Flathead and lifelong library user.

The role of the Commission should be to encourage measurable excellence, but “Local control” is not a measurable standard. Library Boards, including Imagine If, have the right to exercise local control by choosing whether or not to meet the standards.

Establishing new standards/certifications is an unnecessary complication. This action by the MSL Commission is the very definition of wasteful bureaucracy. The MLIS requirement is limited to libraries serving a population of 25,000 is not arbitrary. It was initially written to recognize that our smallest libraries may not have the tax base to support the salary necessary to hire a degreed librarian.

Despite this, 13 Montana libraries have hired degreed librarians as directors serving communities with fewer than 25,000 people. All other “large” libraries have successfully recruited degreed staff. Most recently, Missoula’s three finalists all had their MLIS degrees. Exceptions have always existed for this requirement. Imagine IF willfully disregarded these exceptions at every opportunity.

Public Library Standards are tied to public financial investment in public libraries of all sizes - they exist to incentivize local investment in staffing and services so that all Montanans can access quality library services.

Eliminating standards at the request of one library undermines libraries of ALL sizes.

The Commission appointed a diverse Task Force, including a member of the Imagine IF Board of Trustees, to explore, discuss, and recommend action, but is acting in defiance of its own Task Force, simply because it takes personal issue with its recommendations. This change is a “solution” in search of a problem and changes to Administrative Rules should not be used to excuse the behavior of a single Library or Library Board. This would reward and incentivize similar behavior across the state and it eliminates accountability for the destructive behavior of Library Boards."

**Randy Kenyon, [kenyonnorthfork@gmail.com](mailto:kenyonnorthfork@gmail.com)**

Polebridge

Please do not move forward in eliminating the graduate degree requirement for librarians! This can be seen as a response to the disheartening and sad events that have occurred in the Flathead Library board. Our libraries deserve the best and highest professionals leading them!

**Carol Blake, [carol@carolblake.com](mailto:carol@carolblake.com)**

Eureka

I oppose the lowering the standards of the libraries by eliminating the need for a graduate degree. No need to change them. Leave them alone. Educated librarians are better librarians.

**Carrie Thiel, [carrie.thiel@gmail.com](mailto:carrie.thiel@gmail.com)**

I oppose changing the Public Library standards. Please do not harm our libraries by de-professionalizing the public library standards.

**Peter Saunders, [Petersaunders1957@gmail.com](mailto:Petersaunders1957@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am a Trustee of the Great Falls Public Library

I am opposed to reducing library director standards. Education is important. Please do not dumb down our valuable library system.

Thank you

**Jessica Crist, [crist.jessica@gmail.com](mailto:crist.jessica@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

MOFE retired Educ.

I am opposed to changing the rules to downgrade the standards expected for a Library Director. The professionalism and education represented by an MLS is important in upholding the standards of public libraries. Don't take this away.

**Sarah Vaughan, [smccroyvaughan@gmail.com](mailto:smccroyvaughan@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Hello,

I'm writing in concern for the proposed changes to hiring requirements for the Administrative position at Imaginelf and potentially all Montana libraries. I feel the proposed changes would cause harm not only to our local library, Imaginelf, but also other libraries in Montana.

I hold a high regard for libraries. They are a unique liberty afforded to all Americans that allows for freedom to read and learn no matter your age, race, sex, job, etc. It is regarded as a safe place for all community members, but also one of high integrity. To allow the leader of such institutions not to have specific higher educational requirements could be detrimental to a community. I worry removing this rule will prevent Kalispell / Flathead residents from receiving quality library services. Also, I worry this rule change would prevent important accountability standards from being enforceable.

While it is important to consider the tax-base income of a community when deciding how much of a salary a library can afford, it should be noted it should not be the only consideration. For Imaginelf, is there something else brewing that is preventing them from hiring a degreed librarian? Rather than a rule change, I think reviewing other issues at play is more important than changing the rule for every library, especially since thirteen smaller libraries in Montana have successfully hired degreed librarians (not to mention all other large by population sized libraries in Montana have also hired degreed librarians). The applicants are out there. What is Imaginelf doing that they are so unsuccessful in finding them? I think examining recent changes would reveal clues.

The library is meant to be a place for all. Let us not remove the cornerstone that keeps this institutions grounded and strong.

Thank you,

Sarah Vaughan

**David Hull, [Hulmac1414@gmail.com](mailto:Hulmac1414@gmail.com)**

Helena

Do not change or weaken the standards. Keep Libraries free from book banning and politization!

**Brad Bigelow, [bigelow.brad@gmail.com](mailto:bigelow.brad@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Given the range of services, technologies, and funding issues involved in running a library for a community of 25,000 or larger, requiring a graduate degree in library science or closely related field is essential to maintain an appropriate level of professionalism and set an example for the rest of the library staff. Eliminating this requirement is short-sighted and will undermine Montana's libraries at a time when they are being subjected to

unprecedented political and economic pressures while also being called on to deliver every more services to their communities. The State Library Commission should reject this change.

**Kay Vang, [ksvang@me.com](mailto:ksvang@me.com)**

Butte

Please retain the current requirements for library directors!

**Charlene Hazlett, [charasa47@gmail.com](mailto:charasa47@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am opposing changes to Public Library Standards that would deprofessionalize libraries and harm services

**Joel Vignere, [aba303@centurytel.net](mailto:aba303@centurytel.net)**

Lakeside

A recent letter to the editor (daily inter lake) pointed out that it's not necessary to have a masters to be president, senator, congressman, etc. We can all see just how well thats working out.

**Ronald E. Martin-Dent, [martinre@uw.edu](mailto:martinre@uw.edu)**

Missoula

I am deeply concerned about the proposed rule change to the public library standards. In particular, I urge the Montana State Library Commission to reject Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel.

My first job after college was as a library page at the Butte-Silver Bow Public Library, where the director at the time took a chance on me as a young, bright-eyed graduate with a lot to learn. I am now a student in the Master of Library and Information Science program at the University of Washington, so I've run the gamut from entry-level library job to an MLIS student. As such, I have seen firsthand how much difference a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree can have for library workers and library services.

While I do think there are library positions that can easily be completed without an MLIS degree, the top administrative position in a library is not one of them. MLIS degrees give librarians the training and tools they need to make hard decisions about funding priorities, personnel management, programming, and outreach. Many of my classes have focused on learning how to best serve the public by engaging with the community, hearing their concerns, and working with the public to plan for the library's future. I have learned specialized knowledge about cataloging standards, caring for rare and out-of-print materials, and working with under-served populations like people experiencing homelessness, domestic violence survivors, low-income families, tribal members, and rural populations. These are management and information skills that cannot be learned on the job—even through years of experience.

Montanans deserve libraries and library directors who can give them the services they need. This proposed amendment would weaken Montana's standards of excellence. Every school in Montana requires administrators and principals to be licensed, which requires a master's degree at minimum (ARM 10.55.702-703 and 10.57.413-415z). K-12 schools likewise require librarians and media specialists to be licensed and accredited. Licensing and accreditation is the simplest way of establishing credentials and upholding high standards, which is why the state's standard requiring library directors to obtain an MLIS degree has remained in place without controversy for nearly 50 years—and why the public overwhelmingly supports keeping this standard in place.

To the best of my knowledge, the proposed amendment was introduced following the board of trustees at ImagineIF voting to move forward with a candidate who does not have an MLIS degree. Also to my knowledge, ImagineIF has not requested a deferral to allow their preferred candidate time to complete an MLIS program. This is their choice—no other library in Montana, even in Ekalaka and Columbus, has struggled to find candidates who meet the state's public library standards. It would be wasteful, bureaucratic overreach to change the standards for the entire state due to one library board's actions.

In contrast, the Missoula Public Library in my hometown, successfully recruited a qualified director under the state's current standards. All three finalists for the position had MLIS degrees. Even smaller libraries like Phillips County, North Lake County, and the Hearst Free Library in Anaconda have, to the best of my knowledge, hired directors with MLIS degrees.

Every library board in the state, including the board of ImagineIF, has the right to exercise local control by choosing whether or not to meet the state's standards. They have the right to exercise local control through setting and reviewing library policies, reviewing and approving library budgets, and by hiring key library personnel such as the library's director. The trustees at ImagineIF have not adequately explained why they were unable to find a candidate possessing a relevant degree or how the state's standards creates a hardship for their library.

I urge you to reject this amendment. Keep Montana's public library standards in place."

**Jordan Vaughan, [jordan.h.vaughan@gmail.com](mailto:jordan.h.vaughan@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I strongly oppose blanket rules changing the standards for our public libraries and their hiring practices. If a library is struggling to hire a professional librarian, the solution should not be to change the standard of what is "acceptable" but rather sort out what the limitation is to hiring and address the underlying problem. Other similar sized libraries in other towns are having success, ImagineIF should be able to as well. If a kid is failing a class in school a teacher shouldn't just change the "passing" level for the whole class, rather keep the same standards and work specifically with the failing child to remediate and get them up to speed... Why should a library system be different?

**Larry Iwersen, [larry.iwersen@gmail.com](mailto:larry.iwersen@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library standards. Library boards should be able hire local talent and people with experience and not jst those who have a master's degree in Library sciences. Our office lost our best employee because of a similar requirement and suffered since we should always hire the best employee regardless of a piece of paper.

**Catherine Cooney, [cmecooney@gmail.com](mailto:cmecooney@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I am opposed to lowering the professional standards for library directors. Running a library requires specialized training and a Masters in Library Science should continue to be the standard. There is no reason to lower our requirements since there are many qualified librarians who would gladly move to Montana or local library professionals who would obtain the training through remote degree programs. The only reason that Imaginelf Library could not attract a qualified applicant is because the Trustees and County Commissioners did not want to pay an adequate salary for someone with those qualifications. The same thing is happening with our educational system. We don't want to pay teachers with professional qualifications a decent salary so we have teacher shortages. Trying to underpay public sector employees is wrong and is not a reason to erode professional standards. We are undermining our public sector by our chronic under-investment and this attempt to eliminate the advanced degree requirement for library directors in our bigger communities is just another example of that.

**Will Rawn, [willrawn@gmail.com](mailto:willrawn@gmail.com)**

Havre

Dropping the master of library science degree requirement for large library directors would be a major error. Perhaps the greatest loss would be in the service of those who have been front line troops in resistance to unconstitutional censorship efforts in recent years. I think especially of the part professional librarians have played in protecting library patrons from the inquisitorial provisions of the Patriot Act. Less dramatic, but with day to day impact is the role of fully prepared professionals in providing cost effective services. The expanding potential of electronic services, for example, makes the professional education of directors even more important now than in the past.

**Elizabeth Seabaugh, [lizseabaugh4@gmail.com](mailto:lizeabaugh4@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am sick at heart that libraries are being diminished in their ability to support their communities because of the lessening of requirements for administrators.

**Sas Weber, [sas@stuartweber.com](mailto:sas@stuartweber.com)**

Belgrade

I live in Gallatin County and am an avid library patron.

It seems this rule change is in response to the request of a minority of people of one county. Two years ago when the updated standards were adopted, no one questioned this standard.

I find it disingenuous to claim that this proposed amendment is in support of local control; the one county not meeting the standard is doing so by choice, but local control is not a standard.



Public comment at the October meeting when this amendment was proposed was overwhelmingly against lowering the standards. A master's degree is the best practice. Why would we want to dumb this position down?

I am asking the commission to retain current standards and not undermine the professionalism of our librarians.

Thank you for considering my opinion.

**Denise Harmon, [drharmon9669@hotmail.com](mailto:drharmon9669@hotmail.com)**

Missoula

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to changing library standards. EVERY library should have a director with a degree in Library Science. Because I grew up with a father who was a librarian for the University of Montana for 30 years, I saw first-hand how important well-trained personnel are to be able to serve the citizens of Montana adequately. Please keep the requirements strong so that the best-educated people are there to help keep an educated populace. Thank you! Denise Harmon

**Roberta Jasmin, [bobbijasmin@gmail.com](mailto:bobbijasmin@gmail.com)**

Helena

I firmly believe the public library standards should NOT be changed. We must uphold some standards for heaven's sake."

**Thomas Noreen, [twnooren@gmail.com](mailto:twnooren@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

**Krista Steudel, [krissy.smile@gmail.com](mailto:krissy.smile@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Please keep our libraries strong and allow our librarians to effectively help nurture others into becoming informed, educated, and thoughtful citizens of the world.

Do not censor our libraries and don't tie our librarians' hands. Be certain our librarians are trained in professional their field to be able to serve our communities.

**James Wheeler, [jwheeler@bigsky.net](mailto:jwheeler@bigsky.net)**

Kalispell

The responsibilities of running a large library with over 20 staff require credentialing that includes formal education about the many aspects of running a library, selecting books, etc., and dealing with the public. My barber is required to have a license, as is my doctor, etc.. An MLA is essential to meet the requirements of running a library. Do not adopt the changes that remove the requirement for an MLA to run a large library in Montana.

**Ann Ripley, [apripley50@gmail.com](mailto:apripley50@gmail.com)**

Helena

It is extremely important that the current standards for public libraries remain intact. Weakening the standards, weakens the effectiveness of libraries in general. This decreases the chance for real learning to occur in the patrons who use the libraries. I would vote an emphatic no for the changes

**Barbara Palmer, [thinkbap@gmail.com](mailto:thinkbap@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I totally agree with Montana Library Association executive board's resolution that declares that the commission's decision has, "denigrated the standing of Montana's library professionals and put the future of library services in Montana at risk."

The Kalispell Library has become a banned book depot overseen by people who whose personal agendas should not dictate what I or my family can or cannot read. We need REAL professionals to run our libraries, not the small-mnded that are attempting to lower the standards.

**Kira Rodriguez, [Kirarod@hotmail.com](mailto:Kirarod@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please maintain professional requirements for our Montana libraries as they are. Parents and children rely on libraries in our rural communities and towns and they deserve the same quality in their libraries and librarians as everyone else. Professionalism will prevent partisan divides from dictating new rules. Leave our libraries to the professionals!

**T. Meyer, [mshelms@interbel.net](mailto:mshelms@interbel.net)**

EurekaNA

Lets not bring our community and with that the Library down to these peoples misguided standards. This board is trying to control what people can read, what to think and believe. Please don't let this happen.

**Rebekah Fields, [rebekah.l.fields@gmail.com](mailto:rebekah.l.fields@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am a frequent user of the GIS services the MT State library provides for my work, as well as a patron at the Missoula Public Library. I rely on the expertise my librarians provide and I hope their skills would be representative of the schooling they have undergone. I am opposed to removing the degree requirements for librarians because their skills are the backbone of library functioning. I trust that when I call on a librarian they will have the knowledge to answer any queries or perform the necessary research to field my questions. Please don't remove the degree requirements for the library system. It will only hurt your patron's access to information.

**Kell Brooks, [Kbrookstory@gmail.com](mailto:Kbrookstory@gmail.com)**

Columbia Falls

I'm concerned that the standard of quality will drop in community libraries. Shouldn't we expect a degree of quality in our directors?

Could we have more quality control of the board?

I want to know the folk in charge of my local library are unbiased and listening to reason and not fear. Academically supported reason."

**Andrea Bachman, [andreabachman@gmail.com](mailto:andreabachman@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Good Morning, I am writing in opposition to changes to Public Library Standards that would deprofessionalize libraries and harm services. The local library in my community is a refuge, a place of education, nourishment, connection and continuous learning. Standards are in place to keep libraries honest, accessible, inclusive of all identities and experiences, and to educate us all to function better as a collective humanity. Thank you for considering opposing these changes and honoring the integrity of libraries everywhere.

**Geoffrey Wheeler, [geoffwheeler@hotmail.com](mailto:geoffwheeler@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please do not change the rules. I have spent my entire life as a builder. The complexity and understanding of one's profession takes education and experience combined. Experience without education does not tend to work well. Save us all the wasted time and resources. Keep current requirements. Don't hire an electrician to do our plumbing.

**Jana Thompson, [Janabt23@gmail.com](mailto:Janabt23@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Montana can absolutely NOT lower the standards for public library directors! Here in Kalispell, we have seen the damages this has immediately affected. We have lost a large chunk of federal funding, which has tightened the budget and reduced our ability to acquire new collections.

Additionally, since a small group (3 people who have no training in what libraries are about - access to information) "runs" the library, they are being lobbied (successfully) by community members who want certain books banned. This feels like Orwells' 1984, rather than America. There are a growing number of people in town who are seeing bad history starting to repeat itself, starting with the "we/them" culture and now the banning of books.

A director with the minimum requirement of an appropriate Masters degree would respect why books need to be acquired and KEPT to be available to the public, rather than being swayed by a board with a political agenda, as we are seeing in Kalispell.

On a personal note, a properly educated director would be able to help me locate desired books, which our current director has failed to do for me! Luckily, there was another employee available to help!

The availability of information to the public is necessary in this day of political tension. Professional, credentialed Master's level library directors know and respect this. They provide balanced services to the public that are not even on the radar of our 3 library commissioner's minds. We need leaders who can enrich, challenge, and vary the ideas available to our communities through evidence-based programming.

Please, KEEP the standards for our libraries high! It is too important!

Sincerely,

Jana Thompson

**Betty Kuffel, [bettykuffel@gmail.com](mailto:bettykuffel@gmail.com)**

Whitefish

Retired Secondary teacher.

Broad public education is essential to the well being of our democracy. Lowering standards in the library system cannot be tolerated nor can the senseless banning of books. The current local and national Republican Party is doing its best to dumb-down society and impose their righteous rules. This must be stopped.

**Jon Salmonson, [jjsalmonson@gmail.com](mailto:jjsalmonson@gmail.com)**

Missoula, Mt.

Retired Librarian

The current law recognizes and establishes professional standards in the world of libraries and information management. The standards aren't intended to characterize a particular local community; they characterize the connection between the local library and the profession at large, its past, current operation, and future. To limit these responsibilities to characteristics found in a particular locality is to open the door to idiosyncrasies which may be counter to, and/or undermine literacy itself.

**Sandra Jarvie, [Campjarvie@yahoo.com](mailto:Campjarvie@yahoo.com)**

Helena, MT

Please do not pursue your plan to eliminate the requirement of a Master's of Library and/or Information Science for directors of Montana's largest libraries. To do so would do irreparable harm to the community, the library and the patrons. Being the director of a large library is a complex job involving management of budgets, personnel, physical facilities, technology, as well as a complete understanding of libraries, their content and the role they play in the community. A job which requires an advanced degree.

I received a Masters of Library and Information Science from the University of Texas at Austin. I was the director of the Montana Talking Book Library from 1990 to 1998. I felt my degree helped me to better manage the library and serve our patrons.

