

Public Libraries - Federation Needs and Assets

To better understand how the Montana State Library can help serve all Montanans as described in the Fair Library Access Resolution, State Library staff have embarked on a project to gather data and library input about the communities we serve to share with the Network Advisory Council. The intent is that this data and input can help the NAC set user-informed funding priorities. State Library staff would also like to learn about opportunities to strengthen services and collaborative opportunities at the federation level.

State Library staff would like to find opportunities to listen to librarians from all types of libraries. To begin this study, we started with the public library federations since these meetings had already been scheduled and are generally well-attended. In Autumn 2021 a five-question survey was sent to public library directors in every federation.

The questions were:

1. What are you most proud of about your library (staff, services, building, anything)?
2. What do you see as your community's greatest strengths?
3. What do you see as your community's greatest challenges?
4. Is there an audience in your community that you would like to serve better? If so, who are they and what are the obstacles?
5. If additional support for your library were available at the federation or state level, what would you want that support to be?

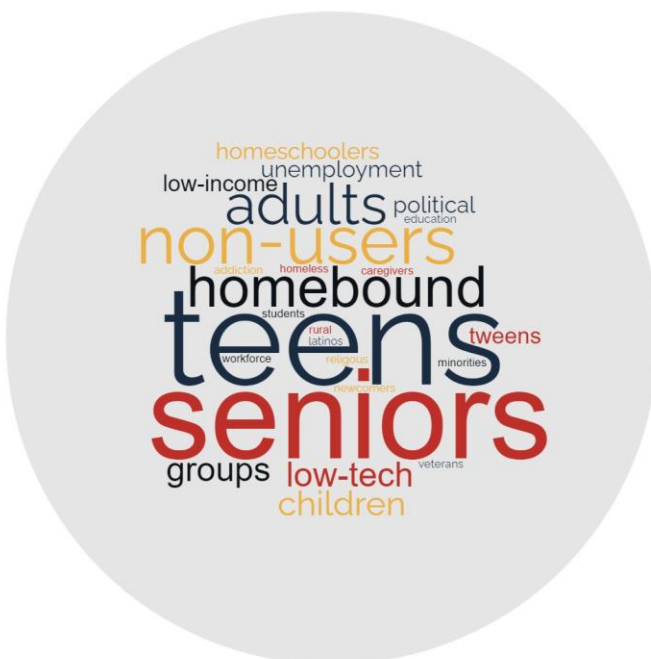
Respondents were asked to identify themselves by library in order to sort the data into their respective federations. 64 out of 82 public libraries responded.

Summary of Questionnaire Results

What are you most proud of about your library (staff, services, building, anything)?

Montana’s rapidly growing population and its residual effects were noted nearly everywhere in the state. Affordable housing (or lack thereof), disproportionately low wages, and the challenges of rapidly changing communities, especially in the western part of the state, were most frequently mentioned. In areas where population is in decline, other issues such as aging communities, difficulty attracting professionals or new businesses to town, and lack of activities for young people besides sports were mentioned. Drugs, alcohol, poverty, and homelessness were problems observed across all federations. Some respondents focused on library-specific challenges with engaging the community and making their services known to new residents or non-users.

Is there an audience in your community that you would like to serve better? If so, who are they and what are the obstacles?



Teens, alternately referred to as “young adults” or “middle/high school students,” were most frequently mentioned as being difficult to engage, closely followed by senior citizens, alternately referred to as “elderly” or “assisted living” (and there are likely some distinctions in serving different populations over 65). Many respondents noted that access, either to the physical library or to the technology and internet services necessary for using electronic resources, is a barrier for several different audiences, including homebound, low-income, or technologically limited citizens, among others. A few respondents stated a desire to help community residents affected by unemployment, workforce transitions, homelessness, or poverty.

Questionnaire Responses in Full

What are you most proud of about your library (staff, services, building, anything)?

