

Attendees: Carmen Cuthbertson, Tammy Hall, Colet Bartow, Tracy Cook

Notes from February 3, 2026 Committee Meeting

- Review of feedback from surveys and drop-in sessions – committee members felt like agenda covered the biggest concerns. Committee added a discussion about associate and bachelor's degrees to conversation about college course work.
- Suggestion that could simplify things – what if we changed the policy to “no credits will be awarded until reviewed and approved by the Commission”.
 - The committee discussed the pros and cons of this suggestion. It could help with responsiveness and flexibility. It could also add to the course catalog. There were concerns about adding courses that benefit only one person.
 - The committee decided allowing some version of this idea would help MSL staff and the Commission with building a stronger course catalog with more options. It would allow librarians to be a part of building the course catalog.
 - Committee will propose changing the language for credit approval to “librarian will receive credit if course is added to the course catalog.” This policy will apply after July 1, 2026.
- Testing the draft form for approval and conference process
 - ARSL 2025 Booklet - <https://www.arsl.org/2025-programs> - the conference booklet does not give the necessary information. Staff will need to gather more information and run it through the form.
 - All requests (staff or other) will run through the approval form.
 - Committee reviewed the form and submissions. The form appears to give the Commission enough information to make decisions.
 - Suggestions to improve the form
 - add an internal section where MSL staff can answer questions about cost and any other notes.
 - Add two questions - “have you taken this class?” and “when did you take this class?”
 - Add an additional section for the Commission that covers – approved – yes/no; if yes, affirm competency that is most relevant; if no, indicate why.
 - Suggestions for improving the course catalog and process
 - Staff will re-format the results of the form to make it easier for Commissioners to review.
 - Staff will explore how to add all of the form information in an external dashboard and will consider adding a way for librarians to give feedback on the course.
- Discuss questions about approval process
 - What is the rubric for approval?

- Do the learning outcomes of the course fall under one or more of the competencies outlined in the course of study?
 - Does the presenter have expertise with the subject matter?
 - Do the learning outcomes address the needs of multiple libraries in Montana?
 - Does the learning support the library in meeting the public library standards?
- The committee will present this rubric to the full Commission for further discussion.
- What is the minimum time required for the pre-approval process? No longer applicable – given the change in process.
- What is the appeal process if the Commission denies a request?
 - Committee discussed best way to handle the process for reviewing decisions about credits.
 - If the Commission decides not to add an item to the course catalog, they will indicate their reasons.
 - Staff will email the person back – letting the individual know they are welcome to reapply for credit at a future date and recommending the individual review and address Commission concerns.
- Discuss the Transition Timeline
 - Clarify transition language in the policy – the Committee discussed the confusion about the transition process. The following language was proposed:
 - Credits earned through June 30, 2026 follow the 2023 policy and remain valid.
 - Credits earned after July 1, 2026 must follow requirements in this 2026 policy.
 - Current certificates remain valid until expiration.
- Discuss other feedback
 - Ongoing concern about loss of staff track and trustee track/desire for us to recognize individual trustees that pursue continuing education
 - Committee appreciated people's interest in professional development for board members and staff. They admired the desire to incentivize professional development for staff.
 - They discussed ways to recognize achievement. The committee asked staff to consider ways to recognize staff and trustees. There may be a way through the MSL Learn system to recognize people who work on their professional development. The committee was also mindful of the amount of staff time this transition will take and recommends focusing first on the library director track. They will consider how to best acknowledge staff or trustee professional development at future dates.

- The law for the Commission focuses on library directors and certification for them. The committee believes focusing on the goal of being a clearinghouse for excellent course offerings for library directors is most important at this time. They believe it is the wisest use of limited resources.
- Ongoing concerns about loss of relevance and ability to tailor learning to size and needs of library
 - The change to the approval process may assist with this by encouraging librarians to help the Commission create the course catalog through the use of the approval form.
 - The committee is committed to making this work. They want to communicate that the policy and process can be changed.
 - They want people to be able to take relevant course work and recognize how many small libraries exist in Montana.
- College coursework – beyond the master's in library science
 - Requests to apply a master's in library science degree are the most common. The CE coordinator does not receive a lot of requests to count an associate or bachelor's degree in library science. The coordinator also does not receive a lot of requests for college courses to apply to continuing education credits.
 - Committee decided not to recommend a policy for exceptions or rare events. Individuals can use the form or request credit for college coursework. If this happens frequently, the Commission will revisit this question.

Review next steps

- Tracy will type up the notes.
- Colet will use them to create visuals for the drop-in session on February 4, 2026.
- Tracy and Colet will work on Commission meeting materials.