Your determination to undermine the quality of Montana libraries is very disturbing. Your decision to withdraw from the American Library Association was harmful to all library patrons, especially those in smaller libraries. Your proposed move to eliminate the Master's requirement will further erode the quality of Montana libraries.

**Liz Lair, [lizlair71@gmail.com](mailto:lizlair71@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

During these contentious times I feel it would be wrong to drop the high standards needed for a head librarian. He or she needs to have an understanding, knowledge and find the balance to keep PUBLIC libraries filled with books for all patrons. I am in full support of a head librarian needing a masters in library science. Thank you

**Julie Stetter, [juliestetter@gmail.com](mailto:juliestetter@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I oppose the proposed rules changes to the public library standards. Eliminating standards at the request of one library undermines libraries of ALL sizes. It is a dumbing down of all the standards of Montana libraries and thus the populations they serve.

**Therese Ely, [tessely56@gmail.com](mailto:tessely56@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

In regard to amendment 10.102.1160

I am against the proposed changes to the Montana Public Library Standards. It is important that our library directors have a Master of Library Science degree. Requiring such gives reasonable assurance of knowledge and professionalism in a leadership position. Eliminating the MLS requirement in favor of allowing local boards to select a director can become a hijacked vehicle. The director leads a staff in the management of information collection, access to information, and staying current with information technology. Without this professional rigor, the director may be selected based on other factors such as political, religious, or other narrow viewpoints that isolate, ignore, or negate portions of that local community.

If Montana's libraries give in to lowering the standards of our library leaders, the quality of our libraries is also damaged. That in turn diminishes the best of what we can offer to our citizens...including students, seniors, children, and taxpayers.

**Susan Bodurtha, [stbodurtha@gmail.com](mailto:stbodurtha@gmail.com)**

Lakeside

I do not support changes to the requirements for Librarians in communities over 25,000. Imagine if trustees willfully and knowingly hired an individual with a pending bachelors degree because they had cut salaries. They also created a climate of anxiety and tension for the previous 2 head librarians. This limited qualified candidates. Librarians well educated provide educated guidance in selecting books for everyone regardless of personal preferences and are essential in creating needed educational activities for the general public. Do not let the issues of one misguided board of trustees effect quality professionals for the rest of Montana. 13 Montana libraries have hired degreed librarians despite serving less than 25,000. Local control can at times be misguided and should be considered a standard.

**Catheryn Quinn, [catherynquinn@hotmail.com](mailto:catherynquinn@hotmail.com)**

Missoula

Please, do NOT change the Public Library Standards. We do not need to lead the nation in Stupidity.

**Wendy DosSantos, [wdfireopal@gmail.com](mailto:wdfireopal@gmail.com)**

Noxon

I was dismayed to recently learn that the Montana State Library Commission is considering a change to the state Public Library Standards. The proposed amendment (10.102.1160 Personnel) which would remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree does not reflect well on the State of Montana.

First, let me explain my background and experiences with the Commission. I graduated from Illinois State University and received a Bachelors in Library Science in December of 1980. I finished my degree with an internship at the Missoula Public Library in the fall of 1980. This program was one of a very few left in the country at that time that offered a Bachelors in Library Science. I chose to stay in Montana, and I worked as a public librarian in a smaller Montana town as the director, librarian, and only employee. Of course I was working for minimum wage for fewer hours a week and had to work a second job just to pay the rent. Since no ALA accredited Master's programs were offered in Montana, I obtained my second Bachelors in Elementary Ed. I went on to work in public education in the State of Montana as a teacher and librarian. So, with this educational background and these experiences, I feel I can address my Public Comments to the Commission with a certain amount of credibility.

Standards are important whether they be in education, libraries, or in any profession. In the field of education, state and national standards are the yardstick for what is to be taught. Having certified teachers with a professional educational background is extremely important. Having library directors with the same professional background, education, and experiences is equally as important. Now you might say, "Weren't you just as qualified with a bachelor's degree?" My answer would be no. Even though I took a lot of the same classes as those in an ALA Master's degree program, there would have been more emphasis on how to be the director of a larger library in a Masters program. More coursework concerning financial and legal responsibilities would have been addressed as well as many more concerns. Think of it this way ... a surgeon has to meet certain standards in his or her profession to be deemed competent. Even though a nurse may have a lot of experience in the medical profession, he or she does not have the training and the competency to do the job of the surgeon. The same is true in any profession. Having a business or management background would be beneficial, but in no way would that person be prepared to handle all the responsibilities of a library director. I am not sure why it would be a hardship to hire an ALA accredited MLS degreed candidate.

The State of Montana has been able to pride itself in being able to maintain high quality, professional standards in many fields including the libraries and education. Why undermine the quality of our professions by unnecessarily lowering our standards and requirements? In my mind, thinking people do not do this. It is my understanding that the Montana State Library Commission is going against the recommendations of their own task force by going ahead with the process to consider a change in the standards. This process seems to be a waste of time and money.

Local control is a much touted catch phrase. It is not measurable. It does not always promote benefits to the communities. In the case of the Imagine If Library in Kalispell, a few board members have managed to wreak havoc with what was once a highly regarded library in our state. Although I do not live in Flathead County, I have followed some of the shenanigans that have taken place. It saddens me to learn of the turmoil that can take place when politics interferes with what should be a non-political government institution such as a library. It is sad. It is ineffective. It is damaging. It is wrong.

**Gael Bissell, [gbissell535@gmail.com](mailto:gbissell535@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

LGBTQ+ Constituents

Maintaining high professional standards is essential for all Montana governmental or governmentally regulated organizations who serve the public. For example, wildlife biologists must have Master's Degrees to work for MFWP. This high standard helps insure managing these important public resources is not based on personal beliefs or bias but based on best available science, professional standards, as well as experience and public input. The same high standards must continue to apply to public libraries...these are not just book stores but important places for learning and accessing educational materials and opportunities. Do Not Weaken Director's Requirements for Master's Degree and put this in local hands. What is happening in Kalispell Imagine If Library is a travesty for our community but mostly an isolated situation. We do not need to change requirements for all our other larger libraries based on this one Library Board's desire to exert greater control over this local but important public institution.

Thank you.

**Tanner Wiley, [tannerwiley79@gmail.com](mailto:tannerwiley79@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Leave libraries in the hands of professionals who have dedicated their education and lives to them. Lowering the standards for library staff will result in Montana libraries banning books across the state. This is just a Republican political ploy to spread their conspiracy theories.

**Susan Thomas, [sethomas1950@gmail.com](mailto:sethomas1950@gmail.com)**

Great Falls

Please retain the Master in Library Science degree requirement for directors of Montana libraries. Our communities deserve the leadership and knowledge base provided by degreed individuals. Do not lower these standards because of the actions of one library board.

**Kateri Iwersen, [teriiwersen@yahoo.com](mailto:teriiwersen@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library standards so that every public library is free to make the best hiring decision for their situation. Thank you

**Glen Fulton, [fulton.glen74@gmail.com](mailto:fulton.glen74@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please continue the requirement of a Master's Degree for libraries serving large communities. Large communities such as Flathead County have varied social, racial, religious and political communities. Community libraries have become much more than a place for books, but also a resource for educators and students, an institution that promotes reading, knowledge, and enjoyment, and a safe place for all ideas, not just those of a few. The education that comes with the Master's Degree is the foundation for a leader to promote a library in this type of environment. To reduce the bar for leadership is to reduce the bar for the quality of the institution. I urge you to maintain the standard as it is written.

**Tom Gooch, [tgooch402@gmail.com](mailto:tgooch402@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

The Montana Federation of the National Active and Retired Federation Federal Employee Association (NARFE)

RE: ""Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel: This amendment to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree is proposed.""

I am adamantly opposed to this amendment.

Our libraries have become embarrassingly controversial over the past few years. This amendment will only perpetuate that controversy and serve nothing more than to further division and discontent. Our library governance should stand above the political and religious noise of zealots and stay true to its mission. This would decrease the professionalism of our libraries; don't take our libraries backward.

**Leland Walbruch, [leland.walbruch@gmail.com](mailto:leland.walbruch@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am writing to you with considerable angst about a recent decision to eliminate the longstanding professional requirement for becoming a director of one of the larger (25,000 population plus) libraries in Montana to qualify for state funding. I ask why we would wish to ""dumb down"" reasonable professional expectations of our library employees other than to seek more control.

Master's degrees equip graduates with advanced information management, access, and dissemination principles, expanding upon knowledge of library science and all that the field entails, including collection, marketing, research, archiving, media-related tasks, management responsibilities, database design, web development, and preservation. The advanced two-year degree integrates classroom and experiential learning to help librarians understand the purpose of libraries and the roles of librarians. It also provides extensive insight into librarianship across various settings, including how librarians interact within the workplace and with the public. These professional expectations should remain the standard of excellence.

Respectfully,

Leland ""Wally"" Walbruch, President  
Montana Federation of the National Active and Retired Federal Employee Association

**Joseph Orouke, [sephrie@protonmail.com](mailto:sephrie@protonmail.com)**

Columbia Falls



11/26/2023

Dear Commissioners,

I believe that the optimal way to ensure that Montana's Public Libraries will provide the best service to the community is to recruit and hire the very best person for the position of Library Director. That decision should be left to responsible community members, typically Library Board trustees, who have been select by the local community and who reflect and support community wishes and values.

While having a Master's Degree in Library Science would indicate that the candidate is very dedicated to the efficient and productive management of Public Libraries, it is not an essential requirement. More importantly, a candidate must demonstrate proficiency in organizational skills and best management practices, formulate well defined and pertinent goals and objectives, be dedicated to long-term community engagement, and be committed to working with local board members to provide the community with outstanding, and secure, and caring, library facilities and services.

The Commission must let local boards choose the Library Director of their choice. The Commission must acknowledge that having a Masters in Library Science is but a small part of a candidate's resume and should play a small role certainly not an essential role. in the hiring process.

Commissioners, please REMOVE the requirement that a Library Director in the State of Montana must have a Master's Degree in Library Science.

Sincerely,

Joseph O'Rourke

**Sue Samson, [sue.samson@gmail.com](mailto:sue.samson@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Keep our Public Library Standards as they are. It is essential that we maintain excellence in library services to all. Librarian qualifications are a cornerstone of that excellence.

**Karole Lee, [karole.lee59634@gmail.com](mailto:karole.lee59634@gmail.com)**

Clancy

MOFE and Community Resident

I hereby submit my approval of the proposed adoption, amendment, and repeal of these rules.

**Roslyn Gallagher, [kiflice@aol.com](mailto:kiflice@aol.com)**

Great Falls, MT

With regard to the lowering of standards of personnel who will be hired to direct our libraries: Education is important. A Masters Degree should be the minimum standard. Our children will not see the importance of an education if our own communities devalue higher education.

**Catheryn Quinn, [catherynquinn@hotmail.com](mailto:catherynquinn@hotmail.com)**

Missoula

Please do not change the requirement for a library director to have an advanced degree. The position is one that deserves respect and support for the knowledge and services that today's libraries provide to both rural and urban populations. A library director without the knowledge gained from a graduate degree would be like a doctor with only a degree in anatomy.

**Barb Hopper, [barbarellahop@gmail.com](mailto:barbarellahop@gmail.com)**

Billings

Leave the public libraries alone. The personnel part of the proposed rules I find particularly disturbing.

**Deborah Corder, [dhcbigfork@gmail.com](mailto:dhcbigfork@gmail.com)**

Somers, Mt

We support the Board's position on removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every Public Library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Max Corder, [max@mcorder.net](mailto:max@mcorder.net)**

Somers

I support removing the Masters Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library Boards should be free to hire local talent and people with experience. Requiring a Masters Degree could severely limit the pool of available talent and drive up staffing costs.

**Susan Sullivan, [grace\\_truth@hotmail.com](mailto:grace_truth@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Masters degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. This will enable local libraries to operate and hire as they see fit for their local library. Thank you.

**Gary Christensen, [link2chris@outlook.com](mailto:link2chris@outlook.com)**

The Montana State Library Commission's opinion and therefore proposed amendment to remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree is simply stated a bad idea that lacks sound judgement.

Requiring one to pass a professional test or obtain a certificate or license to practice in the State of Montana is a good thing. In Montana, to name but just a few - that is done for plumbers, electricians, architects, massage therapist, athletic trainers, barbers and cosmetologists, real estate appraisers, accountants, private security, dentists, chiropractors, behavioral health, engineers, land surveyors, and even outfitters.

Setting laudable standards and credentials for a director of libraries that serves a community of over 25,000 assures that qualified candidates and practitioners have acquired a level of education that demonstrates proficiency in library science. Our larger Montana communities deserve to have library directors with expertise and experience and requiring a graduate degree in library science is a standard that should be applauded not minimized. Let's not "hope" that local library boards make the right decision. We should not be foolish in accepting a lower standard.

**Jordonna Dores, [jordonnadores@hotmail.com](mailto:jordonnadores@hotmail.com)**

Bigfork

Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel: DO NOT approve this amendment. Keep the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree.

**Jake Fulkerson, [fulkersonjake@gmail.com](mailto:fulkersonjake@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I disagree with the proposed amendment. Please leave the MS requirement in place. Respectfully,

**Wendy Lauman, [mwlauman@montanasky.us](mailto:mwlauman@montanasky.us)**

Kalispell

One library board in Montana is trying to change MLS standards for a library director across the state. There is no need for library boards to be controversial, promote individual bias, and political agendas. Perhaps the Imaginelf Library Board has forgotten about board members qualifications and responsibilities. Qualifications include acting as advocates for the library and understanding the principles and issues relating to intellectual freedom as well as representing needs and varied interest of everyone in the community.

The population of Flathead county is increasing so library needs are increasing and changing. Services provided need the expertise of a professional librarian with a Masters Degree in Library Science to meet the challenges of a changing population. We do not need a Library Board dictating and changing the MLS qualification so that they have more control over policies and procedures that have been in place for years without conflict or challenge.

Letters to the Montana State Library from the public overwhelmingly support the need for an MLS. To change the MLS standard by just a few people is a waste of time and money that cannot be defended."

**Walter Rowntree, [walter1701@outlook.com](mailto:walter1701@outlook.com)**

Kalispell

I do not want the proposed rule change. I want library directors to have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree. Let's not get into a race to the bottom. Montanan's deserve well run libraries, administered by appropriately trained individuals.

**Melanie Carroll, [carrollmv99@gmail.com](mailto:carrollmv99@gmail.com)**

Lolo

A member of the public and a library user

As a Montana librarian, I believe that the standard of requiring a MLIS should remain in place.

**June Safford, 8 Hill Street**

Bozeman

A Master's Degree should remain the standard as knowledge is an ingredient that any librarian should have. Excellence is paramount when working with a knowledge-based system. People who use the library range from children to uneducated and then to those having highly advanced degrees. Information comes from education. A mere undergraduate degree for such a prestigious and important position downgrades the high value most make when it comes to libraries. It is unbelievable that a library would search for a librarian from amongst those with such little preparation and not seek a candidate who can be trusted to carry on in a professional manner.

**Thomas Langan, [wtltrading@outlook.com](mailto:wtltrading@outlook.com)**

Kalispell

Lewistown Public Library board trustee

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation. Thank you.

**Andrea Payne, [andrea@mylewistown.com](mailto:andrea@mylewistown.com)**

Lewistown

I support Montana Library Association's position to keep the standard as-is. I think it is a slippery slope whenever changes are made to the standards for library directors, especially when it involves requiring less of a degree for employment. Thank you.

**Erin Fuller, [eggfuller@aol.com](mailto:eggfuller@aol.com)**

Missoula

I am vehemently opposed to removing the requirement for library directors to hold a Masters in Library Science. Libraries need professionals with the training to lead their libraries into the future and communities need strong libraries led by those educated to do so. Please do not make this change. It would only hurt Montanans.

**Rose Jetter, [rjetter@outlook.com](mailto:rjetter@outlook.com)**

Olympia, WA

I would like to register a vote to retain the requirement for a graduate degree for library directors. My first library boss and role model was Alma Jacobs. I was hired by Mrs. Jacobs for a position at the Montana State Library in the 1970s. Because of her professionalism, I learned a great deal in the state library position I held. Also, because of Mrs. Jacobs, I went off to the U of Washington to acquire a professional degree in Library Science. None of this was easy or inexpensive for a farm girl from wheat country Montana. But my professional career flourished because of my advanced education. My first job was in Glasgow, Montana in a dual role of children's librarian and outreach librarian. Because of my education in

Library Science, I was able to work in a multitude of positions from children's and young adult services, to reference, outreach (bookmobile) and library building management over the course of my career.

It would not even be contemplated to reduce the educational requirements for an engineer in a state, county or city department such as Public Works or Transportation. For pete's sake, even farmers have advanced degrees now that allows them to maximize crop yields and manage their herds more efficiently, effectively and at a predictable (mostly) cost. This is what a Librarian with an advanced degree can do for a city, county or state library.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**Ione Daniels**

Bozeman

I oppose the idea of omitting the master's degree and replacing it with an inferior degree.

**Michele Nokleby, [mnokleby@gmail.com](mailto:mnokleby@gmail.com)**

Missoula

As a dedicated patron of libraries and a firm believer in the critical role libraries play in fostering knowledge and community, I believe it is of utmost importance to have a well-educated and highly competent librarian in administrative roles. Libraries serve as cultural and educational hubs, providing valuable resources and information to the community. In this digital age, the role of librarians has evolved beyond traditional boundaries, necessitating individuals with a comprehensive understanding of information management, technology, and community engagement. The administrative position within the library requires someone who not only possesses a solid educational background but also has the vision to adapt to the changing landscape of library services.

Therefore, I urge you to consider and prioritize the following qualities in the selection process of any library administrator:

**Educational Background:** The candidate should have a strong educational foundation in library science, information management, and public relations. A Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), is a must

**Technological Proficiency:** In today's digital era, a well-qualified librarian must be adept at leveraging technology to enhance library services. The candidate should be familiar with library management systems, digital archives, and other relevant technologies.

**Community Engagement:** The ability to connect with and serve the diverse needs of the community is paramount. A librarian in an administrative role should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, effective communication, and a passion for community outreach.

**Innovative Thinking:** Library administrators should possess a forward-thinking mindset, capable of implementing innovative programs and services to keep the library at the forefront of educational and cultural initiatives.

Leadership Skills: Strong leadership qualities are essential for effective administration. Library administrators should be able to inspire and guide the library staff, fostering a collaborative and productive work environment.

