

Montana State Library Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report

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Goals and Objectives

The Montana State Library helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services.

Goal One: Foster partnerships

Partnerships are necessary to ensure that Montanans thrive. Through partnerships, MSL and those we serve will continue to move Montana forward.

Goal Two: Secure sufficient and sustainable funding

We have the funds and capacity to meet the expectations of our partners and Montanans. We are an innovative, forward thinking, and fiscally responsible organization in fulfilling our mandates and meeting the expectations of our partners and Montana citizens.

Goal Three: Create a useful information infrastructure

Montanans have the information and library services they need to understand and influence change in their community. Others follow Montana's model of open, transparent, cooperative information management practices.

Year in Review

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, the Montana State Library (MSL) focused on our organizational capacity and internal efficiencies after budget cuts significantly impacted staffing and operations in the previous biennium. With some increased funding from the 2019 Legislature, MSL hired two Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technicians to support neglected Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure updates. Additionally, MSL hired a Data Coordinator, a Grants and Contracts Administrator, and a Human Resources Specialist. These positions are new positions for our agency and will help maximize the capacity of our staff who previously handled related duties in addition to their regular responsibilities. MSL is already benefiting from this investment in our agency as 2020 brought with it the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic rippled throughout MSL and our agency rose to the challenge. Though most staff began working remotely on March 15, they continue to meet the

information needs of our users and partners with no interruptions in service. One particular highlight is the work of GIS staff on the [COVID-19 Case Map](#). Staff developed and supported data collection and information dissemination for the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, resulting in international recognition for their work on the map.

With an investment of CARES Act funds and available state dollars, and with the support of our Grants and Contracts Administrator, MSL rapidly launched a service for Montana public libraries to support online reading programs ahead of the summer reading season. MSL procured and deployed mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to libraries for libraries to lend to their patrons to support significant increase in demand for broadband access during stay-at-home orders. MSL also procured additional digital e-books and e-audio titles for patrons who suddenly found themselves without access to their local physical library facilities. Importantly, MSL developed and supported a community of practice for Montana librarians who faced daily questions stemming from the unprecedented challenges brought on by the pandemic. Montana's library community continues to show resilience as we grapple with changing service expectations.

Thanks to the groundwork laid by our new Data Coordinator, MSL launched tools that allow us to see the need for and the impact of the work that we do through a [statistics dashboard](#). When reviewing this dashboard, the importance of services that keep us connected, including the Montana Talking Book Library services and MontanaLibrary2Go, become readily apparent.

One significant effort that was underway but that has been delayed due to the pandemic is a rewrite of Montana's Public Library Standards. These standards, which were last updated about a decade ago, exist in the Administrative Rules of Montana and must be met for libraries to receive state funding. In the fall of 2019, MSL sat a task force of librarians to develop a process to study Montana's current library standards and those of interest from other states, and to recommend standards that reflect the dynamic, impact driven, community focused work of libraries. MSL was collecting public comments about new draft standards when the pandemic hit. Because the pandemic itself dramatically impacted library service models in unanticipated ways, the task force felt it was necessary to take time to reflect on the nature of these changes and how they might shape the future of library services in ways that

should inform the revised standards. The task force will resume their work in the first quarter of FY 2021.

In addition to hiring new staff, MSL made significant internal organizational changes to further reduce the arbitrary barriers that result from siloed hierarchical organizations. Instead of organizing the agency into two divisions, Library Development and the Digital Library, MSL is now organized into work groups: User Services, Information Management, and Information Products. User Services staff are those staff that work most directly with our external partners and patrons. Information Management staff are those staff that are responsible for management our collections of data and information. Information Products staff support the web applications and services that allow users to discover and access our information resources. Though this transition remains a work in progress, we believe that this focus on collaboration within our agency will increase our efficiency, help us to work more effectively with our partners, and will maximize the resources and services we offer to those we serve.

Similarly, after a six-month evaluation, the MSL Commission made the decision to change the nature of our contract with the University of Montana for the operation of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP). Effective July 1, 2020, MSL will directly administer the Program, and the Program Coordinator and Information Services staff will become MSL staff. In a true public/academic partnership, under a new umbrella agreement with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, any affiliate campus of the Montana University System may enter into agreements to conduct research in the name of the MTNHP. All resulting data and information resources will be passed to MSL for inclusion in MTNHP information systems, including the Map Viewer and the Montana Field Guide.

Finally, during FY 2020 MSL supported the work of the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) Education Subcommittee and their study mandated by House Bill 633, which was passed by the 2019 Legislature to consider new funding models to fund the work of MSL. The committee evaluated a number of options resulting in legislative proposals to the full Finance Committee. LFC action may result in Committee bills heard by the 2021 Legislature.

