

**MONTANA STATE LIBRARY (MSL) COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 9 a.m.**  
**Montana State Library, Gertrude Buckhouse Conference Room, Helena and**  
**Zoom**

**MINUTES**

Recording can be found at

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MBS\\_SXnFwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MBS_SXnFwM)

Unedited closed captioning is available.

**ATTENDEES:**

Commissioners:

Vice-Chair Tom Burnett, Carmen Cuthbertson, Superintendent designee McKenna Gregg, Tammy Hall, Brian Rossman, Peggy Taylor, Chair Robyn Scribner

Commissioners Absent

None

MSL Staff:

Marilyn Bennett, Malissa Briggs, Tracy Cook, Erin Fashoway, Evan Hammer, Sharon Hardwick, Rebekah Kamp, Amy Marchwick, Caroline Psaltis, Corey Sloan, Savanna Sill, Jennie Stapp, Laura Tretter

Guests:

Michael Q. Dudley (Heterodox Academy/Univ. of Winnipeg), Howard Fuller, Claudine Perrault, Kristina B, Kirk Vriesman, Mark, CRussel, Michele DesRochers - W Yellowstone, Mickey Steward, Nancy Hall, OBPP, Pamela Benjamin, Sarah Peterson (MCPL), Sarah Widger, Wedsworth Library Nancy Royan, Anne Kish, Janay Johnson, Jennifer Pawlak

Agenda: [Attachment 1](#)

(00:00:03) Call to Order and Introductions

(00:02:55) Changes or additions to the agenda – there was a request to remove commission budget intentions from the agenda. Consensus was to have a motion at that time. There was a request to add discussion about accessing TRAILS and MLA hotels under “other business.”

(00:05:18) Staff longevity recognitions – Marilyn Bennett and Caroline Psaltis were recognized for their achievements and received their 5-year pins.

**Business items**

(00:13:49) Consent agenda – Action

- [December 11, 2024 meeting minutes](#)
- [Commission Bylaws](#)
- [Amendments to the FY '24 Montana State Library Annual Report](#)

Cuthbertson had a question about the minutes and annual report. After a brief discussion, the group decided to move forward with the consent agenda.

**(00:19:08) Motion made by Tom Burnett and seconded by Peggy Taylor to approve the consent agenda.**

**(00:19:25) Motion passed**

- **Tom Burnett-Aye**
- **Carmen Cuthbertson-Abstain**
- **McKenna Gregg - Aye**
- **Tammy Hall-Aye**
- **Brian Rossmann-Aye**
- **Robyn Scribner-Aye**
- **Peggy Taylor-Aye**

**(00:20:17) [Confirm Commission goals and next steps](#)**

Chair Scribner shared the priorities of the Commission as a starting point. The goal of the discussion is to set priorities, assign responsibilities, and review the workload.

Commissioners reviewed the priorities and agreed that goal 1 support trustee training and goal 3 shorten the trustee manual were related and could be combined and assigned to MSL staff. Trustee training data will be shared in March and will include items on the Commission goals as well as information about what percentage of trustees are actively taking continuing education credits. The trustee handbook will be done in June 2025.

Commissioners agreed that goal 2 which is review the Excellent Library Services award needed a committee. Tom Burnett, Carmen Cuthbertson, and Brian Rossman will serve on that committee. An MSL staff member will help create a timeline and process for the committee and will assist the committee. The deadline for this goal is October 2025.

Commissioners discussed goal 4 which is to review the accreditation, certification, and continuing education process. This is a part of the Commission's statutory authority per MCA 22-1-103. The Commission needs to review administrative rules and pertinent laws and understand the current process as well as the differences between accreditation, certification, and continuing education. Success for this goal is staff understand what is acceptable for credit. After a discussion of some of the questions that should be considered as part of this process, the Commission agreed this topic would be on every agenda.

MSL staff will present the current process and share relevant administrative rules and laws and their consequences at the March 2025 meeting. Commissioners discussed some additional questions which include: what topics should be covered? What standards do we want to see? Are the current four areas overly broad? Do we need to tighten these four areas?

Cuthbertson observed the broken link report seemed to be no longer needed and requested that staff share a report about continuing education and certification. Some of these statistics are included in the continuing education dashboard, but the Commission may need additional statistics as part of the discussion. Items included what are we giving credit for (would like a list with title and offering agency); how many people are certified; how many people are not taking classes; what is the breakdown for trustees, directors, and staff; how many are pursuing certification; what are we currently offering; and have we dropped anything. Staff will present the CE dashboard, additional data that is available, and get feedback from the Commission about what else they need to see.