I am very concerned that the suggested change in Montana hiring standards for library administrators. I trust that your commitment to excellence will guide your decision process., ensuring that the chosen candidate is not only well-educated but also possesses the skills necessary to lead our libraries into a successful and vibrant future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter."

**Cary Saunders, [pcsaunders@montanasky.net](mailto:pcsaunders@montanasky.net)**

Kalispell

To the Montana State Library Commission,

It is with grave concern that I am writing to you regarding the December 1, 2023 proposed adoption, amendment and repeal of library rules. I would draw your attention to proposed changes in 10.102.1158(7) and 10.102.1160(7) as the changes are not to the benefit of the citizens and library patrons of Montana.

I have been a lifetime library patron. My mother was a librarian. Our family has regularly used library systems for decades. I was taught to love going to the library and to love books.

Our Flathead County community population is growing by leaps and bounds. Thus our community needs are growing and increasing by leaps and bounds. Our current local Flathead County library board has demonstrated a severe lack of ability to steward our Imagine IF Library. They have actually demonstrated an interest in DECREASING professional library services. Removing language reflecting standards to ""maintain"", ""increase"" and ""growth"" would be detrimental to our Montana Library system. In fact these proposed changes would support further degradation to our local Flathead County Library.

Another concern is the proposed rule change 10.102.1160(7) to DECREASE the level of professional qualifications for library directors serving in community populations over 25,000 people. Our Imagine IF library needs a masters level library director without which our Flathead County library services will continue to decline.

Please do not pass these rule changes. Please allow the citizen library patrons throughout our great state to have access to quality state of the art professional library services.

Thank you,

Cary Saunders

**Patricia Doyle, [pkdoyle10@gmail.com](mailto:pkdoyle10@gmail.com)**

Florence

My understanding is that during the October meeting when the amendment to change updated standards requiring a Masters in Library Science for public library directors in Montana was presented, public comment from citizens overwhelmingly rejected this idea. I would respectfully urge you to uphold the standards adopted 2 years ago, to ensure our state's libraries provide the best possible information and services our citizens deserve.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Doyle

**Patricia Basko**, [2basko@centurytel.net](mailto:2basko@centurytel.net)

Kalispell

I DISAGREE STRONGLY with the proposed rules change to the library standards.

**Susan Powers-Healy**, [sphealy@imagineiflibraries.org](mailto:sphealy@imagineiflibraries.org)

Kalispell

ImagineIF Libraries

I truly and deeply believe that a director should have all the qualifications to run a library/non-profit. A bachelor's degree with a minimum of 15 years of experience in libraries OR a MLS degree.

**John Finn**, [jfinn@lclibrary.org](mailto:jfinn@lclibrary.org)

Helena

Lewis & Clark Library

As a Library Director that serves a Montana community of more than 25,000 patrons, I have attained the needed education and skill-set provided by a Master of Library and Information Science degree. For a community as large as L&C County, and a publicly funded budget as large and detailed as Lewis & Clark Library's, I believe that no other training could provide the needed skills to lead this organization. The understanding of Public Librarianship provided by my degree is the key to great library service. I feel that an MLS should remain a requirement for larger community libraries and their Directors.

**David Mahoney**, [dr.dave.mahoney@gmail.com](mailto:dr.dave.mahoney@gmail.com)

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job. regardless of what level of education they may or may not have. The candidate's training, experience, and references is sufficient for a discerning library board to select a suitable candidate. Trust the competence of your local leaders to decide.

**Katherine Ward**, [katherine.ward@gmail.com](mailto:katherine.ward@gmail.com)

Whitefish

I urge you to keep the public library standards as they are now, particularly the requirement that directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree. These requirements benefit and serve Montana's communities and ensure that libraries maintain standards of excellence, professionalism, and accountability. Removing professional standards for our libraries is a disservice to current and future generations of Montanans that depend on these public resources.

**Catharine Moser, [mosers@3riversdbs.net](mailto:mosers@3riversdbs.net)**

Lewistown

As a longtime library patron and former two-term Library Trustee, I am in favor of retaining the requirement of a library director having a Master in Library Science or equivalent degree for public library directors in areas that serve over 25,000 people. Thank you.

**Niki Whearty, [nwhearty@gmail.com](mailto:nwhearty@gmail.com)**

Helena

I strongly oppose the elimination of the Montana Public Library Standard that requires the directors of public libraries serving populations of 25,000 or more to have a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science. Specialized and professional training for Library Directors working in populated areas of >25,000 is key to quality services for those communities. It ensures better understanding of their role vis-a-vis their board and county commissioners, better balance in the materials collection, better services to diverse segments of the community.

In a time of complexity related to information access and authenticity we must not go backwards. "

**Katie Eney, [katieeney@gmail.com](mailto:katieeney@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Standards should NOT be lowered. Look at Imagine IF in Kalispell for an example of what happens when standards are lowered, the library is a wreck. The library board is so bent on pushing their political and religious agenda, they hired a director without a Master's, lost funding, lost employees, and lost the respect of the community. This change would undermine libraries everywhere in the state, and provide more opportunities for destructive library boards to hire people who will go along with their book banning agenda. They know degreed librarians will not allow them to censor book choices. We should not support one bad apple by changing policy. Citizens want the standards kept!

**Martha Furman, [martha.a.furman@gmail.com](mailto:martha.a.furman@gmail.com)**

Helena

Please retain the standard of requiring an MLS/MLIS degree for large libraries (25K and up). The Master of Library Science provides essential foundations for the highly skilled work involved in administering library services. Providing library services to larger populations is a complex job and requires a deep understanding of library service philosophy, both past and present. The value of the advanced degree provides the backbone of excellence of library services in the state of Montana. Changing the rule will expose the professional library landscape in Montana to a considerable risk of mismanagement, uninformed decision-making, and the deterioration of library services.

**Chris Dodge, [thoreautoday@gmail.com](mailto:thoreautoday@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I have been horrified over the past two years by the dumbing down (and de-professionalization) of ImagineIFF, Kalispell's formerly innovative and award-winning library. A lifetime public library user, I have stopped using the Flathead library system and have been horrified to learned that the way is being paved for further de-professionalization of libraries across the state. Such a trend would be unthinkable in medicine. It is wrongheaded



too in libraries. This is strictly a political move, I think—an attempt to return public libraries to how they were in my childhood, a time of racial segregation, and catering to (and limited chiefly to) middle-class, Christian book readers. Libraries are so much more than this.

**Joann Flick, [Joannmaryflick@gmail.com](mailto:Joannmaryflick@gmail.com)**

East Glacier Park

I formerly acted as Continuing Education Coordinator for the MT State Library. In my capacity then in throughout my career as an education professional, I witnessed the positive of Montana's public library standards on the morale, professionalism, and pride in our library community. In the rare occasion that a director struggled to meet the standards, it was never a question of the value of the standards, but of a circumstance that could be easily addressed to the benefit of all.

The purpose of standards at the state level is to ensure that all Montanans have access to world-class information services. This is a foundational principle of democracy and a hallmark of a civilized society. Efforts to improve, upgrade, and advance the rigor of standards should be the goal of any revisions. Rolling back a standard that requires a masters in library science or equivalent degree for Montana's flagship public libraries is exactly the wrong direction for the State Library Commission to make. The recommendations of the task force and the opinions of Montanans matter.

I urge the Commission to keep the standard to require an MLIS for library directors of our larger communities.

**Chris Cunningham, [dc\\_drakon@hotmail.com](mailto:dc_drakon@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell, MT

With respect to the Commission, I urge you reject the proposed revisions. Over the last several years there has been a push at the local level for increased politicization of public libraries, sequestration / censorship of library media, and a sincere but misguided concern for the youth that has compelled policymakers to increasingly shift responsibility for the upright development of the youth from the parents, where that duty belongs, to staff at institutions of public education (e.g. schools, libraries).

I have worked at ImagineIF Libraries in Kalispell for over a decade and watched on with a great deal of frustration as my workplace became a prize eyed by local officials for capture via appointment of party cadres or other political allies to positions of public trust, first to the Library Board of Trustees and then more recently with their attention turned to the position of Library Director itself. Making the proposed changes to rules would allow that process of politicization to continue without cause for pause - i.e. namely on the matter of whether a library in a large town or city can qualify for state funding if professional standards for hiring a director are eschewed in favor of other criteria.

To be frank, it would do my library a disservice if the proposed changes to standards were made. A library is better off underfunded in perpetuity but steadfast in principle and firmly committed to its excellence in service to the public than it is having more funding at the price of corruption and loss of its way to external, political, oftentimes authoritarian influences antithetical to academic freedom."

**Janet Tatz, [janetilene@gmail.com](mailto:janetilene@gmail.com)**

Helena

I am opposed to lowering the required standard of a Masters Degree in Library Science for someone running a Library of whatever size. There is power in knowledge and those who don't respect and acknowledge the value of skilled professionals in the realm of libraries....or anywhere else for that matter, should not be rewarded or promoted for that stance. My understanding is that it is just one county that is requesting this change while all other counties continue to support this degree requirement. Just say "no" to this proposal.

**Wade Wilkison, [wwilkison@hotmail.com](mailto:wwilkison@hotmail.com)**

Helena

With libraries under pressure from more and more users everywhere, why would we want to harm services and de-professionalize libraries at all? Why have drastic and unnecessary changes without a reason?

**Margaret Betchley, [peggy.betchley@gmail.com](mailto:peggy.betchley@gmail.com)**

Columbia Falls

I adamantly oppose changes to the graduate degree standards for library directors in the State of Montana. Public Libraries are central resources to citizens throughout the State of Montana. I have observed with horror that this cherished and essential resource could be sullied by lowering standards because it is easier and presumed to be less costly. The cost cannot be measured simply in dollars and cents and the time it takes to be invested by a library board to hire a fully qualified library director under the current Montana State standards. There is considerable specialized knowledge and ability necessary to fill this position, that then through their work, can create the multi-faceted, resource gem a public library should be for the community it serves. I urge the State Library Commission to not change the long-standing existing standards.

**Brent Elledge, [brentelledge1@gmail.com](mailto:brentelledge1@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I believe ,the Public Library standard , requiring Master in Library Sciences , should be revised.  
The Most qualified may not have that degree . but may have more qualifications for the position.

**Elaine Snyder, [elaine.buckskin@gmail.com](mailto:elaine.buckskin@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I oppose the administrative proposals. I am very upset with Kalispell's Imagine Library for hiring a director without a library science degree. Our county commissioners are also to blame for defunding our library and banning books. These are public libraries for all.

**Doug Adams, [dougmda@gmail.com](mailto:dougmda@gmail.com)**

Whitefish

There are some people of a certain political persuasion who think the answer to everything is to throw money at it. It doesn't have to be logical or affordable, the money just has to be spent. That's the mindset of those who think requiring libraries to hire a director at greater expense than

needed is the best way to go. It's not. Local trustees know local needs. They also know what they can afford. Is there a single instance in which having a library director with no MLS has caused a problem? It certainly hasn't in the Flathead County Library system. It's time to say "NO" to Big Government dictates. I can assure you that the trustees at ImagineIF Libraries will continue to do what's best for the citizens of Flathead County, regardless of the threat of defunding. It's refreshing when people do what is right, even when penalized for doing so.

**Joan Brownell, [jlbrownell@nemont.net](mailto:jlbrownell@nemont.net)**

Fishtail

I oppose the proposed elimination of a Master's degree for directors of large libraries. I am presently a trustee to the Stillwater County Library in Columbus. As a trustee, I have come to appreciate the time and effort needed to operate an efficient library even for a county with a population of less than 10,000. A director has a myriad of responsibilities to the library patrons, the trustees, the county commissioners and the state of Montana. The duties of the library director are extensive from fiscal management to selection of books to public outreach. Librarianship is a technical, professional career. Formal education and training is necessary to attain and understand the necessary skills to successfully operate a library for the benefit of all residents. I agree with the Montana Library Association that the elimination of a master's degree requirement for large libraries is misdirected and denigrate the study of the profession. I ask that you reconsider your recommendation and maintain the standards which have overwhelming support. Thank you.

**Phyllis Lucht, [pssaz2mt@gmail.com](mailto:pssaz2mt@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

myself and my business "Unbridled Connections: Horses Helping Humans

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

**Ruth Swenson, [ruthannaswenson@gmail.com](mailto:ruthannaswenson@gmail.com)**

Helena

- This change was made because of one bad actor.
- Policymakers should not make policies based on exceptions.
- 13 Montana libraries have hired degreed librarians as directors despite serving fewer than 25,000. Some of the smallest are Columbus and Ekalaka.
- Two years ago when the updated standards were adopted no one questioned this standard. We're wasting taxpayer dollars changing the standard again solely at the request of a minority of people from the Flathead.
- Public comment is overwhelmingly in support of keeping the standard.
- Other libraries are successfully recruiting staff. Most recently, Missoula's three finalists all had their MLS degrees.
- For the financial investment the state makes in libraries, we should expect to have a way to assess library services fairly. That is the purpose of the standards.
- Local control is not a standard.

- Undermining this standard is a slippery slope to undermining all standards.
- This standard has been in place for nearly 50 years.
- Instead of putting the state in a position to defend the standard, Imaginelf should have to explain why meeting a standard creates a hardship for their library. They haven't because they can't.
- The only reason this standard is limited to libraries of this size is out of recognition that our smallest libraries may not have the tax base to support the salary necessary to hire a degreed librarian.
- Suggest we create an administrative rule that defines the process for reconsidering the standards outside the normal review process which occurs approximately every 10 years.
- For schools to be accredited, Montana administrative rules require administrators and principals to be licensed. To be licensed they must have a minimum of a master's degree. See ARM 10.55.702-703 and 10.57.413-415z
  - o K-12 schools require librarians/media specialists to be licensed and accredited.

**Richard Desch, [desch5@yahoo.com](mailto:desch5@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

The proposal to lower the professional standards for library directors in larger communities is not in the best interest of the public services that we deserve. Why would I take advice about a health problem from a car mechanic seeing that person has no medical degree? I see this as the same problem that teachers face when dealing with school boards who have held down salaries for years. I taught for forty years and loved my profession, but faced this problem many times over. It makes no sense to dumb down the requirements for library directors just to please some political faction that wants everyone to be just like them and force their views on others.

**Alison Schmaltz, [alischmaltz@gmail.com](mailto:alischmaltz@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

A Masters Degree in Library Science is not a necessary requirement to equip a quality individual to perform the responsibilities of managing our Public Libraries in Montana.

**Mona Charles, [mcharles@centurylink.net](mailto:mcharles@centurylink.net)**

Kalispell

Libraries are an incredibly important part of society and leading them requires a unique compilation of skills, education and knowledge. This is not a vocation where "on the job training" is recommended. To reduce or eliminate the high level of information, knowledge and professionalism required to administer a library would be ill-guided and detrimental to the basic needs of a community of any size. The negative effects would be magnified in the ever-increasing populations of Montana's larger cities and counties. Please don't reduce library administrator standards or requirements. Thank you.

**Danlynn Smith, [emailingdsmith@gmail.com](mailto:emailingdsmith@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Each library should be free to hire a director that fits what their needs require. The state should not require a Master's degree for the head librarian, but leave that particular for each library to decide what qualifications their director should have and what the library can afford.

**Judith Skudlarek, [Gammajean1@gmail.com](mailto:Gammajean1@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Dear Montana State Library Commissioners:

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that citizens can make a hiring decision locally.

-- OR --

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that my local library board can hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of what piece of paper they may or may not have.

-- OR --

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. It applies only to a few libraries in the state, and that's not fair.

-- OR --

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

-- OR --

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people with experience, and not just those who have a Master's Degree in Library Science."

**Roger Gussner, [Lvmowing@gmail.com](mailto:Lvmowing@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I don't have a clue what the lead librarian does but lowering the standard to accommodate a political party's attempt to ban books they deem inappropriate is entirely out of whack with a libraries duties and I believe a serious assault on our first amendment rights.

I assume it's the librarian's job to acquire the material to aid in public education, research and entertainment. To allow political and religious zealots to dictate what Montanans can read or consider is extremely dangerous to our freedom.

Maybe we should let the professionals do their job and up the standards for the board!"

**Joyce Huff, [fmhuff@fidalgo.net](mailto:fmhuff@fidalgo.net)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best hiring decision for their unique situation.

**Jamie Campbell, Po box 10664**

Kalispell

I support REMOVING the MLS requirement from the Public Library Standards. The requirement severely limits libraries from hiring local talent who may have years of experience and reflect the regional flavor of their community. Forcing a library to hire someone with a degree they can only earn from an out of state college makes no sense, particularly since the Montana State Library has voted to separate from the ALA (who accredits the degree). Our public library standards should be consistent, should allow local libraries to reflect their community and should promote opportunities for residents to grow and excel without setting up arbitrary barriers. If there is concern about basic knowledge of library activities and responsibilities, a standardized test could be developed. Successful completion of the test could result in certification. However if such a requirement were to be developed the requirement should be applied statewide, regardless of the size of the library, with a study guide and/or an online test preparation site being made available to all interested parties. Existing librarians should be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare for and take such a test. OR just leave library governance to all of the libraries.

**Pamela Benjamin, [jabbersnark@gmail.com](mailto:jabbersnark@gmail.com)**

Livingston

I am in favor of keeping the MLIS requirement for libraries serving a population of 25,000+.

Montana's communities deserve to have access to the best possible resources, information tools, and information professionals available. There is a difference between a degreed librarian and someone working for a library without a degree. Many people do not realize that only some folks working at a library have an actual library degree. (Those that do, will often request a degreed librarian when they doing personal research.)

Add to this, the exponentially growing inability to distinguish between authoritative information and misinformation - which is guaranteed to get worse. So, for example, if you are trying to find the best and most accurate information about an illness or health concern there are a lot of places to go astray. Presumably, you want an expert to help guide you through the mountains of information and other stuff posing as accurate information that is out there.

The larger the population the greater the need for this kind of expertise.

I support having degreed librarians as directors for 25,000+ communities because I think the people of Montana are worthy of the best guidance available.

**Bruce Guthrie, [guthrie.kalispell@gmail.com](mailto:guthrie.kalispell@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am absolutely against this change. The library director of a large institution needs the training and background that an MA provides. This change request emanates from the Flathead County Library system. It is the result of the era brought on by a board who created such a toxic environment that several directors and specialists quit in a short period of time and the application pool for qualified librarians evaporated to none. Please do not lower the standards of our libraries across the state because one place's poor decisions led them to a dilemma. This is definitely a "light and transient cause" that can be remedied with better oversight. The reasons the standard was set in the first place still stand today. No change is necessary.

