

# Memo

**To:** Montana State Library Commission

**From:** Certification Update Focus Group

**Date:** July 16, 2009

**Re:** **Final certification update recommendations**

The Certification Update Focus Group (members listed at [http://www.msl.mt.gov/For\\_Librarians/Training/certification/FocusGroupMembers.doc](http://www.msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Training/certification/FocusGroupMembers.doc)) first met on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to review the certification program (last reviewed in 1998) and make recommendations for updating the program. Goals for the update process are:

1. Promote continuing education and its impact for quality library services
2. Bring the Montana Library Certification Program into line with more recent competencies and certification programs such as Western Council (<http://certificate.westernco.org/>) and ALA (<http://www.ala-apa.org/lsscp/index.html>)
3. Improve recognition for librarians who participate and libraries that encourage staff to continue learning. Do this by
  - a. improving how we recognize certified librarians – make it a bigger deal than it is
  - b. differentiating between minimum and extraordinary number of credits
  - c. making the MLCP certificate a real tool for library leaders for hiring and promoting
4. Develop a track for Library Directors that
  - a. requires continuing education for all library directors (MLIS, too)
  - b. is more meaningful for what they need to know
5. Develop a voluntary track for trustees and/or library boards
6. Clarify ambiguous sections of the program.

The Focus Group's original recommendations were posted on the MSL website in March and announced on the statewide library listserv. A survey was posted until May 31<sup>st</sup> and 175 librarians and trustees responded with comments about continuing education and certification. In addition, input on the certification update was solicited at MLA and from regular postings on wired-MT explaining the update recommendations. All the input collected was shared with the Focus Group to use in preparing the final

recommendations which was done at the group's June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. The survey responses, collected between March 24 and May 31, 2009, are available at [http://msl.mt.gov/For\\_Librarians/Training/certification/Survey-Master.pdf](http://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Training/certification/Survey-Master.pdf) (24 pages); a summary of the responses, compiled June 8, 2009) is available at [http://msl.mt.gov/For\\_Librarians/Training/certification/Survey-Summary.doc](http://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Training/certification/Survey-Summary.doc) (11 pages). Input from the MLA workshop is at: [http://www.msl.mt.gov/For\\_Librarians/Training/certification/Ideas.asp](http://www.msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Training/certification/Ideas.asp)

At the June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Focus Group considered several update scenarios. After discussion, the members voted unanimously to 'tweak' the original recommendations in response to the comments/input received from the survey and other venues. Changes include establishing one credit requirement for all certifications (no distinction between initial and subsequent certificates), extending the time available to earn certification, and adjusting the number of credits required in specific continuing education (ce) categories to give librarians more flexibility to focus on training needs for their particular position.

Below is the Focus Group's final recommendation to the Commission for certification update requirements:

- Certification remains voluntary for all but public library directors.
- Three certification tracks will be available:
  1. Library Administrator Track (required for all public library directors)  
60 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period which includes:
    - minimum of 20 credits in the Library Administration ce category
    - minimum of 10 credits in each of the other 3 ce categories
    - balance of credits are electives
  2. Library Staff Track  
60 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period which includes:
    - minimum of 10 credits in each of the 4 ce categories
    - balance of credits are electives
  3. Trustee Track  
15 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period
    - minimum of 10 credits in the Library Administration ce category
    - balance of credits are electives
- Participants can earn a specialization in one or more ce category by accumulating a minimum of 20 credits in that category.
- All public library directors, no matter what size of library serviced or level of education, will be required to participate in continuing education activities and earn certification. A change in the current Public Library Standards will be needed to make this requirement official; MSL will propose the necessary adjustments at the appropriate

time. Public library directors with MLS/MLIS degrees, but not currently certified, would fulfill the Library Administrator Track requirements by December 31, 2013. If a non-certified director is hired, he/she has 4 years from assuming the position to fulfill the certification requirements for the Library Administrator Track.

Library science college coursework (undergraduate and graduate level) completed during the 4-year certification period can be used for continuing education credits. MLS/MLIS degrees completed in the past 4 years can be used to meet requirements for certification.

There will no longer be an enrollment process; participants will apply for certification whenever they meet the certification requirements.

These recommendations represent long deliberation and difficult decisions by the Focus Group. The result is a significant program update that meets the goals of the update process and is responsive to the concerns and comments heard from Montanans working in the library profession.

As a result of the update process, Montana State Library is charged with promoting the value of continuing education; encouraging boards to support continuing education for library staff and consider incentives for achieving certification; developing and providing quality training in all formats; increasing recognition for individuals who earn certification; encouraging boards to use certification as a hiring and promotion tool; implementing electronic certification manual, forms and tracking capabilities; clarifying program features and requirements; and enlisting library directors to assist with approving and tracking continuing education credits for staff.