Carmen Cuthbertson, McKenna Gregg, and Tammy Hall will serve with other MSL staff on a committee to review accreditation, certification, and continuing education credits.

The Commission discussed goal 5 which is to discuss the MTSRN and expectations for it to become self-sustaining. The initial discussion will happen at today's meeting.

The Commission agreed that goals 6 and 7 about improving communication and relationships between the State Librarian and the Commission are related. Chair Scribner will be the lead on goal 7. The personnel committee will be the lead on goal 6. Their primary focus is to work with state HR to develop an evaluation tool. Scribner will invite the state's HR person to the June commission meeting. The personnel committee will meet to research tools, review the job description with state HR, and to prepare for the June commission meeting agenda item. Commissioners agreed they would like the evaluation tool for the State Librarian to be ready by September 2025.

Cuthbertson asked if there was online training that Commissioners could take to achieve goal 8 which is Commissioners will learn about GIS, Lidar, and mapping services. Stapp asked Commissioners what they needed. After some discussion, the Commission agreed they need to know what GIS is, what is its purpose, how is it used, and who uses it. They next need to know what is the role of MSL in collecting, managing, and providing access? Are there others doing this work? Is MSL duplicating others' efforts? How are we working with others who do this work? Stapp will share the link to the recording of staff presentations that happened at the February 2024 Commission meeting which covered some of these questions. She will also work with staff to identify other possible learning opportunities.

The Commission requested that the working document with deadlines, assignments, and priorities be shared on the screen and emailed after the meeting. Due to a need to

move onto the next item on the agenda, Commissioners discussed delaying action until later.

**(01:00:46) Motion made by Tammy Hall and seconded by Tom Burnett to postpone the adoption of the Commission goals and move the action item to Commission Goals and Objectives on the agenda.**

**(01:03:43) Motion passed.**

- **Tom Burnett-Aye**
- **Carmen Cuthbertson-Nay**
- **McKenna Gregg - Aye**
- **Tammy Hall-Aye**
- **Brian Rossmann-Aye**
- **Robyn Scribner-Aye**
- **Peggy Taylor-Aye**

**(01:04:47) Commission break from 10:08am until 10:12am.**

**(01:05:55) Confirm Commission budget intentions for the coming biennium**

**(01:06:40) Motion made by Tom Burnett and seconded by Peggy Taylor to remove the budget item from the Commission agenda. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Discussion Items:**

**(01:08:03) Review State Library base budget approved by previous legislatures**

Stapp reported that Nancy Hall from the Governor's Budget Office was available for questions. She asked if Commissioners had any questions about the memo that was presented with information about the State Library's base budget.

Burnett asked about the change in the general fund and how much of it was present law adjustment. He noted that there is a \$522,000 increase over the biennium and wanted to know if that was personal services. Hall confirmed that it was primarily present law adjustment for personal services. The other increase was due to a fixed cost increase for SITSD services. Stapp confirmed that all increases were present law adjustments.

Burnett asked about the \$47,000 increase in fixed rate, and how the process works for determining that amount. Briggs explained the process for determining the fixed rate. It is based on the total cost of operating the NRIS program, and the fixed rate allowed by the Governor's office is 1/3 of the total cost. MSL uses ESRI licenses to determine usage and how to allocate costs.

There was an additional question confirming that personal services included salaries and benefits. Burnett and the Commission felt this memo and information presented answered their questions.

**(01:19:09) Review Montana State Reference Network “glide path” to self-sufficient funding -**

Evan Hammer reviewed the pdf that was shared with the Commission. He talked through the timeline, process for the path, and work with the Legislative Section E budget committee. There are different scenarios that show what can be accomplished with and without investment in the work. The Section E committee would like the MTSRN to be self-sustaining by 2029. Hammer reported that staff have been able to negotiate lower costs which has helped.

Cuthbertson asked what the biggest driver in subscriptions is and what are staff doing to increase the number of subscriptions. Hammer reported that it is a combination of awareness and exposure. People need to know the MTSRN exists, what it does, and how it might change their work process. People also need to be exposed to the product and be able to use it. MSL has found that limited trials have resulted in people subscribing to the product. Staff have targeted surveyors and the GIS community. They are building relationships with the agriculture community and know the construction community might also be interested in this product. They recently held a webinar where vendors showed what was possible with the product. Staff recognize that timing is critical. People are more likely to use this product during the warmer months.

