



---

PO Box 201800 1515 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Helena, MT 59620 (406) 444-3116

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 13, 2017**

**Contact:** Jennie Stapp  
(406) 444-3116

**Montana Talking Book Library to Celebrate New Recording Studio**

**(HELENA)** --- The Montana State Library Commission will host a dedication of a new recording studio that will be used to record Montana book and magazine titles for patrons of the Talking Book Library. The dedication will take place on June 14 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the State Library, which is located at 1515 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Helena.

The Montana Talking Book Library receives the majority of its recorded book collection from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), a service of the Library of Congress. The collection includes best sellers, and a variety of fiction and non-fiction books as would be found in a medium-sized public library collection. However, the Library of Congress has neither the funding nor the personnel to record materials of special interest to each state. Through the recording program, the Montana Talking Book Library produces books by Montana authors, about Montana, or about issues concerning Montana. Through the current recording program, the Talking Book Library records an average of 50 Montana titles each year, which are added to a collection of more than 1,100 titles. Last year then Secretary of State, Linda McCullough, recognized the Talking Book Library for recording the Montana Constitution. The State Library added a second recording studio this past year to increase the Talking Book Library's capacity to produce more Montana content which is otherwise unavailable to them patrons.

Funding for the new recording studio came entirely through donations, including a generous donation from the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Montana. Donations are made through the State Library Trust, which collects an average of \$12,000 annually and is used to fund special projects that are outside of normal operation expenses such as staffing.

This dedication, which has been planned for several months, falls at a very difficult time for the Montana State Library as it faces state budget cuts totaling more than 16% of its' total budget.

"This dedication is a bright spot, in an otherwise bleak time for the State Library and our patrons," said State Librarian Jennie Stapp.

Special guests including, Karen Keninger, Director of the National Library Service, Nancy Hanford and Adina Fox from the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Montana, Vicky Greaney who is the

Capital City Chapter President of the Montana Association for the Blind, Chari Nelson, a volunteer narrator in the recording program, and Montana State Library Commission Chair, Bruce Newell will attend the dedication..

“We are grateful for our champions who helped to make the dream of a second recording studio a reality,” Stapp said.

If the State Library Commission adopts current proposals to address upcoming budget cuts, the Montana Talking Book Library will lose two staff in early July due to state cuts passed by the Legislature. With an existing staff of only six people, the program already relies on an army of volunteers to produce Montana titles and to deliver materials to the more than 3,000 Montana Talking Book Library patrons.

“The loss of staff and funding mean that volunteer support will be more critical than ever,” Stapp said.

The State Library Commission heard from numerous supporters during a public comment meeting on June 6 about the need to continue to provide access to resources for Montanans who cannot read traditional print material.

“Current plans to address known budget cuts effective July 1 would mean the loss of four employees of the State Library,” Stapp said.

If deeper cuts, triggered by state revenue shortfalls, come to pass in August, the State Library stands to lose an additional eight positions including librarians, GIS Analysts, information technology and administration professionals.

“We cannot lose this many staff and still provide the same level of service,” said Stapp. “For this reason, we are grateful for the comments we’re receiving from our patrons that will help us to prioritize our work for the future.”

The Commission is committed to continuing to serve the most vulnerable Montanans to the extent that remaining resources allow. The dedication of this new recording studio signals that ongoing commitment.

### **About the Montana State Library**

Through its statewide programs, the Montana State Library empowers Montanans; enhances learning in families and communities; builds 21st Century skills; and provides opportunities for civic participation. For more information, visit <http://msl.mt.gov>.

###