- I have a difficult time picking just one item that I am most proud of. However, there are several items to be proud of. We have a great staff. One of our staff members is a retired librarian and is absolutely amazing. We have a great Board of Trustees who have great suggestions as well as being very supportive of new programming ideas. Lastly, our library has a great book budget where I can get new books on a monthly basis.
- Everything.. we continue to provide successful programs and services while dealing with all the challenges of this pandemic, building situation and community needs.
- We are most proud of our collection of books, and we provide a friendly environment to our patrons. Our patrons like the fact that we know them by their name, and when we order books in for them, they come in fairly quickly.
- We have worked very hard in the two years since I have returned to the library. It was in a great deal of disarray and we weren't following proper procedures for anything. In two years we have properly cataloged every title, cleaned up every section, and become compliant in all major standards. I am proud of our accomplishments in this area. I have also personally had some success in grant writing and was able to secure an extra \$17000 for my library last year. No librarian had done any grant writing in more than 20 years. What was done was very minimal and I am proud of our results in this area.
- We are able to provide a great library service on a very limited budget
- When I think back over the previous year, something that comes to mind is how our library continued on even with a pandemic. Not once did we think to put ourselves in front of our patrons. Yes, the staff had to stay home, while I kept the library running, the staff felt frustrated not being able to come into the library. When we were able to open the doors again, we never looked back. Our library and staff did an excellent job during the last year and I am so proud of all.
- I am very proud of our recent renovation. The renovation was paid entirely through county funds and we didn't have to pass a bond referendum. The community has been incredibly supportive, and as we all know projects like these do not come to fruition without that support.
- Advocacy and leadership – Sonja testifying on behalf of Montana libraries
- Technology support
- Sagebrush has a long history of collaborating before that strategy was widely employed across the state.
- The hard work we have done to get things cleaned up and in order.
- Staff, hanging in there during all the craziness.
- Our collection, staff, and physical space. I'm also proud that we are able to offer as many services as we do: computers, faxing, children's programming, medical equipment checkouts, etc.
- Despite limited resources and space issues, we continue to offer awesome programs and needed services to our community. I am also proud of how much we have improved on the building over the last 10 years.

- My staff and their absolutely gracious handling of all patrons and problems.
- staff
- Ability to adapt to almost any situation.
- We excelled at providing public library services in COVID times.
- services to our community
- Our community supports and appreciates our library and library team.
- Our programming and the way that we work together to make our library successful.
- The variety of services and resources available to our patrons in the library and through our Partners.
- We have a brand new 45 year old building. I am super proud of my staff for surviving a major construction project and the pandemic in the same year.
- I'm proud of our small community supporting the library and being appreciative that we are open.
- We did an outstanding job reopening for public patrons far quicker than many of the other libraries in the state.
- We're proud of our beautiful facility, especially the original, refurbished reading room. We're also grateful for our dedicated and collaborative staff.
- We work very hard to keep all members of our community engaged in the library, from our programming to classes we offer and the materials we provide
- Creative staff and amazing building and grounds.
- Our new wonderful building.
- Staff
- That they are willing to continue with programming and keep our library functioning.
- We deliver unbelievable value. Our return on what is invested in us is far greater than any other arenas that come to mind. We have a deep heart for our people and for our communities. We make a difference in peoples' lives.
- I am most proud of our library's progress and reputation in our community. I am proud of the technology we offer to our patrons and I'm proud that the staff and volunteers continues to grow to support our patrons.
- Relabeling system for our library, patron participation in the summer reading raffle
- I could not be more proud of the staff. Our town is currently a polarized community, and our staff continues to treat every person with respect and humanity--which has not been easy, truly making our library an invaluable resource for our community.
- I am most proud of my incredible staff. They are friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable.
- The Staff is very driven to provide the best service to the public they can.
- I am most proud of my staff. We have an amazing group of talented, friendly, knowledgeable individuals who work amazingly well together and do all they can to make the library an inviting space for the community.
- Staff! We have an absolutely amazing staff. It is certainly our greatest asset.

I am also proud of our board for being forward-thinking and solution-oriented, and not simply adhering to old ways of doing things or having an overly provincial approach to our services/what libraries can and/or should be doing, etc.

- Our staff is very friendly, and knowledgeable. Our library is described as 'welcoming', 'great little library', and having a 'wonderful selection'. Patrons express 'thankfulness' that we listen and try to create services to meet the needs of our community (Check Out - Call Ins/ Bags to Go etc.), and that we listen to book suggestions.
- Most of all, the quality of the staff, also our collection and the new areas set up. Ever-expanding programming, and a social meeting place for patrons otherwise shut-in.
- I am most proud of our staff and the wonderful support we receive from our Whitefish community.
- Our Children's programs and our friendly atmosphere, and our beautiful building.
- Services
- Our perseverance!
- I am proud of my board for standing up to the city in last years take over. I'm proud of them for realizing they needed help and asking for it from the State Library.
- Our staff and our NEW Bookmobile
- We are truly enjoying our new addition! The extra space for programming is greatly appreciated by the community. Having dedicated space for children's program takes strain off other areas of the library.
- Our patrons are comfortable with the atmosphere and they appreciate the ability of the library to provide them with up-to-date material, access to technology and the tech help they receive. We have received compliments from many avenues on how nice the library looks, it is clean and friendliness and helpfulness of staff.
- I am most proud that we offer friendly, helpful services to our community. The hotspots are especially popular with our patrons.
- Staff is great with the public. We have a faithful following for our children's programs, which we continue to expand.
- I am proud of the staff who worked through a difficult time with COVID. They all are positive, considerate people who are enjoyable to work with. We've tried to maintain services to the best of our ability. Lastly, I love our Indian artifact collection that people, especially visitors, love to see.
- The building is amazing; we are extremely flexible - continually changing to meet needs of our community.
- Staying relevant through the years. My staff, which is outstanding.
- Our amazing staff and patrons, and the many supporters of the library who don't even use our resources, but still see the value of the public library.
- Our building is historic, aesthetically pleasing, and clean. Our staff is friendly and helpful. We are responsive to community requests and try to support community events through advertising and space availability.
- I am most proud of the library staff. We have been through a lot these past two years and only have two of us remaining. We are resilient and are pushing ahead trying to get things accomplished. I am proud we have been able to provide some of our services once again.
- I am proud that we are able to offer so many free services to the public.
- The customer service.