The biggest factor hindering progress is the lack of staff time. Kazi manages the network and answers questions which leaves him little time for outreach. Stapp and Hammer are leading outreach efforts, and their time is also limited. Burnett asked if there was a possibility of shifting duties and putting more staff time towards this work. Stapp reported that they have asked staff to prioritize this work and to identify what can be de-prioritized. Their goal is to devote .5 FTE towards this effort and to train staff, so others can help with answering questions about the program.

Burnett shared public feedback that a lower price might encourage more subscriptions. The current cost is \$1500 a year. Commissioners and Hammer discussed the pros and cons of changing the price, offering monthly versus annual subscriptions, or offering a sliding scale for smaller firms. The goal is to maintain quality and keep administrative costs lower, but staff are open to changing the price and are working to find out what is a better price point. Staff shared other work they have done including reviewing other states' models, talking to economists, and identifying potential customers.

Cuthbertson recognized how limited staffing impacts the ability to do outreach, but she believes that some face-to-face work might help increase subscriptions. Hammer reported that staff are engaging vendors and others to help promote MTSRN. He also answered a question about other operating costs for the network. The other primary

cost is adding nodes to the network. Eventually, there will be a need to replace the equipment.

Hall asked if other Commissioners are interested in shifting staff to this project. Burnett pointed out that efforts are already underway, but Commissioners agreed and asked for the minutes to reflect that shifting staff to support and promote the MTSRN is a priority.

**(01:44:30) Review list of current federal grants**

Hall requested a list of federal grants due to the priorities of the current presidential administration – especially when it comes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Stapp confirmed there is no current DEI work happening. Hall would prefer it if we did not lose federal funding. She continues to have concerns about the awarding of continuing education credit for sessions that are offered by organizations that support DEI work and is glad we are working on a review of the certification/continuing education program.

Commissioners discussed the changes that indicate DEI work will not be a priority. The only lingering concerns are who we partner with and their statements. Stapp confirmed that she is not interested in jeopardizing federal funds as the bulk of the funds support staff.

Hall requested clarification about the CITBOT program. Are staff verifying the data? While it is designed to encourage citizens to help collect data, it needs verification. Hammer explained the process for review and confirmed that staff verify the data. Cuthbertson shared the robust process that is used at a program in Flathead County.

**(01:58:43) State Library Reports – Stapp and staff**

- [FY 25 Work Plan Dashboard](#)
  - [PDF Version](#)
- [2<sup>nd</sup> quarter staffing memo](#)
- [2<sup>nd</sup> quarter grants and contracts report](#)
- [Website analytics and broken links report](#)
  - [PDF Version](#)
- [Downloading dashboard instructions](#)

Stapp thanked the Commission for their patience regarding the financial reports which were delayed due to staffing issues. Stapp asked if the Commission agreed the broken links report was no longer necessary. This is a report that is created specifically for the Commission. Burnett suggested only presenting the report when broken links exceed industry standards. Commissioners agreed with this suggestion. Stapp noted this request.

Cuthbertson asked about the process for managing the work plan. She was curious about year end and how staff create the items for the next fiscal year. Stapp explained the process for developing the work plan. Cuthbertson requested a report about work plan items – what will be continued, what will drop off the list, and how will next year’s priorities be determined.

Burnett asked about attaching staff hours to various projects. There was a brief discussion about using project budgets to determine staffing requirements rather than asking staff to track their hours. The consensus was to see if project budgets could answer Burnett’s questions.

Hall asked about job descriptions for staff working remotely. It would be helpful to see what remote people are doing and what outcomes they are achieving. Stapp pointed out the dashboards which show statistics that highlight what people are doing.

**(02:10:51) Confirm Commission goals and next steps**

Commission returned to tabled action item. They reviewed the updated Commission goals’ document – focusing on who was responsible and the process for reviewing. Commissioners clarified committee makeup.

**(02:14:53) Motion made by Peggy Taylor and seconded by Tammy Hall to accept Commission goals as provided in the attachment.**

**(02:16:56) Motion passed unanimously.**

**(02:17:40) Commission Goals and Objectives – Commission**

- (02:17:52) Review meeting motions and directives to staff to confirm Commission
- Annual business calendar
  - PDF Version

Stapp will share Commission goals after the meeting. She will make sure the minutes reflect the Commission’s desire that staff prioritize promotion of the MTSRN. Staff will no longer bring the broken links report unless the number of links exceeds industry standards. Stapp will bring a summary of work plan goals and anything we can do to provide clarity on the budget to the June 2025 meeting.

