

To: MSL Commission

To: Karen Strege

From: Karen Strege

From: Christie Briggs, Darlene Staffeldt

Regarding: Proposal to Prepare the Montana Talking Book Library (MTBL) recording studio for transition from Analog to Digital.

Date: January 28, 2002

The MTBL has been afforded an opportunity to transition from analog technology to digital technology for the production of Montana Cassette Book (MCB) titles. MTBL records books and magazines about Montana or books of interest to patrons that the National Library Service (NLS) does not record.

For the purposes of this proposal, we are defining analog technology as a physical recording process that stores audio sound using magnetic audiotape storage media (i.e., cassettes and reels). Recording equipment is electrical and mechanical such as reel-to-reel recorders. MTBL currently uses analog recording equipment in Helena and in Deer Lodge.

We are defining digital technology as an electronic recording process that encodes the analog audio sound into a binary code or a digital signal. The code can be transferred to a CD, audiocassette tape, or other format for storage and played back by machines that convert the code to analog audio format. Recording equipment is electronic such as computers.

The combination of extensive MTBL digital research, Commission questions regarding plans for digital recordings, availability of MTBL personnel, as well as current National Library Service (NLS) digital developments, have all contributed to the opportune timing of this proposal.

The status of current NLS digital research is making it possible for MTBL to participate in this groundbreaking effort. This will be our first step in the evolution from analog to digital MCB recordings for Montana patrons

MTBL requests the Commission's approval to use \$44,000 from the MTBL Trust Fund for a project that would convert our Helena recording studio to a digital format. As of December 31, 2001, the Trust's balance is \$87,616.50. Attached to this memo is the Commission's guidelines regarding the use of the Trust.

The costs of the project include factory-tested hardware and customized software for a digital mastering module and accessories for the studio. The cost also includes a digital duplicating system for distribution of digitally recorded titles on analog audiocassettes. The vendor will test all system components and accessories, before installation, in addition to providing onsite system installation

and training of designated staff and volunteers. NLS personnel will work with MTBL staff to ensure that all equipment and procedure will conform to current NLS specifications.

This digital pilot project, if approved by the Commission, will begin with installation of equipment and training of personnel in April 2002. This project will position MTBL for whatever distribution format and playback device is chosen by NLS.