- Our staff, and our library continues to attract really creative individuals from our community. I am really grateful for that.
- I am the most proud of the welcoming, safe atmosphere within our library that has been created and maintained by our staff, patrons and volunteers.
- I'm most proud of how far the library has come in the past year and a half. We have improved the aesthetics and the reputation to become a place known to be friendly and welcoming. Patrons now spend time enjoying the library environment instead of grabbing and leaving. Purchasing as well as outreach have increased significantly. Programs have expanded beyond children's and craft programs to include humanities programming. We are becoming more well-rounded in our programming in order to serve our population with a diverse range of interests and needs.
- I'm proud of my staff. No matter what team I get, I usually get exceptional team members.
- Our excellent customer service.
- Our staff have been amazing throughout the last couple of years. We take a lot in the "hominess" of our building. We have tried to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere for everyone that walks into the building. For a small school and a sparsely populated county, we have a very nice library.

What do you see as your community's greatest strengths?

- Our community in general is a very giving community especially when it come to supporting school functions or other organizations that are raising funds for this and that. Also, when a family is in need, the community comes together to help financially as well as donations of goods that a family may need.
- Right now, we are just keeping things open and going.
- The people. Small communities tend to take care of their own, especially in times of need.
- I think the people that I deal with on a daily basis have a real love of the library and see it as a point of pride in our town. We are also a very resilient community and a supportive one if someone is struggling or is in need.
- working together for the greater good
- Our community is Resilient!! Pandemic, Tornado, we are ready for the challenge. Our patrons and community members just keep taking this one day at a time, pushing on to make the future better.
- We are a tight knit community that supports one another. As a new person into the community I have felt very welcome and have been invited to get involved right away.
- The community will support worthwhile causes.
- Agriculture
- Area schools and school-related activities are very well supported. Elder care is something very well supported - we have a nursing home and options for independent and assisted living.
- Whenever someone needs help, everyone comes together in support. Our community is very giving.
- Everyone knowing each other.
- Diversity, geography

- Caring and looking out for one another
- Provides library services for people their whole lives because we are a school and community.
- cohesiveness
- People feel community ownership.
- We come together to assist during a tragedy. Our community is very friendly and helpful.
- It is a strength to have the school and community connected throughout the library. Sharing resources is a benefit to all ages.
- The care that people in this county have for their communities, both large and small, and that everyone supports the Library.
- Volunteerism
- We band together in a crisis with a commitment to the work.
- Like many rural communities, the people here pull together to help one another.
- People genuinely care about one another and want to see the community succeed.
- Very supportive of the Library and its mission. The majority of the population are well-educated and involved in current events.
- Our community supports each other and any way possible. If someone needs help, people are just there to reach out.
- Intercommunity connections
- The willingness to work together.
- Good people. Our communities are made up of diverse, kind, creative, and generous people. They want to contribute and help and build.
- The community's greatest strength is the way people come together in times of need. Although it may seem at times that people aren't thinking of the library, when it comes to "asks", they always come through with support.
- Caring community young families moving to the area.
- Our community knows the value of our small-town value and is highly supportive of every organization. Whether it's the library, hospital, school or small business, there is support when needed.
- Our community members are extremely involved in open discussion of policies that affect this place we all love.
- The community care about the people that live here. They invest in community such as parks, trails, new library, so the entire community has services to make lives better.
- We still have a small town feel and look out for one another. There is a joint sense of pride in Flathead Lake, the Mission Mountains, and all our area has to offer. We have a rather philanthropic community that likes to fund big projects that support youth.
- Our community is very supportive of our library. In 2020 our voters supported our mill levy by almost 60% for increased operating revenue. So the community-mindedness is a strength that directly benefits us. Other non-library specific strengths would be a growing local food movement/Farmers Market, functioning downtown (if not exactly vibrant), good access to outdoor recreation, and active nonprofits working to help the community with various issues (domestic violence, supporting youth, after school programs, etc.)
- How connected everyone is within in the community. This can be both positive and negative, you sneeze and everyone knows about it.