Finances

Revenue

Category	Amount
Coal Severance Tax	\$513,637.95
Federal	\$1,122,855.42
General Fund	\$2,921,577.56
Grants/Other	\$\$172,705.67
Montana Land Information	\$949,109.53
Montana Shared Catalog	\$370,738.85
NRIS Core Funding	\$284,541.00
Total	\$6,332,165.98

Expenditures

Category	Amount
Central Services	\$1,747,626.51
Consulting/Learning	\$717,421.92
Information Management	\$1,013,575.05
Information Products	\$453,851.87
Montana Land Information Act	\$525,273.93
Montana Shared Catalog	\$370,73885
Patron Services	\$402,514.69
Statewide Projects	\$1,101,163.169
Total	\$6,332,165.98

Programs

Central Services

Central Services staff provide accounting, human resources, and information technology assistance, as well as general administrative support.

Digital Library

The Digital Library collects and provides access to multiple types of information of interest to state employees, federal partners, and the citizens of Montana.

Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure

The [Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure](#) is made up of fifteen “framework” geographic databases vital for making maps of Montana and understanding its geography. MSDI datasets are generally accepted as the best available, standardized, statewide data that meet the essential, digital geographic information needs of Montana’s citizens, its government, commerce, legislature, area researchers, and more.

Natural Resource Information System

Established in 1985 by the Montana Legislature, the [Montana Natural Resource Information System \(NRIS\)](#) was designed to simplify the task of identifying and acquiring natural resource information. NRIS’s mission is to make information on Montana’s natural resources easily and readily accessible.

Montana Natural Heritage Program

The [Montana Natural Heritage Program](#) (MTNHP) is the state’s source for reliable, objective information and expertise to support stewardship of our native species and habitats, emphasizing those of conservation concern. MTNHP strives to provide easy access to information in order for users to save time and money, speed environmental reviews, and inform decision making. The MTNHP currently manages information on nearly 12,600 native and non-native species and more than 120 biological communities which can be accessed on the [Montana Field Guide](#), [Natural Heritage Map Viewer](#), [Species Snapshot](#), and [Species of Concern](#) web pages and applications.

MTNHP is a program of the Montana State Library’s Natural Resource Information System (NRIS). During FY2020, it operated as a special program under the Office of the Vice President for Research and Creative Scholarship at the University of Montana, Missoula.

Research Resources

MSL provides [research and professional development resources](#) for state employees and contractors as well as for Montana library staff.

State Publications

MSL makes a concerted effort to create citizen access to state publications to fulfill MCA 21-1-212: "The state library shall administer a state publications depository library program to identify, acquire, catalog, preserve, and provide access to state publications."

Digitized publications are available via the [Internet Archive](#) and state web pages dating back to 1996 are archived at [MT.GOV Connect](#).

Talking Book Library

The [Talking Book Library](#) program works with the [National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled](#) to provide free library services to Montanans who cannot read standard print due to a visual, physical, or reading disability.

The program aims to improve patron quality of life and offer ease of access to reading materials so that patrons have opportunity to educate themselves and become informed voters connected to society, make informed and healthy decisions to be productive in the workforce, and contribute to society.

Library Development

The Montana State Library provides leadership and guidance to libraries in order to improve programs, services, and facilities.

Consulting, Training, and Lifelong Learning

MSL provides consulting services, continuing education opportunities, and learning programs for library employees across Montana. These resources, training sessions, and professional development opportunities help library staff meet the needs of their patrons and create thriving opportunities for their communities.

MontanaLibrary2Go

[MontanaLibrary2Go](#) is an online service that offers registered library patrons of participating libraries free access to a collection of over 49,000 contemporary, classic, and bestseller audiobooks and e-books (books in electronic, or digital, format).

These books check out just like a physical book or audio CD, except that users can check them out at any time, from anywhere – an online library “to go.” Registered library patrons can download the books to their electronic devices or computers, or they can read or listen to books in an online browser. There are currently 106 MontanaLibrary2Go member libraries (including branches) with a total of 111,999 users across the state having signed up for accounts.

Montana Memory Project

The [Montana Memory Project \(MMP\)](#) supports the creation of, and provides free access to, digital collections of items relating to Montana’s cultural heritage and government. Libraries, museums, local government agencies, and historical societies across Montana contribute content to the website.

Montana Shared Catalog

The [Montana Shared Catalog \(MSC\)](#) is a consortium of 177 multi-type libraries and branches across 99 Montana communities that share, at minimum, an online catalog and system administrator staff.

The libraries that enjoy the greatest benefit from MSC membership also participate in sharing groups in which library patrons can seamlessly place holds on items from dozens of libraries around the state and pick up the item soon afterward. This program is made cost-effective through the use of a courier service, in which crates of items are delivered from library to library.

Commission and Councils

Montana State Library Commission

The [State Library Commission](#) is the governing body of the State Library in accordance with 22-1-101, Montana Code Annotated. The seven-member Commission seeks advice from a number of standing advisory councils and ad hoc task forces on issues of importance to the communities served.

Montana Land Information Advisory Council

The [Montana Land Information Advisory Council \(MLIAC\)](#), as required by statute, advises the State Librarian and the State Library Commission on issues related to land information, on the priority of land information, including data layers to be developed, on the development and management of the

Montana Land Information Act grant process and on the distribution of funds collected in the Montana Land Information Account.

