

## Montana Library Network Notes

What is the Montana Library Network?

A promise by Montana libraries to their patrons, communities and one another to strive together to ensure that all Montanans have information sufficient to their needs

- Key principles:
  - Our success is measured through user-focused outcomes.
  - Our work is made easier through collaboration.
  - We respect the knowledge and experience of librarians to know and understand the needs of their patrons and to know how to meet those needs.
  - We are willing to learn from others.
  - We are future focused.
  - We have a desire to explore, try, test, pilot, and adapt to new and changing programs and services.

What does the MLN look like?

- Ubiquitous library access for Montanans.
- Montana libraries engaged with their communities, both those in the libraries, and those who never come in the library, striving to design programs and deliver services to meet community needs.
- Librarians are aware of, and direct patrons to, services offered by other Montana libraries that might not be offered locally.
- Montana librarians engaged with one another to share ideas, expertise, opportunities, and concerns.
- Reflected in achievement of collaborative public library standards.
- Advocacy is the norm and communities of practice mentor and advise one another on challenges and opportunities.
- Wherever possible those services are delivered through a collaborative infrastructure of core services that scale to meet the needs of all Montanans. These core services are those in which the State Library invests state and federal dollars.

- Examples of core services might include (thought must be given to how best to fund these services though funding should not be a barrier to our commitment):
  - A shared library management system
  - Shared e-resources and e-resource platforms
  - Resource sharing services including ILL, holds fulfillment, and a courier
  - A shared cultural resources platform
  - Collaborative collection management including collection development, acquisition, materials processing, and cataloging
  - Scalable programming to support lifelong learning and community needs
  - Internet access to and through libraries
  - Shared data metrics and analytics
  - Shared publicity and promotion

#### Role of MSL

- Provide technical support, system administration, procurement, contract administration, partnership development, service exploration and development, consulting, and funding.
- Support a platform to track and inform the public and library community about unique and shared library services.
- Ask questions, to seek advice and direction from within and outside the library community.
- Act in the best interest of Montana libraries.

The Network Advisory Council is a small committee of thought leaders that advance the vision of the MLN.

- Role of the NAC
  - Articulate the successful outcomes of MLN that will help us to continually evaluate our success, adapting as necessary.

- Identify, prioritize and evaluate core services that will best achieve the fair library access resolution.
- Consider core services holistically.
- Identify the gaps in achieving the fair library access resolution.
- Recommend to the State Library how best to invest resources (including time and money) to effectively deliver core services.
- Help MSL plan for the future, including development of the LSTA 5-year plan.

NAC subcommittees are made up of subject matter experts and support specific core services. Each subcommittee meets at least annually to evaluate the success of the services for which they are responsible however it is likely that subcommittees will meet more frequently to consider questions of importance related to those core services.

- Role of NAC Subcommittees
  - Develop and maintain necessary policies and workflows to ensure effective service delivery.
  - Serve on RFP committees and provide similar administrative support when necessary.
  - Identify both short and long-term success measures for core services and continue to refine those measures overtime.
  - Identify data and other means to evaluate success.
  - Consider how to deliver core services for all patron types and across all library types.
  - Identify opportunities to continue to improve service delivery through deeper collaboration, new technologies, partnerships, etc., always with an eye to measures of success.
  - Identify funding needs and future funding goals.
  - Be a resource for the NAC and MSL to understand the impact of circumstances such as the pandemic on our resources and services.
- The NAC should consider the input from the subcommittees holistically and should advise MSL and Montana libraries about opportunities to advance service models, work and funding priorities.

## Results

- A dynamic, user and future-focused network of Montana libraries and a system of library services from which Montana libraries can choose to participate in or not. Services recommended by the NAC will receive MSL support through staff and funding as available. By considering services and their impact on users, MSL and MT libraries will be better positioned to evaluate systemic impacts for patrons and on library services, we will be able to evaluate opportunities for continuous improvement, we will be better informed about where to prioritize scarce resources and to plan for the future. We will have data and anecdotal information to answer questions about where we need help and what comes next.

## Why now?

- Much of the focus of MLN already exists from the culture to the services. Much of this work has matured to the point that it's helpful to consider MLN with fresh perspective.
- We want to look at our services holistically.
- We want to make more effective use of the NAC (and perhaps our other advisory groups).
- We want to make services more efficient.
- We would like these groups and MSL staff to keep an eye towards how tech is changing and how service models are changing – this is helpful when practitioners guide the conversation.
  - Service models to consider, best practices, issues impacting our state.
- We want to identify how to better use funds.
- We want to give our advisory groups/NAC more meaningful work.
- We want to continue to create a deliberate planning and evaluation culture.
- We want to strengthen the role of the libraries within their communities and across the state. As a unified network we can support each other in our efforts.