(02:20:27)

- Review and prioritize agenda items for March business meeting  
March 26, 9:00 a.m., Belgrade Community Library, Belgrade, MT
- Montana Library Association Conference, March 26-29, 2025  
Best Western Grantree Inn, Bozeman, MT

Stapp asked commissioners if the items on the March agenda memo were correct. She will add a presentation about accreditation, continuing education, and certification as well as sharing baseline data for trustees.

Cuthbertson recommended adding Commission authority per MCA to the agenda introduction to make it easier for everyone to understand the Commission's duties. Stapp will add that to future agendas.

Hall asked about the process for requesting presenters at Commission meetings. Currently, any Commissioner can request the addition of a presenter. It is at the Chair's discretion. Commissioners discussed the possibility of asking Commissioners to share ideas with the Chair who would then present the list at the next Commission meeting for members to vote on who would be selected. Discussion was placed on hold due to the arrival of informational presenter.

**(02:26:52)** Informational presentation from Michael Q. Dudley, Accessibility, International, and Extended services Librarian, University of Winnipeg.

Dudley gave a presentation about the work of Heterodox Academy of Libraries (HxLibraries). This group was formed due to concerns about the American Library Association abandoning neutrality and the exploration of different viewpoints. He shared a timeline of the group and highlighted several articles about the importance of libraries maintaining neutrality and allowing for the free and open exchange of ideas. Heterodox Academy of Libraries is concerned about librarians seeing themselves as agents of change. They believe this has led to other voices being suppressed and to a lack of emphasis on the role of libraries in supporting the sharing of knowledge.

Burnett asked about evaluating items to analyze them for bias. Dudley expressed an interest in creating a template for libraries to use. Hall expressed concerns about whether librarians can easily get title recommendations for conservative viewpoints. There was discussion about whether librarians can be agents for change and neutral. Dudley finished his presentation with a review of the different types of neutrality and what they mean for library services.

**(02:51:38) Commission Goals and Objectives – Commission**

- [Review and prioritize agenda items for March business meeting](#)  
March 26, 9:00 a.m., Belgrade Community Library, Belgrade, MT
- Montana Library Association Conference, March 26-29, 2025  
Best Western Grantree Inn, Bozeman, MT
- Conversations with the Commission, March 27, 9:45 a.m.
- [Spring Federation meeting dates](#)

Commissioners returned to discussion about process for presenters. Rossman asked if we could include a brief description of the presentation to the agenda. Consensus was

to try a different process that include submittal of names, bio, and brief description for future presenters.

Stapp reviewed the process for the March agenda. She shared that Commissioners have until March 5 to request agenda items. The agenda will be released on March 12. There was a brief conversation about the length of Commission meetings. Currently, a presentation about the certification program, review of trustee training data, status of the commission goals, and an information item on the status of the hot spot program funding will appear on the agenda.

The March meeting will now take place at the conference hotel because the Belgrade Library is not available.

Commissioners discussed the format of "Conversations with Commissioners." They will return to a panel with Commissioners seated together. The goal is to listen to the questions and comments from the librarians. Commissioners may have a list of questions should they need to spark conversation. Cook agreed to facilitate the session per Commission request.

Commissioners reviewed the list of spring Federation meetings and identified who was planning on attending which meeting. Scribner agreed to email the final list to Commissioners after the meeting.

- Broad Valleys (May 8-9) – Brian will attend May 8 business meeting
- Golden Plains (April 24) – Tom
- Pathfinder (May 1) – Robyn
- Sagebrush (March 14) – Carmen
- South Central (April 12) – Peggy
- Tamarack (April 25-26) – Peggy or Robyn

Stapp will send updated meeting agendas with Zoom links to the Commissioners.

(03:09:40) Public Comment on any matter not contained in this agenda and that is within the jurisdiction of the State Library Commission.

There was no public comment.

(03:09:58) Other Business & Announcements.

Hall will work with Jennie to get access to TRAILS. Stapp quickly summarized the process for all Commissioners. They need to connect with Marilyn Bennet to receive a MSL library card that will give them access. Commissioners briefly discussed MLA and hotel arrangements

**(03:11:02) Motion made by Brian Rossman and seconded by Tom Burnett to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

*Minute document created by Tracy Cook, 2/14/2025.*

DRAFT