**Marley Crusch, [marley.crusch@gmail.com](mailto:marley.crusch@gmail.com)**

Manhattan, KS

Keeping the MLS requirement not only encourages a high level of quality for directorial candidates, but it helps assure current MLS students that their degree will be worthwhile. Removing this requirement is likely to result in a high amount of turnover in this role, leading to a lack of leadership, which will likely cause services to suffer. Thank you for your consideration in this matter, and please help keep our libraries functional and our communities strong!

**Dana Fraley**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards so that every public library in Montana is free to make the best decision for their unique situation. Library boards should be able to hire local talent and people who are experienced, and not just those with a Master's Degree.

**Randl Ockey, [rwockey@gmail.com](mailto:rwockey@gmail.com)**

Helena

I urge you to not let the situation in Flathead County become a reason for eliminating the MLS requirement for public library directors in Montana's largest cities. Montana public libraries need the specialized skill sets, in-depth knowledge of principles of librarianship, broad perspective, and professional approach and commitment that only an individual with a graduate degree in library science can bring to the position of library director. Montana public library users deserve the best in library leadership. Please don't lower the library director standard.

**robin Vogler, [vogler\\_robin@yahoo.com](mailto:vogler_robin@yahoo.com)**

Bigfork

Two years ago, when the updated standards were adopted, no one questioned this standard. We are now wasting taxpayer dollars trying to change the standard based solely on the request of a minority of people from one county.

It is disingenuous to claim this is in support of local control; the one county not meeting the standard is doing exactly that by choosing not to meet the standard. That is their choice but local control is NOT a standard.

Public comment at the October meeting when this amendment was proposed was overwhelmingly against lowering the standards.

**Jennifer Long, [Jenlong505@gmail.com](mailto:Jenlong505@gmail.com)**

Sidney

Have worked at both the Richland-County Public Library in Sidney, MT as well as Plains Public Library in Plains, MT.

I hope that retaining current standards is given. By taking away library directors with those that have a MLIS degree is unheard of and is currently sending a shockwave to those that wish to move to our beautiful Montana as a librarian director. There is a large amount of hard that comes to what has already happened to our libraries with ALA being removed; and this is only going to get worse with such a blatantly harmful agenda for the future for our libraries.

**Erika Morck, [emorck71@gmail.com](mailto:emorck71@gmail.com)**

Columbia Falls

Removal of the Masters Degree requirement for Public Library Director lowers the standards and diminishes the professional administration of one of our greatest public assets - the Public Library. A master's degree in library science is an uncommon degree, and the knowledge and experience to professionally run a large library system is also an uncommon talent, especially amid the politically charged and divisive times we are living in. We need library directors with experience and the education that can rise above controversy. I would hope the person I go to for information on the vast swath of information provided by a library would be more knowledgeable than myself. Please keep the Master's degree requirement in place.

**Sheila Bonnard, [bonnard272@gmail.com](mailto:bonnard272@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I am writing regarding your proposed administrative rule changes, particularly the proposed amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel. As stated on your website, one of the roles of the State Library Commission is "to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible". Proposing to lower standards for librarians is the antithesis of this; it shows a serious lack of respect for the library profession, for Montana libraries, which have always aspired to higher standards of service, and for the citizens of Montana who support great libraries.

The State Library Commission should be standing up for libraries and librarians and supporting excellence in the profession. Changing this standard would make it clear that the Commission doesn't think libraries need library professionals and that it is abdicating its role as an advocate for libraries.

I urge you to reconsider your stance and forgo changes to that standard. The evidence is clear that our successful, vibrant large libraries are that way because of having professional librarians at the helm. Smaller libraries also strive to meet these standards; a number of communities with populations of less than 25,000 have hired librarians with degrees. Please stand for excellence in Montana libraries and strike the proposed amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel.

**Andrea Olsen, [Andrea.Olsen@legMT.gov](mailto:Andrea.Olsen@legMT.gov)**

Missoula

Dear State Library Commission,

During my service in the Montana legislature (10 years), I have witnessed and opposed a trend to eliminate educational requirements, including advanced degrees, public funded training, and continuing education. This is a sad state of affairs to discourage education rather than properly fund it for our current and future employees. In particular, I strongly oppose the elimination of a masters of library science requirement for our librarians. Knowledge of libraries, and all that goes into being a librarian requires this education for way too many reasons to list here. Libraries are the center of our communities and we must have fully qualified employees running our libraries. What is also very sad to me is that there is no real problem that this change is trying to address, but rather is a political issue to address one persons reluctance to obtain the requirement of a librarian in order to hold the position. From the Montanan, ""The recent proposal to eliminate the graduate degree requirement for library directors raises serious



concerns about the future of library leadership and the services our community expects. The ImagineIF Board's pursuit of a lower standard for their library director has now affected the State Library Commission, creating a race to the bottom that does a disservice to all Montanans." Please maintain our quality standards. Thank you!!!

**Lawrence aka "Max" Maxwell, [maxneva@montanasky.net](mailto:maxneva@montanasky.net)**

Kalispell

I strongly believe that the rule requiring an M.A. degree for leadership of the libraries in Montana's large towns should be retained.

I don't come to this lightly. I was a library trustee for 10 years, chairman for 6 of those, active member to the Montana Library Association, trustee of the year and president. I served for five years on the then called Library Services Advisory Board which evaluated the applications for federal LSCA funds and made recommendations to the State Library Commission. I chaired this committee for three of those years.

Yes a masters degree for larger towns and educational support for the librarians in smaller communities. Today's libraries are so much more than shelves for books. Opportunities arise for Montana citizens as they learn more. Local libraries are a path for that knowledge.

**Barbara Levitt, [bjlevitt41@gmail.com](mailto:bjlevitt41@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I support removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards. It applies only to a few libraries in the state, and that's not fair.

**Tiffany Christensen, [director@conradlibrary.com](mailto:director@conradlibrary.com)**

Conrad

Conrad Public Library

Public libraries in Montana are legally required to establish a volunteer board of trustees (MCA 22-1-308). Libraries that have board members who are professionally educated in the field are extremely lucky. However, the majority are made up of smart, passionate, and well-meaning community members that do not have extensive knowledge of the professional aspects of the field. This is exactly why a library director is hired - a professional is paid to run the library and implement professional practices while the volunteer board guides the library. To give a local volunteer board sole authority on the requirements of the profession does not make sense.

As with most organizations, the larger the customer base, the larger the organization, and the more complex the administration. It is appropriate to have higher standards for directors responsible for libraries with more moving parts. Ultimately, libraries of all sizes would benefit from employing a degreed librarian, which several of our smaller libraries do. However, the majority of the remaining small, rural libraries would simply not exist due to lack of qualified applicants and/or the money to obtain qualified professionals. The larger cities in Montana have a larger applicant pool, of which many members fulfill the current requirements.

An unrelated degree, such as IT or HR, does not provide the foundation for a library director as they do not encompass the entire picture or purpose of the public library. Hospitals, legal firms, and schools are directed by professionals educated in their particular fields. Library Science has many specializations, and not all MLS librarians are fit to be in leadership. Education does not necessarily make a leader, but a leader absolutely requires education.

Our public libraries already have the burden to prove their value in an age of increasingly expensive public services. Please consider the impact this decision will make on communicating the credibility, validity, and overall value of our public libraries as a whole.

**Barbara Austin, [barbaraustin4@icloud.com](mailto:barbaraustin4@icloud.com)**

Kalispell

Aren't there enough lowered standards in this country? And now, some group wants to remove degrees required for Librarian?

I am against rescinding requirement for Librarian. Let her (or him) employ what they earned: A Master's degree. There was hard work in this attainment and personal sacrifice shouldn't be eschewed. I applaud any person with an advanced degree in their curriculum vitae. Let the rule stand.

**carmen Hemmer, [carmenhemmer63@gmail.com](mailto:carmenhemmer63@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I think a masters degree should continue to be required for libraries of over 25000 population.

**Dan Schaeffer, [schaeffer84@hotmail.com](mailto:schaeffer84@hotmail.com)**

Billings

Here is a list of undeniable facts that must be considered regarding this ill-conceived attempt to limit access to libraries:

This change was made because of one bad actor.

Policymakers should not make policies based on exceptions.

13 Montana libraries have hired degreed librarians as directors despite serving fewer than 25,000. Some of the smallest are Columbus and Ekalaka.

Two years ago when the updated standards were adopted no one questioned this standard. We're wasting taxpayer dollars changing the standard again solely at the request of a minority of people from the Flathead.

Public comment is overwhelmingly in support of keeping the standard.

Other libraries are successfully recruiting staff. Most recently, Missoula's three finalists all had their MLS degrees.

For the financial investment the state makes in libraries, we should expect to have a way to assess library services fairly. That is the purpose of the standards.

Local control is not a standard. Imagine IF is already exercising its local control in choosing not to meet the standard.

Undermining this standard is a slippery slope to undermining all standards.

This standard has been in place for nearly 50 years.

Instead of putting the state in a position to defend the standard, Imagine IF should have to explain why meeting a standard creates a hardship for their library. They haven't because they can't.

The only reason this standard is limited to libraries of this size is out of recognition that our smallest libraries may not have the tax base to support the salary necessary to hire a degreed librarian.

Suggest we create an administrative rule that defines the process for reconsidering the standards outside the normal review process which occurs approximately every 10 years.

For schools to be accredited, Montana administrative rules require administrators and principals to be licensed. To be licensed they must have a minimum of a master's degree. See ARM 10.55.702-703 and 10.57.413-415z

K-12 schools require librarians/media specialists to be licensed and accredited.

I wasn't born yesterday. The proposed policy change is merely an attempt to weaken our 1st Amendment right to free speech. The evangelical right-wing is lowering itself to desperate measures in order to assert power over free-thinking individuals. Once again, a minority is wielding control over a majority of citizens who need and deserve access to books, even if those book don't reflect the extremely limited world-view of those who are proposing this change. If this trend continues, libraries will be defunded, and book burning will become commonplace. We all know what happens when thugs start banning and burning books. Remember that Hitler guy?

**Sharon Potenza, [srpotenza@hotmail.com](mailto:srpotenza@hotmail.com)**

Townsend MT 59644

Standards are what make libraries the epitome of citizen source of information. The people making decisions for providing the facts must be credible themselves. Directors of library systems must be held to the highest standards across our fine state. Therefore it is essential that they have a broad understanding of all facets of library service . Therefore they must be required to hold a Master's degree in library science which provides that wide background! Please uphold this standard for the sake of Montana citizens.

**Rich Strong, [richpstrong@gmail.com](mailto:richpstrong@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I am against the change 10.102.1160 (7) PERSONNEL because it lowers the standards for our libraries. In the future anybody who holds the political and religious views of a library board will be put in charge. Then we will be left with libraries that are being run by completely unqualified individuals. A library should not be with politics or religion has its mission. I would remind you that these are PUBLIC LIBRARIES and by definition of the title should contain books for everyone not just those currently in power. If someone doesn't want to read a book that is fine but leave me and my family alone. Thank you.

**Linda Mann, [Ljmann63@gmail.com](mailto:Ljmann63@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Please keep library standards as they are.

**Robert Capriccio, [Rcapriccio@icloud.com](mailto:Rcapriccio@icloud.com)**

Missoula

As libraries become more and more community based institutions, including much more than just books, I believe it is imperative, that directors of libraries have a masters degree. There seems to have been a trend to dumb things down quite a bit in many aspects of our society these last two decades. In a library environment particularly, I think we should be trying to elevate, not deprecate, the value of a directors position.

**Christine Mullaney, [chrismullaneyr@gmail.com](mailto:chrismullaneyr@gmail.com)**

Red Lodge

As a 60 year user of Montana Public Libraries, I believe that the standards should remain as they are. Excellence should be the standard, not partisan agendas by one library.

**Doug Rand, [dougreddcanoe@gmail.com](mailto:dougreddcanoe@gmail.com)**

Gallatin Gateway

Former teacher

Please do not lower the requirements for library administrators as being proposed.

**Barbara Kuester, [thekuesters2316@gmail.com](mailto:thekuesters2316@gmail.com)**

Billings

I urge you to leave the Public Library Standards unchanged. I grew up in a small community where I read books at the public library for entertainment and research for school assignments. It was a place I could gain knowledge on a variety of topics. Public libraries were designed to serve All Montana's without censorship as to what we read. The recent proposal to eliminate the graduate degree requirement for library directors raises serious concerns about the future for library leadership and the services our community expects. Please safeguard the future of our libraries by leaving Public Library Standards unchanged.

**Nina Maclean, [Nina.maclean@gmail.com](mailto:Nina.maclean@gmail.com)**

Darby

We should not lower our standards for library directors because of a few people from one county. An overwhelming response against lowering the standards has already been expressed. We must keep the standards.

**Maren Engen, [maren.engen@gmail.com](mailto:maren.engen@gmail.com)**

Fort Benton

As someone who has worked in a rural library for nearly six years and is about to obtain an MLS, I find the ammendment to 10.102.1160 incredibly insulting. I can't imagine having a large library system run by someone who a) not only doesn't know the ins and outs of library management, and b)

is assumed to run it like a business. Libraries are not businesses nor should they act as such. I have seen firsthand what happens to great libraries when they are run by people who don't understand libraries. It gets very ugly very fast.

There is no problem with the standards that have existed until now. They were implemented for a reason and that reason has not changed. ""Local control"" already exists when hiring directors. Why wouldn't they want someone who is knowledgeable and trained extensively in their field? Why wouldn't the Commissioners also support that? The real problem here is one library's board, something that needs to be addressed and acted upon without the rest of the state being involved.

I don't understand why so many people who don't understand libraries are in charge of what librarians can and can't do. Oh, right. Disinformation. Maybe you should contact a local librarian to help separate the facts from the lies.

**Konrad Koolen, [koolen3k@gmail.com](mailto:koolen3k@gmail.com)**

Billings

I don't agree with this proposed amendment at all. Please leave the Library standards unchanged!

**Kathryn Briton, [Kbrittonrn@gmail.com](mailto:Kbrittonrn@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

A Masters in Library Science degree should be considered essential in today's highly complicated information world. Please don't eliminate that requirement!

The head of a library has a huge, diverse, complicated job that requires advanced education. To reduce those requirements sends the wrong message to the community, reduces the quality of services, and is a huge disservice to us all. I find it mortifying that it is even being considered. We're better than that!

**Stewart Mohr, [smohr1029@charter.net](mailto:smohr1029@charter.net)**

Bozeman

Leading an important community organization requires certain core competencies whether it be a city planning department, county school system, or community library. This is particularly critical for institutions serving larger communities. Just as public administrators need a Master of Public Administration (MPA), library directors for Montana's larger service area need to have a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree. Possessing such a degree ensures that they have the basic skills of building and maintaining a collection for all age groups, describing and making findable the materials through cataloging and classification, managing the full and part-time staff, collaborating with city and county officials, and managing a complex budget with multiple funding sources.

I am not familiar with the specific circumstances that led the Flathead County Library Board of Trustees to seek an exemption to the current state standards regarding director qualifications. It would seem to me that a specific, unique exemption could have been requested and then granted for the Imagine!F libraries director position rather than lowering the standards for the entire state.

Lowering professional standards has infrequently, if ever, led to improvement in overall performance. The proposed change in state standards regarding library directors for larger service areas possessing a MLS should be rejected. Let's keep Montana's standards high!

**Anita Beach, [drbeach@bresnan.net](mailto:drbeach@bresnan.net)**

Whitefish

The Master's Degree in Library Science for library directors in libraries as currently written MUST continue to be a requirement. Flathead County is the only county contesting this and as a resident of 25yrs in Flathead County I know they are wrong. They simply want unqualified directors. The public comment at your October session was overwhelmingly opposed to lowering the Master's requirement. The argument that the President and Congress people of the U.S. aren't required to have a Master's degree is ludicrous. A library system is focused on information access and dissemination of information, availability of resources, management skills and these require a Master's degree in the field of library science.

**Dennis Beach, [npbeach52@gmail.com](mailto:npbeach52@gmail.com)**

Whitefish

Communities of over 25,000 residents MUST have library directors with a Master's in Library Science or the equivalent. To revoke that requirement smacks of "dumbing" down the library director position which would be very detrimental to the public. There are plenty of appropriate programs for getting the relevant Master's degree and Montana must retain that requirement for our library directors.

**Libby Threadgoode, [samson.libby@gmail.com](mailto:samson.libby@gmail.com)**

Billings

I am representing myself as a professional librarian 0 I am a public school librarian in Billings, MT. I am writing in to implore you to retain the current standards for public libraries, especially lowering the required qualifications for the director. Despite our profession being upholding the First Amendment, we have been under attack. There is a national trend that is aimed at librarians. We have been at the crossroads of current culture wars that fail to understand our purpose. A public library serves as a physical representation and foundation for our democracy and the American value of liberty. We serve to foster Intellectual Freedom and promote the marketplace of ideas by building and maintaining collections of resources that serve all in our communities. By lowering the requirements for a director, you are lowering the necessary standards to which our libraries are held. We are unlike any other business. Being under the direction of someone who does not have the educational foundation of a trained librarian, we could risk turning the library into something that it is not- something that our communities critically need. Please uphold our profession, the library foundations, and our goals for the future of our communities. Retain the current standards.

**Janet Williams, [bwspud2000@yahoo.com](mailto:bwspud2000@yahoo.com)**

Havre

Havre/Hill County Library

I do not support this rule change to the public library standards. This change implies that librarians are not professionals and their expertise is not needed or welcome. Nothing could be further from the truth. A state certified librarian brings a level of education into a library that makes that institution stronger and reliable. Reliable in the sense that patrons can come into the facility with the certainty the library is run with competence and stability. It takes no time at all for a library to become a jumbled mess in the hands of an unprepared individual, leaving the facility weakened and useless to the public.

Please consider how best to support the libraries and librarians in our communities by continuing to keep in place a certified professional as a state standard.

**Megan Moore, [mamoore5@gmail.com](mailto:mamoore5@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I oppose the proposed amendment that removes the requirement for library directors to have a Master's degree in Library Science for libraries that serve over 25,000 people. A Master's in Library Science provides the necessary training and specialized (and foundational) skills for a director to fulfill their duties. This degree is especially important for Montana directors who serve various demographics and populations with unique needs. Additionally, individuals with this degree are equipped with academic and experiential knowledge that will help them succeed as managers, employees, collaborators, and public-facing individuals. Local library boards provide valuable input and expertise when voting on library decisions. However, they are not the library experts, the library director and staff are. It seems inappropriate for local library boards to set qualifications for a library director. We should instead follow the professionals and experts in the field of library science who are strongly in favor of a Master's degree for library directors.

