

2017 LEGISLATIVE SNAPSHOT

Public Library Broadband

From the Montana State Library

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SNAPSHOT #5

Access to adequate high-speed broadband creates limitless possibilities for online opportunities for Montana libraries and patrons that we can only begin to imagine: Entrepreneurs using libraries as small business centers to engage in e-commerce around the globe; students collaborating with one another around the state to create and share learning objectives; young musicians practicing with band members in real time from hundreds of miles away.

The Federal Communication Commission stated in 2015 that, “with respect to libraries, we initially adopt as a bandwidth target the American Library Association’s recommendation that all libraries that serve fewer than 50,000 people have broadband speeds of at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps), and all libraries that serve 50,000 people or more have broadband speeds of at least 1 gigabit per second.”

According to Fiscal Year 2015 reports:

- Of 82 public libraries, only four Montana libraries meet this target: the Billings Public Library, the Manhattan Community School Library, the Roundup School-Community Library, and the Ronan Public Library District.
- The average reported broadband speed available at Montana libraries is less than 35 Mbps.
- At least 28 Montana public libraries report providing internet access to patrons at speeds of less than 10 Mbps.
- Montana public libraries supported an average of 6,789 internet sessions per library for patrons using wireless devices in FY 15. The Missoula Public library reported the highest number of wireless internet sessions at 61,344. That’s more than 165 a day!

Source: Montana State Library, 2015 Public Library Statistics

Public Library Broadband, continued

- In many Montana communities, libraries remain the only source of free internet access. Montana public libraries provide access to 1,288 public access computers around the state.
- Nearly 22,250 patrons used computers at their Montana public libraries each week in FY 2015.
- The Petroleum County School-Community Library, which serves a population of fewer than 500 people, had more than 1,000 computer users in FY 2015.

Montana Public Libraries: Subscribed Broadband Speed (2015)