Network Advisory Council

The [Network Advisory Council \(NAC\)](#) represents the interests of all types of Montana libraries and maintains the perspective of statewide geographical balance as it explores technology resources, assists with the official procurement process of those resources, reviews and evaluates the feasibility, design, and outcomes of statewide library projects; assists with statewide planning, and advises the State Librarian and the State Library Commission as appropriate.

Highlights

3D Elevation Program Funding for Lidar

Coordination efforts led by MSL staff resulted in a successful application to the US Geological Survey Broad Agency Announcement for 3D Elevation Program (3DEP). This is the second 3DEP award that Montana has received. The agreement will result in the collection of approximately 11,392 square miles of lidar data (~\$3.5M) in Glacier County, Fergus County, Blaine County, Sheridan County, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Fort Peck Indian Reservation, and Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

Montana Lidar Inventory

The [Montana Lidar Viewer](#) is a web application for viewing, downloading, and requesting lidar data throughout Montana. Users can find information on the status of lidar projects, preview and download available data, search by address, save and print maps, measure distances and areas, and accurately identify elevations.

ASPeN Library Directory

Over the past year, MSL staff have released and improved a new statewide library directory system known as [ASPeN: Access to Services, Programs, and eNetworks](#). ASPeN allows library staff to enroll in services, keep track of continuing education credits, and complete information required by MSL. ASPeN is also available to the public, who can use it to learn more about their local libraries. Library staff have been brought onboard with training and given guidance about how to use the system most effectively.

Forthcoming changes to the system are coordinated via a two-year roadmap, with major new feature releases planned every six months.

Big Sky Country Digital Network

MSL is a member of the [Big Sky Country Digital Network \(BSCDN\)](#), which also includes the Montana Historical Society, Montana State University, the University of Montana, and North Dakota State Library. BSCDN works to digitize images, maps, oral histories, and other documents and make them publicly accessible online. In FY2020, the BSCDN launched a local page on the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), allowing the network's collections to be seen by a broader audience.

COVID-19 Dashboard

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, MSL staff were asked to assist in Montana's response to the pandemic. Staff created an [interactive dashboard](#) displaying new and active cases by county, and updated the information daily. The dashboard was featured in [an article](#) highlighting GIS responses to the pandemic.

Library Census Champions

In order to help prepare Montana for the 2020 Census, MSL staff worked with libraries across the state to promote Census activities. Libraries were asked to designate a staff member as a Census Champion, who would be expected to keep up with Census news and information, share information with other staff, plan events and activities, and work with local Complete Count Committees. The group developed library census activities and Montana-specific resources to engage communities and create awareness about the Census.

MLIA Grant Projects

In accordance with the Montana Land Information Act (MLIA), MSL administers an [annual grant program](#) to distribute accumulated funds from the Montana Land Information Account, established by the MLIA. Grant applications are evaluated by the State Library and the Montana Land Information Advisory Council, and follow the MLIAC Grant Subcommittee Code of Ethics. Grant criteria are

established based on the original intent of the MLIA and the goals and objectives of the annual Montana Land Information Plan.

In FY2020, MSL awarded 15 grant recipients across Montana a total of \$250,000.

Montana Cadastral Beta

In late 2019, MSL launched the beta version of the new Montana Cadastral application. This web mapping application allows users to research property information statewide, and is the most popular MSL web application. Feedback from the public and core users has been valuable for improving the beta version, which will eventually replace the current version.

Montana Natural Heritage Program Accomplishments

MTNHP had several notable accomplishments during FY2020:

- Added 251 new species to the data system that are now showing up on the Montana Field Guide: 249 natives, mostly invertebrates, and 2 non-natives
- Added 236,720 observation records for native species, including 31,422 vertebrate, 25,032 invertebrate, 24,023 vascular plant, and 153,590 diatom observation records
- Added 10,908 observation records for non-native species, including 1,652 vertebrate, 1,003 invertebrate, and 8,253 vascular plant observation records.
- Added 18,378 records of locations where a particular survey protocol for an animal or plant species had been conducted
- Added or updated 884 range maps for 855 vascular plant and 14 vertebrate, and 15 invertebrate species
- Created or updated predicted habitat suitability models for 481 species including 394 vascular plant, 86 vertebrate and 1 invertebrate species. Write ups for the models can be downloaded at <http://mtnhp.org/models/>
- Established a Land Cover Working Group and a storymap of the Land Cover Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure theme layer

Summer Library Leadership Institute

In July 2019, ten librarians, three facilitators, and three MSL staff met for an intensive four-day retreat at the Rising Wolf Ranch near East Glacier Park. Attendees learned about leadership styles, practiced communication strategies, and explored project management models. During FY2020, attendees continued to meet virtually and work on projects that they had designed and developed during the Institute, culminating in a storymap report presented to the MSL Commission.

Talking Book Library Services

While the majority of Talking Book Libraries across the country had to close or significantly reduce services during the COVID-19 pandemic, MSL's Talking Book Library program was able to remain open and continue services with no impact to users. Staff continued to ship out books and equipment directly to patrons, and were available via phone and email to assist patrons with their reading needs. Demand for talking books spiked during the pandemic, demonstrating just how vital the program is for many Montanans.