**Michael Ober, [michaelober209@gmail.com](mailto:michaelober209@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I steadfastly oppose any rule change that eliminates the MLS degree requirements for library directors in certain libraries across the state. Those proposing this change are driven by a complete misunderstanding about the complexities of managing our state's libraries. Case in point: The most recent library director in Kalispell, who was hired without an MLS degree, was overwhelmed by the burdens of the job and micromanaged by the local board. She left after two years at the helm. Her lack of training left her ill prepared. I hold a MLS degree from the University of Denver. I practiced the profession for forty years using the skills I gained in graduate school to prepare me for budgeting issues, personnel matters, staffing, grant writing, collection management and boardsmanship. Please preserve the MLS degree requirement as the gold standard for our larger public libraries. Thank you.

**William W Goodman, [wwgoodman@gmail.com](mailto:wwgoodman@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

This is really all about censorship. I do believe we should call a spade a spade. I have never been happy with other people censoring things in my life and this is a perfect example.

I think to keep things on an even keel, I should be allowed to censor things in the lives of the people who are wanting to censor things in my life. Please send me their names and addresses.

**Scott Cain, [scottcain@pga.com](mailto:scottcain@pga.com)**

Red Lodge

The standard of education should not be lowered for Library Directors.

**Julie Knapp, [julieknapp85@yahoo.com](mailto:julieknapp85@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

This is absolutely unacceptable. It's akin to allowing someone to practice medicine without an advanced degree. A master's degree is MINIMUM to run a public library. Stop lowering the standards for our communities!

**Margaret Strainer, [mrsstrainer@gmail.com](mailto:mrsstrainer@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Montana libraries need directors with graduate degrees. Why? Because libraries are interwoven complex community centers for diverse forms of information. And these pillars of first amendment rights are under grave attack. To paraphrase Margaret Wright Edelman, you can't keep a community healthy without its robust library system, and you can't keep a robust library system if you sink its health to the lowest common denominator. We need graduate educated directors for the good of all!

**Lana Shura, [ланаанддaнshura@gmail.com](mailto:ланаанддaнshura@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Our public libraries in towns such as Kalispell's population must have head librarians with at least a Masters degree in Library Science. It would be highly unethical to even consider changing this requirement. Master's in Library Science must remain as the requirement in our library standards!

**Rebecca Dupre, [beckyandjessemt@gmail.com](mailto:beckyandjessemt@gmail.com)**

Missoula, MT

Members of the State Library Commission,

Thank you for your service. I do not believe it is in the best interest of our libraries, library staff, or our communities to remove the requirement that large public library directors have an MLS/MLIS or equivalent degree. There is no compelling reason to remove the requirement, and it serves the purpose of ensuring our large library directors are operating with a base level of knowledge and understanding about libraries and library work. Removing the requirement sends the message that the degree is not useful or necessary, which I wholeheartedly disagree with. Our Montana Librarians are treasures, and we should support them by compensating them well and having high expectations and regard for their education and skills.



I am a Teacher Librarian in a large high school. I earned an additional 21 credit K-12 Library certification and then National Board Certification in Library. I do not have an MLS, but I have close relationships with many people who have earned a Masters in Library. I find value in the mentorship and leadership of those librarians. Many states require their teacher librarians to hold an MLS/MLIS. It absolutely makes sense to me that large public library director should be required to have this level of education in the field, and I don't believe that a library board for a community of 25,000+ (like mine) should be able to decide their library is better managed by someone who has not achieved the degree.

Thank you for your consideration,

**ELIZABETH CHUTE, PHD, [EECHUTE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:EECHUTE@GMAIL.COM)**

HELENA

I BELIEVE THAT HEAD LIBRARIANS IN LIBRARIES SHOULD HAVE A MASTERS DEGREE. I DO NOT SEE ANY REASON FOR THIS TO BE CHANGED

**Bonnie Williamson, [y0q33mat@gmail.com](mailto:y0q33mat@gmail.com)**

Havre

Message to the Montana State Library Commission: My message is simple please leave the library standards in place as adopted. The Montana State Library and public library directors worked very hard to get the standards in the administrative rule book. Local control is not measurable county by county; you need the different sizes of libraries to make it measurable. The local library board may choose to follow the standards or not. The standards give library directors, library boards and library staff the opportunity needed to further education and provide the best library service possible. The standards are needed to give city and county governments a reason to believe library boards are there to support the library staff in continuing education. I served as a library director for 30 years and after the standards were in place I was able to provide a continuing education line item in the budget before standards my city and county had no plans of providing that opportunity. The standards are hinged on state funds. Please listen to the Montana Library Association and your own tack force.

**Stephanie Krager, [theroyaldaughter@gmail.com](mailto:theroyaldaughter@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

The degree qualification for library director as required by the State of Montana should be waived if there is an experienced candidate available. Local entities should have the freedom to manage themselves as suited for their demographics.

**Patricia Greiberis, [tricias\\_online@yahoo.com](mailto:tricias_online@yahoo.com)**

Helena

I do not support the proposed rule change about library director qualifications. I think libraries that serve communities with populations over 25,000 should require an MLS.

**Jana Gorton, [Janathejanitor@gmail.com](mailto:Janathejanitor@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I do not agree with dropping the requirement of having a degree.

**Judy Rosenfeld Cox, [rosenfeldcox@gmail.com](mailto:rosenfeldcox@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please do NOT change the requirements for directors of libraries especially County libraries. Education and credentials are important standards to maintain. I think our institutions should work towards and NOT away from excellence.

**Rosemary McKinnon, [rosemary.mckinnon@gmail.com](mailto:rosemary.mckinnon@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am dismayed that there would be any question that a library serving 25,000 or more people should not have a fully qualified MA level librarian. This is an important and increasingly difficult job which requires training and expertise well beyond BA level qualifications. We should expect rigor and relevant expertise which can be vouched for by a professional MA education and we should pay the person who holds this education accordingly.

**Sheila Ann Shapiro, [sheshapiro@centurytel.net](mailto:sheshapiro@centurytel.net)**

Whitefish

I support a Master's Degree education for this Library position. I believe a person who extends their education into a Master's Level is truly dedicated to obtaining a more expanded education in their field of study. Many professions expect this further education to help raise the standards of practice to the highest level. This job isn't about a popularity or political contest. It's about a well-rounded, well-prepared and up-to-date education in a FIELD that is rapidly changing and requires further education, especially in "best practices". Please maintain the integrity of education in our state.

**Nancy Pensa, [pensa6@gmail.com](mailto:pensa6@gmail.com)**

Somers

Eliminating the Masters Degree requirements from potential applicants to head a library, any library, but especially a large one with over 25,000 people is a HUGE MISTAKE! Undergraduates in library sciences do not have the additional knowledge base to adequately address budgets, develop long term plans for fund raising, recruit and retain valuable library employees, connect to the needs of the community in a meaningful way. These are skills attained through the Masters Program and ARE NOT addressed in undergraduate programs.

Because one library in the state of Montana is currently experiencing a dearth of knowledgeable board members with White Conservative Values who want to see their agenda carried out on a large scale, does not mean we need to change the standards. Up until the current controversy in Kalispell, the standards worked just fine.

Why consider fixing something that isn't broken? We should all, every single Montana resident, expect impeccable library standards that help to frame the knowledge base of a Masters Degreed Librarian. Don't dumb these standards down.

**Jen Millner, [jrmillner@bridgeband.com](mailto:jrmillner@bridgeband.com)**

Bozeman

I am writing in support of keeping the standard requiring higher education standards for library directors.

This is just another case of people wanting to change the rules because they don't like having to follow them. That's now how standards and rules work. "Local control" is not a measurable standard. Standards are for the greater good, not singular preference.

Eliminating standards at the request of one single library undermines ALL libraries.

Changes to Administrative Rules should not be used to excuse the behavior of a single Library or Library Board. This change also eliminates accountability for destructive behavior of Library Boards.

**MaryJo Hamling, [hamling@midrivers.com](mailto:hamling@midrivers.com)**

Lewistown MT

I am a life-long MT resident who is retired

I urge you to keep the standard for having the larger libraries' directors have a masters degree in library science. A person could work on obtaining this degree while working at the library if they did not already have the degree.. A person with a business background, but without adequate library science training would be a detriment to the larger libraries. I would not want the MSU Extension Service to hire County Extension Agents unless they have degrees in Agriculture. Also, I want our hospital administrator to have adequate educational training in administration of health facilities, not merely have a "business" background. Getting rid of this requirement would disregard the importance of the expertise graduates in library science have. This will erode the strength of the libraries in properly serving their communities' needs. The commission needs to consider this and look toward the future negative consequences, if this standard is thrown out.

Sincerely, MaryJo Hamling

**Barbara Fenner, [Gbfenner@centurytel.net](mailto:Gbfenner@centurytel.net)**

Kalispell

I am in favor of removing the Master's Degree requirement from the Public Library Standards and allowing local library boards to hire the candidate best suited for their community.

**Jennifer Filipovich, [jmfilipovich@hotmail.com](mailto:jmfilipovich@hotmail.com)**

Helena

Please leave in place the requirement for ALL library directors serving communities of 25,000 or more to have a Master in Library Science. Such education and knowledge shows the care and consideration we have for excellent libraries and librarians to serve Montana citizens.

**Moira McKinnon Linam, [mckinnonmoira@hotmail.com](mailto:mckinnonmoira@hotmail.com)**

Whitefish

I am appalled by the proposed amendment to eliminate the graduate degree requirement for library directors. Our communities deserve libraries run by qualified, highly educated leaders. This proposed amendment threatens the quality, integrity and stability of our libraries and would be a disservice to all Montanans.

**Paula Sheets, [Psmjsheets@gmail.com](mailto:Psmjsheets@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I agree with the changes you are proposing

**Barbara Ridgway, 3 Desperado Drive**

Clancy

In a rapidly evolving information landscape, it is astonishing that the Montana Library Commission would reduce the standard requirement for Public Library Directors because of one public library. ImagineIF Library used to be the gold standard for public libraries - not just in Montana but in the Northwest.

With the rapid advancement in information creation and delivery taking place due AI, library directors should be equipped with the advanced knowledge, skills and abilities gained through an accredited MLS program. These programs not only cover metadata creation, information architecture, accessing and evaluating innovative services and resources but they prepare directors to understand, manage and assist the public with emerging technology like large language models (e.g. ChatGPT, BARD, etc.). Modern libraries that serve the public are increasingly reliant on technology to provide innovative services and resources which benefit the community they serve. It's what our citizens expect and time and time again they have shown their support for public libraries by passing levies to support them.

While general management skills are valuable, an MLS program offers specialized training in library management, including budgeting, personnel management, and strategic planning. Public library directors with an MLS are better equipped to lead their institutions effectively, understanding the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in public libraries. Maintaining the Master's in Library Science is essential for public library directors to ensure they possess the necessary skills, knowledge and ethical grounding to successfully lead one of our most valuable community services.

It would appear the Montana State Library Commission has spent an inordinate amount of time and taxpayer money on frivolous and ridiculous activities like the color of the State Library logo or saving all Montanans from being associated the American Library Association.

My sincere hope is that other Montana associations don't follow the lead of the Montana Library Commission and lower their standards. Can you imagine the Montana Medical Association lowering standards for physicians to an undergraduate degree because hospitals should not be fettered with silly things like minimum standards or advanced degrees? I for one wouldn't be particularly excited if the State Bar of Montana said you can be a lawyer in Montana with an AA or BA.

The Montana Library Commission can do better. Maintain the MLS minimum standard for Library Directors."

**Anna Shchemelinin, [anna@bridger3dimagination.com](mailto:anna@bridger3dimagination.com)**

Bozeman

Please adopt the Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel and remove the requirement for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master's in Library Science. This requirement creates a heavy financial burden on people who cannot afford to pay for currently extremely overpriced college degrees and don't want to take student loans they don't know how to repay. The financial aspect of the requirement alone severely limits the diversity of potential applicants. Taking into account that getting a Master's in Library Science creates a dependency on the ALA and its' Marxist president, the requirement potentially discriminates against the Civil Rights of all applicants whose personal beliefs reject Marxism. Local library trustees who are accountable to the communities they represent know best how to hire a qualified director for their library. The more people could compete for a job, the better candidates would be hired.

**Janet Nix, [jenix9@gmail.com](mailto:jenix9@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Dear Montana State Library Board Commission,

I support excellence in Montana's public libraries and I am asking you to also support excellence in Montana's public libraries. Library directors must have graduate degrees. This standard of excellence is crucial to continuing of the excellent standards for Montana's public libraries. Please do not eliminate this standard.

Eliminating the graduate degree standard shows that the board has no respect for Montana citizens and reducing the standards for public libraries contributes to the dumbing-down of Montana citizens. Montana citizens deserve more respect than sub-standard public libraries.

Montana citizens deserve the respect of excellence, especially in their public libraries. Our current excellent public libraries contribute to the betterment of quality of life for Montana citizens.

Before he died, and coming from a very rural town (Glendive, Montana) far from a large city, my father frequented the Glendive Public Library which gave him access to newspapers, magazines, and books that he read for ideas on how to increase his knowledge of investing in the stock market. The Glendive Public Library gave him excellent academic information so that he could be successful in his investment strategy. If the library had been sub-standard, it would not meet his needs. He served his country in the military and was a very hard worker. He paid taxes. He and the rest of Montana citizens deserve excellent public libraries. Do not make Montana libraries sub-standard.

Sincerely,

Janet Nix

2775 Old Ranch Road Apt 304

Missoula, MT 59808

**Rebekah Black.** [rblack@valdosta.edu](mailto:rblack@valdosta.edu)

Swainsbor

The best practices employed by a librarian are only acquired through a lifetime of continuing education. Jaeger et al highlighted the importance of education in the context of social justice and advocacy (2015). Diversity is important, and so are the qualifications of management.

The MLIS is required in Georgia to be a certified librarian. The Certified Librarian Law states that no library serving more than 5,000 can get funding without employing a certified librarian. Despite this, it is common for library systems in Georgia to employ high school graduates at the highest level of branch management.

My community has a population of higher than 5,000, yet our public library is run by ""high school graduates.""

<https://www.facebook.com/swainsborolibrary> This negatively impacts our community as library management struggles with alphabetization and basic math (scheduling employees) much less tracking statistics or preparing monthly board reports. Most tellingly, planning is done FOR the community instead of WITH the community. Deadlines are missed and programs are canceled as management drops the ball, again. I heard a manager brag that she ""once tried college but got bored.""

Burke and Boggs argue in the "E-government Study" that the quality of information on library websites is largely determined by the presence of degreed librarians. In "Raised by Wolves," Neal argues that while it may be possible for an individual without the degree to encompass the totality of the plurality which the MLIS represents, it is highly unlikely.

## References

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2022 Georgia Code :: Title 43 - Professions and Businesses :: Chapter 24 - Librarians :: &sect; 43-24-4. Employment of Certified Librarians by State Operated Libraries; Withholding Public Funds From Noncomplying Libraries

Justia Free Databases of US Laws, Codes & Statutes

[law.justia.com](http://law.justia.com)

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**Eileen Hoppe, [ehopp\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:ehopp_2000@yahoo.com)**

Havre

We need to keep librarians who have a Masters in Library Science because they can support, do research, prepare budgets , supervise employees and be a vital guide in helping the public when using the library. Every library in every town , doesn't need what the population size is, keep all libraries open with the knowledge of their advance knowledge and guidance. Not everyone without this advance degree knows how to operate a library .

**Beth Kaeding, [kaedingl@aol.com](mailto:kaedingl@aol.com)**

Bozeman

This comment is in response to the proposal to lower long-time professional standards for the directors of Montana libraries in communities > 25,000 citizens that receive state funding. I OPPOSE any lowering of standards -- currently these library directors must have a graduate degree in library or information science. That is as it should be. Biologists hired by the state agency responsible for wildlife management must have a graduate degree; certified public accountants licensed by the state must have degrees; attorneys must have degrees; doctors and nurses must have degrees; certified teachers must have degrees. This lowering of professional standards is an affront to Montanans concerned about our state's educational standards and the ability of anyone using a library to get access to information that is necessary for a free society. I believe in local control BUT I also believe in professional standards and not allowing the minority to control the majority. Our libraries (as well as other institutions) are under assault in today's polarized political environment. Do NOT let the minority control our ability to have professional librarians directing our libraries that receive state funding.

**Lynnette Curtis, [lpcurr@gmail.com](mailto:lpcurr@gmail.com)**

Helena

Please do not downgrade the professional and education requirements for library directors. Libraries provide essential services to their communities. These services should be provided as uniformly as possible applying universal guidelines. Allowing local politics to govern library services would be a huge step backward. Libraries are too sacred to be used as pawns in the current ugly political landscape. Any doubts, look at the horror that is the Flathead Co Library Board.

**Kris Keup, [kristeen.keup@fulbrightmail.org](mailto:kristeen.keup@fulbrightmail.org)**

Billings

As a retired educator and staunch supporter of the free exchange of ideas, and as the proud daughter of a college librarian, I oppose changes to Public Library Standards that would deprofessionalize libraries and harm services.

Further support:

[https://www.everylibrary.org/oppose\\_mt\\_public\\_library\\_standards\\_change?utm\\_campaign=oppose\\_change\\_to\\_mt\\_public\\_lib&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=votelibraries](https://www.everylibrary.org/oppose_mt_public_library_standards_change?utm_campaign=oppose_change_to_mt_public_lib&utm_medium=email&utm_source=votelibraries)

**Greg McClellan, [kiskagreg@yahoo.com](mailto:kiskagreg@yahoo.com)**

Stevensville

I am not in favor of amendment 10.102.1160 to remove the requirement of the Director of the Library having a Master in Library Science degree or equivalent for populations over 25,000. I grew up in Billings, Montana and my mother took me regularly to the library to check out books and developed my love of reading which I am very thankful for. I think we should strive for high qualifications in a director of a library. I would think populations over 25,000 could afford to hire a director with those qualifications. I can understand not requiring that requirement for smaller communities, like where I currently reside in Stevensville. I believe libraries are very important to provide an opportunity for kids to learn and enjoy reading. I think we should have highly qualified directors of libraries to facilitate this opportunity.. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**Tom Stonecipher, [99stonecipher@gmail.com](mailto:99stonecipher@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Please do not support the proposed amendment to ARM 10.102.1160, removing the requirement that directors of Montana libraries serving more than 25,000 patron have at least a Masters of Library Sciences degree. That degree exists precisely because the science of running a library successfully to serve the public effectively (and getting the most use out of Montana tax dollars at the local and state level to do so) requires specialized knowledge which has developed over centuries into a regimen which requires specialized post-graduate training. The Commission suggests that local communities might have a need for a library director who has a ""different skillset or knowledge base"" than library training. Please name what they might be before making such a decision, for there are none that I have heard of -- do you have any real-life examples? This suggested change is much like removing the requirement that directors of medicine at state-supported hospitals need not have any medical training if the local community wanted a different skillset for that position, perhaps someone with no medical training but knowledgeable in the use of leeches to treat blood disorders.

Montana tax dollars are collected and used to support Montana libraries. That being the case, Montanans deserve regulations at the state level to ensure that this public money is used by competent, college-trained specialists in the operation of its libraries. This suggested change can only dumb them down.

**Bob Adams, [badams811@gmail.com](mailto:badams811@gmail.com)**

Helena

Members of the Commission:

When you consider the upcoming proposed rules change for library director educational standards, KEEP the current requirement that the director (in libraries serving communities over 25,000) have a Masters of Library Science. Now, more than ever, we need library directors who have the specialized knowledge to oversee a modern library operation serving, for Montana, large numbers of urban patrons. This degree is not a luxury, it is an essential for librarians. Thank you.

**Mark Wetherington, [mark@bitterrootpubliclibrary.org](mailto:mark@bitterrootpubliclibrary.org)**

Hamilton



I oppose changing the standards to eliminate the requirement that library directors serving populations greater than 25,000 have a Masters in Library Science or equivalent degree. Proposing this change out of the context of examining the rest of the standards, which were revised just a few years ago, seems unnecessary and unwarranted.

**J.M. Linam, [rza\\_78@hotmail.com](mailto:rza_78@hotmail.com)**

Whitefish, MT

I believe our library leaders should be highly educated and qualified for the position and that lowering the standards for library leaders threatens the stability and integrity of Montana's libraries.

**Carolyn Adams, [cjaneadams@gmail.com](mailto:cjaneadams@gmail.com)**

Helena

Please DO NOT CHANGE the Public Library Standards by eliminating the graduate degree requirement for library directors. I worked for years as a library assistant. During that time I realized time and again how much I didn't know and how important it was for the director to have the graduate degree. Now more than ever EXCELLENCE should be the standard for library leadership to maintain the stability and integrity of our libraries!

**Bob Gates, [gatesbob52@gmail.com](mailto:gatesbob52@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

In my opinion, the MLA's executive board's decision to no longer require a master's degree for directors of the states's larger libraries puts the future of library services in Montana at risk. While recognizing the importance of local control, I feel it is important to uphold high standards of professionalism. I urge the commission and other stakeholders to find common ground, address concerns, and work together to ensure the continued success of Montana's libraries, rather than making the choice to denigrate and devalue the standing of Montana's library professionals.

**Andrea Melle, [a.melle@hotmail.com](mailto:a.melle@hotmail.com)**

Havre

This concerns the amendment to 10.102.1160 -Personnel. This proposed change is in response to a problem at one library, Imagine IF, but will directly start to delegitimize libraries across the state. A recent editorial in the Daily Montanan says it well, ""The recent proposal to eliminate the graduate degree requirement for library directors raises serious concerns about the future of library leadership and the services our community expects. The ImagineIF Board's pursuit of a lower standard for their library director has now affected the State Library Commission, creating a race to the bottom that does a disservice to all Montanans."" This change is a "solution" in search of a problem. Changes to Administrative Rules should not be used to excuse the behavior of a single Library or Library Board. This change would reward and incentivize similar behavior across the state. This change eliminates accountability for destructive behavior of Library Boards. This change is NOT needed nor should be made!

**Cheryl Shearer, [cheryl.shearer@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.shearer@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am opposed to removing the requirement for a library director to have a Masters in Library Science, no matter the size of the library.

**Audrey Marr, [audrey\\_marr@hotmail.com](mailto:audrey_marr@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please remove the requirement for a master's degree for Library of Science degree for director of large libraries from the list of Montana Public Library Standards

**Nancy Royan, [wedsworth.library@gmail.com](mailto:wedsworth.library@gmail.com)**

Cascade

Wedsworth Memorial Library

To Whom It May Concern:

Montana State Library Commission is holding a public hearing for adoption, amend and repeal State Standards.

As Director of Wedsworth Memorial Library I have some concerns about some of these changes.

Under New Rule 1 Definitions I realize you are changing the definitions, but I question the formula these definitions produce.

I maintain that these definitions and the formula they produce unfairly benefits the larger population libraries. Small libraries are unfairly represented in the formula that provides State Aid for the Per Capita per Square Mile Served. The definitions and formula does indisputable harm to the smaller libraries.

A perfect example is the area Wedsworth Library serves and what we are allotted in the Square Mile served. We service the School District of Cascade Public School. This School District reaches from Craig to Ulm and south of Ulm to the north close to Simms. Yet the Great Falls Public Library is granted almost everything in this area to the east of Cascade for their per capita area.

Where the per square mile service area meets and or overlaps between the Great Falls Library and the Wedsworth Library, the Great Falls Library is credited for the population of the census count.

The formula doesn't represent the reality of the area that Wedsworth Memorial Library serves but receives no compensation for just because the city of Great Falls has more people than the Town of Cascade.

I would also like to address the issue of deleting the requirement that Directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree.

Public comment and Library staff across the state overwhelmingly support the Standard that requires Directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people to have a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree.

Small libraries realize they do not have the tax base to support the salary necessary to hire a librarian with a degree. We maintain there is a necessary requirement of education to oversee larger libraries and support this requirement of a degree.

This requirement was not an issue until the problem with ImagineIF Library arose. It is quite apparent that this standard is being eliminated at the request of one library. This procedure then undermines the standards for all libraries regardless of size.

Other large libraries have successfully recruited staff with degrees. How do you measure local control? All Library Boards have the option to exercise local control by choosing whether or not to meet standards. Why have Public Library Standards if one library chooses to ignore them and then the Commission changes Standards to accommodate?

Public Library Standards are tied to financial investment in public libraries. They exist to motivate the best expenditure for staffing and services so that all Montana libraries maintain the same quality of library services for their patrons.

The third issue I would like to address is the new formula for disbursement of funds to add Tribal Libraries that meet Public Library Standards. The new formula distributes money just between the libraries in a county that contains a Tribal Library. This is unjust for the libraries in that county. If there are three libraries in a county and a Tribal Library meets Standards then the three original libraries should not have to be unjustly punished by losing money.

If a Tribal Library meets State Standards, then they should be admitted to a Federation and the Federation should then disburse that money as a Library has been added to the Federation.

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to my concerns.

Respectfully,

Nancy Royan

Director Wedsworth Memorial Library

**Carolyn Swingle**, [daswingle@aol.com](mailto:daswingle@aol.com)

Bozeman

Kalispell is an anchor city for the Northwest region of Montana. Please do NOT downgrade the standard for qualifications for the Librarian Administrator for this area's public library. Like the libraries located in the other major cities in the rest of Montana, the Kalispell Library should have a head librarian of the finest quality. Libraries do so much more than stamp due dates on books these days. They assist all kinds of folks with information regarding evaluation of materials on the internet and how to locate information that is not readily available to the public. Libraries have changed enormously in recent decades and their functions are more complex than ever before. To hire a person of the highest quality and background is a valuable service to students seeking materials for Speech and Debate tasks, folks trying to find out how the economy and job training requirements have changed or are in the midst of change, or to back up students from the Community College who need advanced information on subjects of their choosing are just some of the tasks a qualified librarian needs to know: the WHAT, WHERE, WHO, and HOW of any topic of request and where to obtain that information. Thank you. This is important to your community.

**Shelley Eberhardy**, [shelley\\_eberhardy@yahoo.com](mailto:shelley_eberhardy@yahoo.com)

Kalispell

I don't think lowering the educational requirement for Library Directors is in the best interest of libraries and the people they serve. Library Directors with a masters degree have more background knowledge in best practices and overall management of a library and it's contents. Library boards already don't have an education requirement, so it makes sense for the Director to have this background to provide their board members with appropriate insight and suggestions to maintain consistency and effectiveness of the library.

**Tess McCarthy**, [Tess.McCarthy@gmail.com](mailto:Tess.McCarthy@gmail.com)

San Francisco

All public library entities need degreed MLIS, MIMs or similar graduates to serve at Director level so that the librarians, archivists and information workers they supervise are well understood and resourced to serve the public. This is a non-negotiable.

**Sonya Quackenbush, [sonyaquack@yahoo.com](mailto:sonyaquack@yahoo.com)**

Missoula

Requiring a Masters Degree for a library director can put small town libraries in a tight spot. Once someone has invested in a Master's Degree, they rightfully expect to be paid accordingly. Many small town libraries in Montana don't have funds to pay Library Directors salaries far above the average salary in their area. To encumber them with this requirement, will take more of the library funding to pay the one Library Director, rather than investing in library programs or additional staff. Do not require Library Directors to have a Master's Degree - let the local library boards decide their own hiring requirements.

**Kim Crowley, [crowley@frii.com](mailto:crowley@frii.com)**

Bigfork

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing today to urge you to keep the administrative rule that requires library directors serving a population of 25,000 or more to have a Masters degree in library science or an equivalent degree.

The directorship of a library is not an administrative job. It is a leadership position, and requires a professional who understands and can convey the philosophy of library services, and who can mentor and guide other staff members both professional and not. When, about a year ago, in response to my telling a library director that she had a very knowledgeable and forward-thinking staff, she replied, "yes, they're so capable I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing." This is the response of an administrator, not a director or a leader. My response? Lead! A library director must be a leader, a mentor, a problem-solver, a negotiator, and a person who is comfortable being out in the community with professionals from every sector of the economy.

When someone chooses to get a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science they commit to sacrifice, work hard, and to honor the profession. They understand how their MLS will benefit not only themselves but the communities they end up serving. And it doesn't end there. Librarians with an MLS understand the value of education for themselves and for their staff. They will likely make continuing education an integral component of their staff culture, which in turn will enrich the materials and services a library offers its community.

My parents, 3rd and 4th generation Montanans and college graduates, understood that in order to make positive change, to enhance their environment, and make a better world for their five children, education was key. Their parents, a blacksmith in the mines of Butte and a sheep rancher from Canyon Creek (both married to homemakers) also understood the value of a college education even though they had little education themselves.

I received my MLIS in 1991 from the University of Michigan after an undergraduate degree at the University of Montana. I proudly served as library director of ImagineF Libraries from 2004 until 2018. During my tenure I mentored countless staff, in our own libraries and at others around the state. I forged partnerships locally, statewide, and nationally, all to the benefit of our Flathead communities. Yes, my MLIS served me well, but more importantly it greatly benefited our county and our state.

Getting rid of the MLS requirement for library directors serving over 25,000 people is a huge step backwards and a detriment to the communities and staff members we serve. Please reconsider.

Thank you,  
kc

Kim Crowley

**Frances Mcallister, [fhmcallister2@gmail.com](mailto:fhmcallister2@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Friends of ImagineF

Please do not lower the Montana standards for the directors of libraries. Professionals with the required advanced degrees in Library Science are educated and trained to uphold the high quality of standards that Montana Libraries have achieved and are recognized for nationwide. Letting a few individuals with limited backgrounds and experience take control of our working system is basically dumbing down the process. They are not working for the masses but for their own agenda. It saddens me that few people are able to whittle away at our library professionals and force them out of positions. Their agenda appears to be going after individuals, books and policies. What's next? Closing of libraries? It doesn't take professional historians to point out the obvious, this is history repeating itself. I am ashamed and disheartened that this is happening in my state. Please stand taller and uphold advanced degrees for the sake of our state and our citizens.

**Mandi Hull, [mandihull@gmail.com](mailto:mandihull@gmail.com)**

Pearl City

I have recently earned my Master's in Library and Information Science and had a master's degree in another field before entering the program. My MLIS program prepared me to specifically work in and manage a library. I learned cataloging, collection development, and new technologies specific to libraries. Even with the education I had before entering the degree program (a bachelor's degree in computer science and a master's in instructional technology) I would not have been an effective librarian, never mind managing a library. I think you're doing your libraries and their patrons an injustice by removing the degree as a requirement. If your branch is having trouble now, think of how much worse it will become after having someone unqualified at the helm. I believe working with the MLA to come up with a solution is best for the library and the community it serves.

**Jane Hunt, [jane200@centurytel.net](mailto:jane200@centurytel.net)**

Bigfork

I am opposed to changing the requirement that our Public Libraries must hire Directors with graduate degrees. Our public libraries are a long standing tradition of American Democracy. We should be hiring people who are committed enough that they have a graduate degree. Anything less than this is taking away from our public institution.

**kelly dougherty, [travellingkad@gmail.com](mailto:travellingkad@gmail.com)**

kalispell

Please don't "Dumb down" our current public library standards. In these challenging times, we need educated leaders more than ever.

**Barbara Maxwell, [barbaram.maxwell@gmail.com](mailto:barbaram.maxwell@gmail.com)**

Bigfork

I have been a library patron in various communities and of various population sizes for over 60 years. Many times I have relied on the librarians for research recommendations and assistance and on each occasion, I received accurate and invaluable assistance. Not one of these professionals attempted to mislead me or limit my inquiries. I absolutely support the current requirement for our librarians to have a Masters Degree in Library Science or an equivalent degree. The position has always been critical to ensure that the public and library patrons have the necessary tools and reference materials available to them no matter who they are or their ability to pay. Although I have a college degree, I don't begin to know everything I'm interested in knowing. Today, especially, it is more and more difficult to find objective and truthful information and librarians have the education, skills and experience to assist their communities in learning. I don't believe just anyone can do this job reliably and effectively. I have been a financial supporter of the efforts to create a new Bigfork ImagineIF Library branch and I want that branch to have the highest standards of excellence for the community. I want a librarian with a Masters Degree in Library Science to be in charge of ImagineIF library branches. I want the State Library Commission to remain in a leadership position to maintain and not lower standards for librarians in Montana public libraries.

**Diane Bayuk, 1520 Charlie Russell Dr.**

Helena

Board Members:

Vote NO on this radical concept of lowering the standards for library directors.

Let a commitment to excellence be your vision.

Please uphold our current high standards.

Thank you.

**Kathleen McLaughlin, [Poodymc@gmail.com](mailto:Poodymc@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Re Amendment to 10.102.1160: I oppose the changes with this amendment. Head librarians in communities over 25,000 have very complex and demanding jobs. A masters in library science provides them with the needed skill, set to effectively manage these positions.

**JL Angell, [jangell@earthlink.net](mailto:jangell@earthlink.net)**

Rescue

Please reject the Montana Library Commission's decision to remove the requirement for a master's degree for directors of Montana's largest libraries.

Our communities deserve library directors who are well trained in best practices across the country. Policies on educational standards help libraries function effectively and consistently as library board members change. I had family members who were certified librarians and heard the stories of how dysfunctional things became if someone not well qualified was hired.

**Paul Vang, [pfvang@me.com](mailto:pfvang@me.com)**

Butte

Butte-Silver Bow Public Library Foundation Board of Directors- though I am submitting my comments on my own behalf, which do not necessarily represent the views of other directors.

I have been a lifetime user of public libraries, and all our family members are library users in their own home communities. Public libraries are important to me and to our community. I have been able to know and work with library directors over the years and have a deep appreciation for their work and knowledge. Running a public library is a vitally important occupation, and our communities deserve to know that their library directors are qualified and able to do their jobs, in all kinds of political environments, and will work for the right of the public to have access to books, music, film, periodicals and all the other services that public libraries provide. Lowering the standards for library directors is an absolutely wrong direction, which will adversely impact on our communities and the many people who rely on library services.

**Bob Lopp, [boblopp@bresnan.net](mailto:boblopp@bresnan.net)**

Kalispell

Retired board member of Imaginelf library.

I served for 10 years on the board and encouraged Kim Crawford, our new director to bring in as many new staff with master's degrees as the budget would support. Consequently, the quality of all of the departments grew dramatically. At the end of my tenure, my wife, Jane Lopp, was appointed to that position, and served until her untimely death, 9 years later.

What has happened under the current leadership is a disaster. Do not let that attitude migrate to the state library association. All libraries, regardless of size need strong leadership from the state.

**george mclean, [gmclean73@gmail.com](mailto:gmclean73@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Why try to dumb down a complex position requiring not only administrative skills to allow a complex institution to run smoothly, but a person with a background in a variety of literature, books, legal issues etc.? A well functioning library with knowledgeable leadership for a growing community is an invaluable asset. Please: don't do this.

**Katherine Vaughan, [kathy.vaughan72@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.vaughan72@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am opposed to the change in the state library standards for directors of public libraries (amendment to 10.102.1160). I believe that removing the requirement for a MSLIS for directors of libraries in communities of over 25,000 people only serves to de-professionalize and weaken libraries and thus communities. This standard has been in place for nearly 50 years and undermining this standard is opening the door to undermining all standards.

**David Steinmuller, [dsteinmul@msn.com](mailto:dsteinmul@msn.com)**

Bozeman Self

Eliminating the requirement for a Masters degree is a poor idea. So much of library management and service is highly technical these days that expertise beyond the a BA or BS should be a requirement of all librarians.

**Anne Langdji, [awlangdji@hotmail.com](mailto:awlangdji@hotmail.com)**

Helena

This amendment, Amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel, should not be accepted. It is important for libraries to have well-trained staff and the requirements are important to maintain the quality of services.

**Michael Bayuk, [mibayuk@gmail.com](mailto:mibayuk@gmail.com)**

Helena, MT

Hello. Please do not lower the standard for public library directors. The Public Library Standard needs to remain unchanged. The stability and integrity of our Montana libraries must be protected.

Thank you.

Michael J. Bayuk

Helena, Montana

**Nike Stevens, [stevenswildlife@earthlink.net](mailto:stevenswildlife@earthlink.net)**

Bozeman

REtain requirement for MS for librarians there is already a 25,000 resident lower limit that adequately addresses the needs of small communities

**Jane Weber. [jwebers5@msn.com](mailto:jwebers5@msn.com)**

Great Falls

As a former county commissioner who served for many years on the Great Falls City-County Library Board, I am appalled that you would consider reducing the educational requirements for librarians. These positions require a master's degree in library science and your decision to reduce the



qualifications is unacceptable. Few library patrons fully understand the duties of their librarians, so are likely not to comment on this absurd proposal. If they truly understood the importance of the librarian credentialing, you would expect more opposition to this ridiculous proposal. Citizens need fully QUALIFIED librarians who are specifically trained in library services with the current credential requirements to oversee this critically important service in our communities. I am OPPOSED to this proposal to reduce the educational requirements and demean the value of our librarians.

**Celeste McLean, [celestemc7@yahoo.com](mailto:celestemc7@yahoo.com)**

Kalispell

Dear Sirs:

Why would we want to dumb down, to the lowest common denominator, our library personnel? It appears to be a race to the bottom.

Requirements for our library director in Kalispell, MT is for a Master's Degree in Library Science. Unbelievably, we accepted a high school graduate (yes, her qualification was a high school diploma) to fill that spot and lost valuable financing from multiple sources. Now we want to accept the bottom as our goal?

Please reconsider any changes to the present personnel requirements for the library and for the good of the community.

Respectfully,

Celeste McLean

Kalispell, MT 59901

[celestemc7@yahoo.com](mailto:celestemc7@yahoo.com)

**Mike Ryan, [mryan01@bresnan.net](mailto:mryan01@bresnan.net)**

Dillon

Removing the standard for a library director in communities over 25,000 people to hold a Master's Degree is a bad idea. Managing a library in a large community is not an easy task. I believe it takes a skill level commensurate with an advanced library degree to be consistently successful.

I have 46 quarter credits in library/media studies (equivalent to a Master's Degree from universities such as the University of Oregon) from the University of Montana, beyond my B.A. degree. I was at one time the Chair of the Library-Media Center at Sentinel High School in Missoula. I did my internship at the Missoula Public Library. Library Directors, Head Librarians, etc. should be encouraged to get more training, not less.

Keep reasonable high standards for library leadership in place.

**Art Burch, [Budski@bresnan.net](mailto:Budski@bresnan.net)**

Kalispell

I oppose reducing the education standards for library directors in Montana. Flathead County's mistake should not set an example for the rest of our state.

**Valerie Webster, [vwebster587@gmail.com](mailto:vwebster587@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Please reject the Montana Library Commission's decision to remove the requirement for a master's degree for directors of Montana's largest libraries. More and more children are being home schooled in Montana. Many families that homeschool make extensive use of libraries. Given the increasingly important role of libraries in contributing to an educated citizenry, having well educated library directors is increasingly important.

Our children will be our next generation of business owners, nurses, ranchers and more. Our communities require library directors who are well trained in best practices across the country so that we can compete nationally and internationally. Policies on educational standards help libraries function effectively and consistently as library board members change. Sincerely, Valerie Webster, a mother of three young adults and the grandmother of one child (so far)

**Connie Leistiko, [mtleco68@gmail.com](mailto:mtleco68@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I do not agree with the rule change. For example, The ImagineIF Library serves a very large number of patrons. The Director supervises over 30 employees who handle any number of tasks and services which require various degrees of training. That job requires specific training and knowledge that a Masters Degree can provide and add to the success of that system and a higher quality of administration.

**KAREN LUNDGREN, [KLUNDGREN27@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KLUNDGREN27@GMAIL.COM)**

BOZEMAN

I can't imagine why it would be advisable to eliminate the Master's degree requirement for librarians. That standard is necessary to ensure that librarians are well prepared and should be a minimum requirement. I object to making it an individual decision of a particular library as then the decision of who to hire is subject to the whims of a board rather than a standard that Montana upholds. Please do not change the requirement.

**Alissa Wolenetz, [wolenetz@alumni.stanford.edu](mailto:wolenetz@alumni.stanford.edu)**

Lewistown, MT

I am a library director who does not have an MLS. The service population for my library is under the 25,000 threshold set in the current standards. Even so, an MLS would be incredibly valuable in the performance of my duties and for the library as a whole. Currently, my individual development plan is comprised almost entirely of subjects that would have been covered in any MLS program. This means that I spend hours and hours each week training, which reduces my capacity for community outreach, engagement, and personnel development. Unfortunately, that ultimately reduces the capacity of the entire library to provide services to our community.

In order to compensate for my lack of education, I often reach out to other librarians within Montana. When I don't have the expertise to approach intricate, library-specific topics such as library architecture, long-range community engagement planning, and policy development, I can rely on librarians with an MLS degree to share their knowledge with me. Unfortunately, if requirements for education for library professionals in large communities are removed, that will result in a loss of resources for libraries like mine in smaller communities, too.

I am also concerned that removing this standard would undercut wages for my staff. Librarians are often underpaid. When the ImagineIF Board of trustees removed the requirement for an MLS degree for their director, they also undercut that position's salary by \$10,000. This is alarming. When my staff go into union negotiations for wages with the city, one factor considered is salaries for comparable positions across the state. If the MSL Commission chooses to undercut the value of education and expertise for our profession by removing the MLS standard, it will be much, much more difficult for my staff to advocate for fair pay for the highly skilled work they do.

Right now, the MSL Commission's actions feel like they are in reaction to one library's refusal to play by the rules. I think that collectively, our time could be better spent imagining how Montana's libraries can grow. In the future, I hope that the MSL Commission will choose to advocate for better resources and education for our libraries, librarians, and the public we all serve.

**Angela Archuleta, [afarchuleta@gmail.com](mailto:afarchuleta@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I am the Past President of the Montana Librarian Association, however, I am writing this comments personally as an user of Imagine If Libraries in Kalispell.

A profession is considered a job that requires prolonged training and formal qualifications. When I served in the military, Soldiers were encouraged to get degrees at all levels of service and in fact, without a degree or Advanced training you could miss out on a promotion. We were a profession. Librarians are also professionals and having degree requirements to serve is not an unusual. Imagine If has been brought up numerous times in these arguments and the fact is until the last director - Imagine If has had several qualified library directors, who all held a Master's in Library Information and Sciences. All major cities in Montana have directors with these qualifications and many smaller libraries with less than 25,000 people in their community also hold these degrees. The Task Force, who was asked to study this situation, found that librarians support keeping this requirement. I do not understand why one boards decision in one town is influencing the decision to get rid of this standard. Montana is known for maintaining excellence, yet this concept that you do not have to have a MLIS flies in the face of that idea. Moreover, as an organization, MLA's Cates Scholarship has provided many Montana students with financial assistance to obtain MLIS's from accredited institutions. I believe it is a bad idea to get rid of this standard. I am asking the Commission to reconsider their decision.

Sincerely,

Angela Archuleta

MT Army National Guard, LTC (Retired), MLA Past President  
Stamitsikitsikin Elementary Librarian.

**Claudia Clifford, [Claudia.Clifford57@gmail.com](mailto:Claudia.Clifford57@gmail.com)**

Helene

One of the most trusted entities in our community is our public library. I count on the head librarian to have the expertise to run this important resource. That expertise should include at least a masters degree in library science. Our libraries work well now so I see no reason for changing this requirement. As my grandparents said, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

**Megan Stark, [Starklibrarian@gmail.com](mailto:Starklibrarian@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Please maintain the standard to require the MLIS degree for library directors serving 25000 or more people. Thank you.

**Michele Tohtz, [jmtohtz@gmail.com](mailto:jmtohtz@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Please do not change the existing public library standards. Montana's libraries have always been expertly guided by licensed professionals and there is no good reason to change this.

Please do not let the personal agenda of a few Gianforte appointees further undermine our state library system.

**Leah Hammerquist, [leahhammerquist@hotmail.com](mailto:leahhammerquist@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Montanans deserve to have the excellence of their libraries maintained by continuing to require for directors of libraries that serve over 25,000 people have a MLS or equivalent degree. Montanans deserve continued access to trained library professionals. The process of earning a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree equips librarians with the skills to efficiently organize interdisciplinary information; equitably provide access and usage of information to the public; and operate within local, regional, and federal domains, to ensure that the general public maintains their fundamental First Amendment rights.

The theoretical and ethical knowledge that librarians learn during their advanced training cannot be understated; brief examples being: the implementation of FRBR to replace MARC, and its implications for catalogs and the user experience; or the negotiation of equitable DRM practices in the digital library that align with the historical principles of riparian rights and by extension intellectual property rights. While these topics might sound like acronym-riddled, nebulous concepts, they are critical to how Montanans access global information on a daily basis.

Montana is home to incredible libraries; the Montana Shared Catalog allows over 30 libraries to seamlessly share resources as well as request resources from around the world. The infrastructure facilitated by the state library to local libraries creates a robust, accessible resource, enabling communities to participate from Libby to Glendive. Library administrators are tasked with high-level decisions that impact an expansive system built on decades of theory and practice. If library boards in areas that meet the population threshold for the MLS education standard are struggling to retain trained library professionals, they need to reconsider their approach to hiring practices for interdisciplinary professionals to run a popular

public library in a competitive economic environment; this is in-line with their duties as stewards of local resident's tax dollars. To diminish the requirements for Montana's library directors in areas with populations over 25,000, would be a disservice to all Montanans.

Leah R. Hammerquist, MLIS  
Born and raised in Kalispell, MT  
Current resident of Colville, WA

**Kay Vang, [ksvang@me.com](mailto:ksvang@me.com)**

Butte

The requirement for a master's degree must be maintained to insure that librarians have the background to deal with all of the technologies libraries provide to Montana citizens.

**Rhonda Steubs, [steubsr@gmail.com](mailto:steubsr@gmail.com)**

Lakeside

I oppose any changes to the Montana Public Library Standards. Montana Libraries deserve degreed qualified librarians. As a resident of Flathead County and a former Westshore Community Library Board member I am embarrassed to live in a county and state where the debacle at Imaginelf became national news.

**Anne Millbrooke, [anne27m@yahoo.com](mailto:anne27m@yahoo.com)**

Bozeman

The Montana Library Association asserts the state's proposed elimination of a master's degree requirement for the directors of large libraries has "denigrated the standing" of their profession. That is obviously true. The master's degree is a professional standard nationwide. Dumbing down libraries makes no sense in terms of the function of a library as a public resource. Reject the proposed change. Support our libraries by supporting our librarians. They are a treasure in our communities.

**Jonna Mihalic-Hoag, [hoagwarts@gmail.com](mailto:hoagwarts@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

I strongly object to the proposal to remove the required standards for public library directors in Montana. A Master's degree in Library Science is the gold standard for library directors and librarians, and should not be removed as a job requirement for our larger libraries. Let's support our state university library science grads, or we'll lose them to other states.

**Patti Steinmuller, [psteinmul@msn.com](mailto:psteinmul@msn.com)**

Bozeman

I strongly support maintaining the current master's degree in library science requirement for directing a library system serving more than 25,000 residents. With so many technical, cultural, and social changes occurring in our society, library directors need to obtain advanced skills available

during master's degree education and training. Lowering the qualifications of library directors at a time when more is expected of libraries and library directors than ever before, devalues the profession, and runs counter to the expectations of the public to have knowledgeable, highly trained, and qualified professionals directing libraries of their local communities.

Consider my nutrition profession provides an example of the need to upgrade requirements for competency. Although I'm a registered dietitian who now has an MS degree, I was eligible to take the national registration exam with my bachelor's degree and evidence of having achieved the additional requirements. However, as of 2024, applicants to take the national registration exam will need to have earned a master's degree from an accredited institution as one of the eligibility criteria. The level of expertise for competency has increased leading to a requirement for increased academic qualifications.

Maintain the trust of the public in the skill and competency of library directors by maintaining the master's degree requirements for library directors of library systems serving more than 25,000 residents. The current rule operates correctly. "If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it!" The prospered rule change harms rather than helps. Maintain the current rule.

**Sara Walsh, [swalsh@3rivers.net](mailto:swalsh@3rivers.net)**

Kalispell & Augusta

I'm writing in opposition to the proposed change that would lessen the standards to which Libraries in our largest cities are held in order to earn taxpayer funds.

The graduate degree in question is a Masters level degree in Library or Informational SCIENCE -- a degree that recognizes that a properly functioning library that serves everyone is rooted in proven professional standards, much like that for doctors, lawyers, accountants, pharmacists, etc. It is not a job for which one is qualified by mere age, residence, or interest, as claimed by a recent letter to the editor.

To change/eliminate this professional standard simply because one covered library (Imaginelf in Kalispell) has been unable to hire or retain a director who meets those standards reflects a problem with that library's Trustees -- not with the standards themselves. Those standards have been developed by professionals in the field, are universally deemed valid, and are met by all the other covered libraries. We should not eliminate long-standing state-wide standards simply to accommodate Trustees that are trying to micro-manage library staff and policies for ideological purposes, resulting in those with qualifying credentials being unwilling to apply for the director's position or to stay in that job.

In fact, I'm surprised these trustees would want taxpayer monies spent to support a library not held to professional standards. The withholding of funds for libraries that do not meet these standards is the very way government should be held accountable for spending taxpayer monies. Eliminating the graduate degree requirement would mean expending taxpayer funds to support political ideology rather than an institution held to professional standards. And it is entirely reasonable that state certification of a certain level of competence is required to justify taxpayer financial support.

I would urge the MSLC to adhere to the recommendations of the Public Library Standards Task Force, which was made up of Librarians rather than political appointees, only one of whom has a degree in Library Science. Libraries are unique institutions that hold a special place in the public trust. They receive public funds and should be held to professional standards.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sara Walsh  
Kalispell & Augusta, MT

**FRANCINE HAGAR, 1290 SWAN HORSESHOE DRIVE #244**

BIGFORK

REQUIRING A MASTER'S DEGREE IN LIBRARY SCIENCE SHOULD BE KEPT AS A RULE. LOWERING THE STANDARDS FOR THIS POSITION DOES A DIS-SERVICE TO MONTANAS WHO EXPECT EXCELLENCE IN OUR LIBRARY SERVICES.

**Diane Magone, [diane\\_magone@hotmail.com](mailto:diane_magone@hotmail.com)**

Superior

I oppose this proposed rule. Leave the standards as they are.

**Christopher Hagar, [im4allkids@yahoo.com](mailto:im4allkids@yahoo.com)**

Bigfork

I OPPOSE any change to the requirement for the head librarian/person in charge of the library (for towns with 25,000 or more citizens) to have a masters degree in library science to equivalent. While this requirement would be burdensome for many of the rural libraries, it needs to be a requirement for larger population centers that serve greater numbers and potentially more sophisticated needs of such a hub. The "watering down" of qualification requirements would do a dis-service to library patrons and could lead to libraies that are unduly influenced by political interests. I very strongly OPPOSE any change to the requirement.

**Mary Ruedisili , [nruedisili@yahoo.com](mailto:nruedisili@yahoo.com)**

Helena

I have worked in Minot, ND, public library. I believe the standard should remain the same. It is important to have well educated people as library directors. Let's move forward rather than backward. Thank you.

**Dick Hagar, [cumcbigfork@yahoo.com](mailto:cumcbigfork@yahoo.com)**

Bigfork

Bigfork Senior Center

As a retired school administrator I have seen first hand the value of a fully qualified librarian to provide guidance and leadership that impacts the education of youth and instructional programs within a school and district. This is similarly important for cities with large populations. Here in the

Flathead it appears services have been tainted by political stances. This must not be allowed to impact our libraries on which all citizens of the county demand. Please do not allow any changes in the qualification requirements; keep the requirement to have a masters degree or equivalent in library science. Respectfully submitted.

**David Chadwick, [wick47@gmail.com](mailto:wick47@gmail.com)**

Helena

The proposed repeal of the requirement for a masters degree in library science is a mistake. Montanans will suffer as the management of libraries is further politicized. Libraries are essential community resources and need to be managed by people with appropriate professional qualifications and requiring a masters degree is the most basic way of establishing those qualifications. Repealing this requirement is just more culture war nonsense.

**Michael Jones, [drmcj60@gmail.com](mailto:drmcj60@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Please remove the requirement for a masters of library science degree and return control of the hiring process to the local boards so they may determine who is the best candidate to hire for their director.

**Susan Plath, [Susan.b.plath@gmail.com](mailto:Susan.b.plath@gmail.com)**

Billings

Board member of Billings Public Library

I oppose the change in this standard. A Master's Degree better prepares the Director for their role. A Master's Degree in Library Sciences teaches design, development, and management of a library.

Removing the Master's Degree devaluates the position. We do not hire a school principal without a Master's Degree, we should not lower our standards for the important job of Public Library Director.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Plath

Board of Directors

Billings Public Library

**Rebecca Mosbacher, [Mosbachers@gmail.com](mailto:Mosbachers@gmail.com)**

Missoula



I urge the Montana State Library Commission to follow the advice of the Montana Library Association and the State Library regarding staffing of our state's libraries. Being a professional librarian requires a master's degree. Library assistants are able to do the nitty gritty work of checking books in and out, shelving books, etc. People making administrative decisions need the education required to see the big picture of library operations.

**Hayley Botnen, [hayleycote@gmail.com](mailto:hayleycote@gmail.com)**

Billings

Please do not change the requirement for library directors to have a Master's Degree. Within Master's programs, people are taught the basics of not only running a library, but also how to select books, how to support patron needs and how to collaborate with other librarians. While it is important to recognize the difficulty of smaller libraries (something which the current rules already allow for), changing the rules regarding not having an MLIS denigrates the library profession. Regardless of current political atmosphere, librarians are utmost professionals who follow ethics and need the same requirements of other professions.

As a follower of local news, this seems obviously to be connected to Kalispell's issues. Kalispell is a wonderful city with lots to offer. Their issues with hiring qualified candidates seem more connected to the disorganization of their library board than a lack of qualified candidates. Do not change the qualifications necessary simply because one board is incapable of acting like a board should do.

**Robert Filipovich, [bob.filipovich@live.com](mailto:bob.filipovich@live.com)**

Helena

To: Montana State Library Commission

Nov. 30, 2023

From: Robert Filipovich 927 8th Ave./Helena, MT 59601 [bob.filipovich@live.com](mailto:bob.filipovich@live.com) 406 449 6039

Re: Changes to ARM 10. 102. 1158 "LIBRARY BOARD, GOVERNANCE, AND WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR" Public Comment for December 1 meeting.

The differences between the deleted language in ARM 10.102. 1158 versus the proposed new language are matters of tone, specificity, emphasis, and requirements. The former language looks to the future based on the local, inclusive community, and library budget; the latter focuses on present adequate financial needs and necessary requisite financial resources.

The tone of the deleted language is Optimistic –“library budget shows year to year growth”, and “maintain and increase the library’s ability”; this deleted language is Inclusive, Cooperative , and expected -- “The director and board routinely present the library to the community and local government in a manner to maintain and increase the library’s ability . . . .”

The proposed language is Orderly & Limiting – “will identify”, “will regularly communicate”, “identify requisite financial resources” and “adequate library services”; this proposed language also disrupts the Hierarchical balance between library director and library board to make professional librarian decisions versus financial decisions. This new language implies that the “community” writ large is omitted from discussions and replaced

by “local government and community leaders.” Those “community leaders” are most likely local library board members, unschooled in library science and often appointed by city or county commissioners who are primarily concerned about the costs of local public services.

This circle of influence – library board and local government – could also include those unspecified “community leaders” -- banks, corporations, and nonlocal foundations -- whose tax advantaged largess is sought by the state library’s steering committee tasked in June, 2018 to support Montana’s public libraries with private funding.

A comparative reading of the existing and proposed language in ARM 10.102.1158 reveals a subtle shift in the attitude of Montana law regarding local control versus state or state/private control of what still appear to be public libraries. Define the terms. Balance. Nonpartisan. Let the current language stand whenever possible.

**Christina Granrud, [cgranrud@hotmail.com](mailto:cgranrud@hotmail.com)**

Kalispell

Masters degrees in Library Science MUST be mandatory. I am completely AGAINST any changes to the existing standards!!!!!!

Any attempt to weaken the existing standards have been put forth by sick individuals who have, in my opinion, evil and self-righteous motives. Change NOTHING!!!

**Murry Graham, [murrobgraham@gmail.com](mailto:murrobgraham@gmail.com)**

Kalispell

Why is it that you want to lower the standards for crucial personnel when our need for highly trained and experienced administrators of our libraries is at its greatest? Our world is in turmoil and any action that causes our institutions of knowledge and understanding to become less effective is ludicrous. It would be like watering down the gasoline in your automobile. Sure, you would have more and maybe go farther but the damage to your engine would be fatal in the long run.

Please do not implement this change!

**Sue Harding, [Sueharding@montanasky.net](mailto:Sueharding@montanasky.net)**

Whitefish

I am opposed to the proposed changes. I want professional library leaders who understand books, technology, and systems at the onset of career, knowledge that will expand with experience. I expect teachers, doctors, pilots, lawyers, and other professionals to start with a high degree of expertise. Librarians, in charge of the diversity of accumulated knowledge deserve to start with a high degree of study accomplished.

**Alice Asleson, [alice.asleson@gmail.com](mailto:alice.asleson@gmail.com)**

Billings

I am a high school librarian in Billings writing in strong opposition to the proposed amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel, which would get rid of the requirement for public library directors in cities over 25,000 to hold an MLIS or equivalent degree. There is no reason to lower our standards for

what we expect for our public libraries. Our library directors are responsible for overseeing collection development, cataloging, circulation, programming, digital resources, and more, as well as managing the staff and budgets of our libraries. MLIS programs include classes that teach these skills with library ethics and values as the overarching framework. Our libraries, funded by public dollars, deserve to have knowledgeable, trained stewards at their helms. It would be irresponsible to taxpayers to require anything less than the current standards for library directors.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Alice Asleson  
MLIS

**Kaylee deMontigny**, [kdemontigny03@gmail.com](mailto:kdemontigny03@gmail.com)  
Missoula

I do not want the standards to be changed. There are exceptions in place already to support small libraries and changing the standards as a whole will do more harm than good.

**Halsey Demontigny**, [Halseydemontigny@gmail.com](mailto:Halseydemontigny@gmail.com)  
Billings

I do not want the standards to change. This new process is overcomplicated and the libraries were able to do well with few exceptions for the smaller ones.

**Carrie Nelson**, [cnelson1895@gmail.com](mailto:cnelson1895@gmail.com)  
Kalispell

I am submitting my comments in favor of retaining graduate degree standards for directors of large public libraries. This long standing professional requirement was adopted to promote quality library services across all communities. Eliminating this standard now at the request of just one library undermines all libraries. What public service professions will be targeted next?

The diverse Task Force appointed by the Commission itself even recommended keeping the standard. Ditching standards at the request of just one institution and in defiance of the recommendations of their own Task Force is not good governance and sets a bad precedent. Please support the continuation of reasonable professional standards and uphold the value of education in our public institutions. Respectfully submitted,  
Carrie Nelson

**Debbie Westermann**, [dwestermann25@gmail.com](mailto:dwestermann25@gmail.com)  
Bigfork

Keep the standard in place for librarians. A Graduate degree in Library Science. A librarian is a librarian is a librarian. A business person is just that, business, not books and all of library science.

Changing this standard is more bureaucracy, more government invasion, of what is simple. A librarian, studies and is an ongoing expert in library science.

Changing the standard would eliminate accountability. No more real libraries? No more libraries for all? No more real certified librarians? No more experts in their respective fields? Where will it stop? Dumbing down the system, because “anyone can do that job”. NO they CANNOT! Librarians need to be educated with a Library Science Degree. Certified in their field.

KEEP the standard in place for the librarians of Montana!

**Star Bradley, [sb1ib12@gmail.com](mailto:sb1ib12@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I am writing today to express my opposition to the proposed changes to the Public Library Standards. It is abundantly clear that the proponents of this change do not understand Libraries or what is entailed in earning a graduate degree in Library and Information Science. Libraries are about so much more than checking out books and it is clear that the proponents of this change do not understand that. This change would do a disservice to every resident of the state of Montana. In fact, it already has. The money and time being spent on this proposed change could be used in ways that actually support residents of the state, instead of creating problems where there weren't any to begin with.

The current standard states that libraries that serve populations of OVER 25,000 require the director to have a terminal degree in the appropriate field. Why would that be a bad thing? Would we want our health care professionals to have business degrees? Would we be willing to have school principals and teachers without teaching degrees? Why is the field of librarianship any different? Librarians are professionals and should be treated as such. To do anything else is just wrong.

**Jamie Dolan, [jamiedol@gmail.com](mailto:jamiedol@gmail.com)**

Helena

Librarians are professionals with specific expertise that comes from their advanced education. Library directors have an important position and must have the requisite formal background. Please continue to require a master's degree for these positions.

**Jennifer Pawlak, [jenniferpawlak@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferpawlak@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

Board of Trustees, Bozeman Public Library

As vice-chair of the Board of Trustees for the Bozeman Public Library, I am urging you to reject the proposed amendment to 10.10.1160, removing the Master of Library Science degree requirement. Modern libraries are an amazing combination of services, materials, opportunities, and challenges. The combination of skills needed to successfully run a public library (of all sizes) are not the same as those used in other businesses or organizations. The MLS degree is essential in providing library-specific expertise and proficiency.

My opinion is based on my experience as both a trustee and a librarian. However, the Commission has received the same recommendation from the 2023 Public Library Standards Task Force, as well as the overwhelming majority of public comment. I ask that you listen to the voices of Montana library users and reject this amendment.

**Neal Ganser, [neal@ganserllc.com](mailto:neal@ganserllc.com)**

Bozeman

In support of the change to library director qualifications eliminating the Masters Degree: Why would a local library board in an area of any size population want to give up its authority to hire whoever they wish based on their own ability to assess the applicants qualifications to serve the position. They should not give up the right to do so.

**Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson, [lisameckjack@gmail.com](mailto:lisameckjack@gmail.com)**

Missoula

Montana Library Association

The requirement for library directors to have an MLS degree in towns with populations over 25,000 is essential. That degree provides needed training in necessary library principles including collection development and personnel management that are unique to a library setting. I chair the Sheila Cates Scholarship Committee for the Montana Library Association (MLA). MLA recognized the importance of an advanced degree in library science by creating the Sheila Cates Scholarship in 1994 which is awarded yearly to those Montana individuals pursuing a graduate degree in library and information science. So far, we have awarded over \$80,000 to 53 Montana librarians. This shows there is a great interest and need for advanced degrees for Montana librarians. Personally, I have an MLS. This has allowed me to serve as both Montana's Legislative Librarian and the Montana State Law Librarian. I couldn't have done those jobs without the MLS degree. It is as essential as a law degree is to a lawyer. Please reconsider your decision.

**Kate Zoellner, [katezoellner@gmail.com](mailto:katezoellner@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I am writing to oppose the proposed changes to the Public Library Standards. I support the Montana Library Association's position on the changes.

**Michael Flanagan, 3625 W Central Ave**

Missoula      None

When I'm at the library and I'm having difficulty finding information or a resource, I can count on librarians to assist me in my search. I want to know that the people running the library are well trained and are up to date with the resources and books and keep themselves well trained also. I believe that those in charge of the library really do need a Masters degree in Library Science to keep our community well informed.

**C Smith, [cjsmith1011@aol.com](mailto:cjsmith1011@aol.com)**

Helena

These changes not only disrespect the scholars that earned their degrees in academia, they're being proposed by a commission that is unqualified to represent libraries. Save for the one individual with an actual library degree, they're completely unfit to serve the public in this capacity. One of these board members is a talk radio tourist who uses testimonials to hawk garbage from her web page. Another is a superintendent that has literally endangered children with her driving. How do you not see the big yellow school bus and blinking stop sign? Let's not forget the Kalispell fascist leaking her fascism at a state level. How did they get here? How much money has this collective lump of stupidity wasted, e.g., the war against the great gay prism logo? Please do not proceed with your proposals. Please just leave. You have failed Montana.

**Kathleen Godfrey, [godfrey.pounce@gmail.com](mailto:godfrey.pounce@gmail.com)**

Belgrade

I support the opinion that local boards should be given responsibility to set library director qualifications. I have observed library directors who do not possess an MLS/MLIS guide their libraries to outstanding success and achieve wonderful things for their communities. While these degrees may be encouraged, I think the best options will be available to each community by having a more open policy that is based on the right candidate, rather than restricted to only those with MLS/MLIS degrees. Potential directors may have so much to offer through experience, education in related areas, and continuing library education, but may not currently have an MLS/MLIS .

**Devin Savage, [devin.savage@gmail.com](mailto:devin.savage@gmail.com)**

I don't live in a city

As a parent, I am appalled by the idea that professionals wouldn't have to meet certifications or standards set by accrediting bodies. The idea of further politicizing a public service profession that has long held political neutrality as a key guiding concept will be disastrous. Do not remove library postgraduate degrees as a requirement.

**Kirk Vriesman, [kirkv@mtlib.org](mailto:kirkv@mtlib.org)**

Arlee, MT

Executive Director, Montana Library Association

On behalf of the Montana Library Association (MLA), I urge the State Library Commission to leave the current standard for the hiring of Library Directors in MT communities of 25K+ in place. This standard was vetted in recent years without opposition - what is the rationale for changing it now? To satisfy the current need of one particular library?

Montana libraries need strong and capable leaders, and the best preparation for strong and capable library leadership is a Master's Degree in Library Science (MLS). Please recognize this, put aside commission partisanship and short-term objectives, and leave the standard as-is.

Thank you.

**Fannie Flanagan, [louiseflanagan100@gmail.com](mailto:louiseflanagan100@gmail.com)**

Missoula

I support that our Library Directors do have a Masters Degree; I believe they help keep our libraries working consistently, and I appreciate their knowledge and experience, both locally and when I use a library service in another town in our state.

**Warren Neyenhuis, [warren.neyenhuis@gmail.com](mailto:warren.neyenhuis@gmail.com)**

Hamilton, Montana 59840

As a concerned Montana voter, I am writing to support retention of the Masters of Library Science requirement for Library Directors of Montana libraries serving populations of 25,000 or greater population. There is no demonstrable basis to justify degrading professional standards for such a complex and important position.

My opinion is informed in part from my service of over 10 years as a board trustee of the Bitterroot Public Library based in Hamilton, Montana. During my tenure as a trustee I have gained a deep respect for the mission of the American public library-an institution dedicated to serve the whole of our society. As our society becomes ever more complex, a successful library director and the library's community are best served with the specialized knowledge of a library degree.

The proposed regulation change appears to reward political interference in a local library. The Montana Library Commission should be working to protect our public libraries from this kind of political malpractice. Please vote against the regulation change.

**Elizabeth Marum, [Emarum3@gmail.com](mailto:Emarum3@gmail.com)**

Belgrade

The MT Library Assn should require a Masters of Library Science degree for all the larger libraries in the state. It's standard best practices and the state's important trustees should understand that and adhere to these standards. Dont change this requirement. We need to have professionals guide our libraries as we face the challenges of our changing environment and the technology of the future. We need people with the greatest understanding of the tools and the training that has supported it.

**Robert Filipovich, [bob.filipovich@live.com](mailto:bob.filipovich@live.com)**

Helena

This comment concerns a proposed amendment to ARM 10. 102. 1160, the elimination of a master's degree requirement for some Chief Librarians.

Local library boards of trustees {hereafter ""Board""} and the Board's Chief Librarian {hereafter ""Director""} are somewhat analogous to the Montana House of Representatives and Executive branch, respectively. The Board has purse power and under 22-1-309, MCA has ""exclusive control"" over many things, including ""operation and control of the library"" and appointment of the Director, tenure, and compensation under 22-1-310, MCA. The local Board ""shall appoint"" the Director, but the State Library Board of Trustees (you) act as a judiciary in such matters as qualifications for Director.

Your "" . . . opinion that local boards should be given responsibility to set qualifications as the size {sic} of the community may require a different {sic} skillset or knowledge base"" has no justification based on changes to Montana law. The ""different skillset or knowledge base"" for the large Montana libraries assumes that ""size"" somehow matters, be it population size, geographic size, or some other size factor. Surely the larger the community and its library, the more complex are that libraries' needs and possibilities; its Director needs a GREATER skillset and knowledge base. The ""size"" of the Director's knowledge base should expand in response to the increasingly complex cultural, technological, environmental needs of a 21st century advanced society. Graduate schools offering more specialized Library science degrees and the ALA accreditations of these degrees are attempts to stay ahead of the increasingly challenging responsibilities that Directors encounter.

The proposed elimination of a master's degree for larger Montana libraries' Directors appears to be propelled by a cluster of ideologies. Flathead County's ImagineIF board of trustees' troubles are ""self-inflicted chaos"" wrote senior librarian Sean Anderson in a November 11th Independent Record. Interim Director Furman resigned, saying: ""This board (ImagineIF) is trying to get its hands on the materials and the staff."" Extensive 2021 -2023 coverage by the Flathead Beacon, Daily Interlake, and Montana Free Press expose this Board's problems. Carman Cuthbertson's 12.21. 2021 Beacon statement: ""A book is not banned if you are free to buy it on Amazon"", Douglas Adams' attacks on the ALA, the withdrawal from the ALA based on one twitter remark by a 1 year Marxist lesbian president of a very large, essential national organization, the Ashley Cummins interview and related difficulties, and even HB 91, which raised aid to libraries by a dime per capita, sponsored by a 2023 freshman Flathead Representative but was opposed by three Kalispell area Representatives and one representing Bigfork, all of the same political party as HB91's sponsor -- these conflicts appear to suggest that there may be more to the elimination of a Master's degree requirement for Directors than meets the eye.

Finally, Livingston-Park County Public Director Mitch Grady said at the 9.22.2023 Task Force meeting: ""There's been a subtle shifting of the burden of proof on this {change of the standard}. . . It's not up to those of us in favor of the standard to prove why it should be retained. And I haven't heard any good arguments."" Susan Gregory, Bozeman Library Director, compared removing a professional degree {for library Directors} to the same requirement for a school principal. ""We're being told, 'No, your profession is different. . . . Anybody in your community can come in and run the library.'"" In other words, removing the Master's degree requirement for large library Directors is a profound, unwise, troubling, unjustified change supported by dubious forces.

**Sarah Widger, [swidger@bozeman.net](mailto:swidger@bozeman.net)**

Bozeman

MLA

The amendment to 10.102.1160 Personnel states that removing the requirement for library directors working in libraries serving more than 25,000 people will allow local boards to set library director qualifications. The reasoning for this amendment is flawed and I urge the Commission to keep the standard as is. Local library boards already have the local control and responsibility to determine the library director qualifications. Any library board can choose to meet or not meet the standards that have been in place for many years, standards that were reaffirmed within the last two years without question. It is unfortunate that the ImagineIF Libraries lowered their standards for hiring a library director, but that local board decision should not impact other libraries that serve more than 25,000 people.



The reason for the standards are to measure excellence in our public libraries, and the role of the Commission is to encourage measurable excellence. Local control is not measurable, whereas the standard requiring an MLIS for library directors serving a population of more than 25,000 is measurable: the director either does or does not have an MLIS. Exceptions have always existed for this requirement, and every library board has the right and the tools to request exceptions.

Eliminating this standard because of one library's request, especially considering one member of that library's board served on the Public Library Standards task force to review this policy, undermines all sizes of libraries' investment in their staffing and services to better support their communities and Montanans. This action and amendment not only excuses disruptive behavior of library boards, but incentivizes other library boards who are not pleased with Public Library Standards to act as equally destructive and demanding of the State Library and Commission.

For you, the Commissioners tasked with encouraging excellent libraries in the state, to go against public comment and your own Task Force's recommendations to keep the standard in place is shameful and a waste of taxpayer dollars. The demographic served by the Montana State Library is mainly libraries and their staff members, so the majority of public comment being submitted by library staff throughout the state should not be surprising to anyone, especially the Commission. It would be more concerning if staff at public libraries were not commenting on this amendment to the Standards that they and their libraries are held to in order to receive state funding.

Again, I urge the Commission to maintain the requirement for libraries with service populations of over 25,000 people to hire a library director with an MLIS.

**Jim Allard, [jimallard22@gmail.com](mailto:jimallard22@gmail.com)**

Bozeman

I am writing to oppose you proposed the change in Public Library Standards that drops the requirement that library directors in communities larger than 25,000 people have accredited M.L.S degrees.

While I was growing up in Nebraska, my parents encouraged me to use the local public library and I used the library regularly for school assignments and recreational reading. I still remember being astonished when I decided to read about mountain climbing and, low and behold, my library had books on it. After attending the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, I moved to Missoula in 1968 and got a B.A. and an M.A. at the University of Montana. After moving away in 1970. I moved back to Montana and to Bozeman in 1973. I've love it here and I've been here ever since. One of the first things I did when I moved her was to get a library card and I have continued to use the Bozeman Public Library ever since. Just as when I was young, I still value the library as a place to get information and to find books to relax with. The library here has steadily become better and larger over the years and that's been wonderful.

I want a professional librarian in charge because I want a good, balanced selection of books available. Sometimes my interests are odd and I use interlibrary loan on those occasions. But rarely or never is it the case that the library has nothing relevant on a subject in which I'm interested. Part

of the reason is that the collection has been professionally selected. I do not want to give up the quality selection our library now has. That's why I oppose changing the requirements for directors of public libraries.

I have two additional reasons for opposing this change. First, a director has a large budget and I want that spent in an appropriate way. Second, professional librarians raise the quality of service not only in their own libraries but in adjacent ones as well. I'd say more and polish this comment, but I just discovered that the deadline is noon today.