- Coming together for each other.
- Our greatest strength is sense of community and being involved in its future.
- Friendly and we generally try to help people.
- Engaged locally. Small town feel and friendliness.
- We support each other.
- There are a few patrons who absolutely love the library and would do anything to keep it going.
- We have a community that is very generous in their private support of the Library.
- The ability to come together when needed.
- They pull together as a community when a need is made apparent.
- Sorry to say I cannot see one.
- We have a lot of young families who have moved into our community in the last few years. We live in a generous and supportive community.
- We have positive people, (i.e. the mayor, the director of Community Development, etc.) that care about keeping our community growing. There have been a number of meetings for people to attend to express their ideas of what will keep our town vital in the future. This is healthy :)
- The ability to open their hearts and checkbooks when someone or some group is truly in need.
- Library support is huge!
- There are many kind and generous people living in our community.
- Community pride and community support. Medical issues, fundraising, cancer support, school spirit, meals on wheels, strong schools.
- Our community's greatest strengths are library support and a willingness to help. People stepped up and wrote letters and attended commissioner meetings during the library's 11 month closure. We are grateful for all the support moving forward.
- One benefit of being in such a small community is that it feels more like a family at times. Our community is able to pull together to support the school and community members in need.
- Coming together in times of trouble.
- The people of our community are very generous with their time and resources.
- Our community's greatest strengths are the support, compassion, strength and hope that members of the community provide to one another. In a sense, our community's greatest strengths exist because of each and every community member.
- There are numerous events which provide a lot of opportunities to socialize and to get to know one another. In general, people in our county have strong convictions and are not afraid to be vocal about them.
- There is a an authentic love for one another in this community. The people who live in our community interact as a family would interact. Both good, and bad.
- Natural resources and landscape and our sense of community.
- We are unique enough that even though we are just a few minutes from the city, many people prefer to come to our town for some of their needs.
- Our community seems to come together when someone is in need or a special project needs doing. Our community is very active in keeping the county thriving.

What do you see as your community's greatest challenges?

- With such a small and rural community, keeping things maintained to keep doors open whether it be the building or pandemic situations. Our numbers are rising at this time.
- The lack of activities for our youth. We do have sports programs, but nothing for those not in sports. Our roads need improved
- We are an aging community with very limited resources. In a year like this year with a drought and terrible grasshoppers, every crop was 100% failure. Our tax base is so dependent on agriculture that a bad year can really wreak havoc with funding.
- shortage of funding for infrastructure
- After experiencing the past 20 months, I feel one of our community's greatest challenges is how to get truthful information out instead of constant propaganda. In addition, as our Constitutional Rights are being attacked on a daily basis, how to fight the Tyranny of our government and health care system.
- The political division is probably the biggest challenge. As librarians, we serve the public in whatever need people face. I feel we need to stay in our own field of expertise, and point people to the correct department. Referring people to those who are trained.
- It's challenging to live on the peripheral of the Baaken. Our economy very much reflects the ups and downs and challenges but we do not enjoy the revenue from oil that North Dakota has.
- Population decline
- Seeing needs and supporting activities that aren't sports.
- Consistent health care options – very difficult in finding physicians who choose to stay in the area. Even PAs or FNP's tend to come and go. There are needs in certain professions: electricians, plumbing, construction - but we can't seem to attract (and keep) those professionals.
- Mental health in the community, not having access to reliable services such as good internet or healthcare, and there is a lack of diversity.
- Drugs and alcohol
- Homelessness
- lack of affordable housing
low wages (these are, of course, related)
entrenched ways of thinking
extremely windy
- Age of community members, housing and employment
- Meeting everyone's needs.
- poverty
- Population growth and the infrastructure to support it.
- Community Organizations try to reinvent the wheel instead of working together. Each organization is doing the same things, creating hardships on the community, instead of collaboration. This creates a lot of disgruntled community members
- Our biggest challenge is promoting the services and resources throughout the community.
- Homelessness, lack of child care, drugs.
- Getting the word out to everyone about events or opportunities
- Meeting everyone's diverse needs.

- Like a lot of Montana communities, the population of our town is growing, people are moving in and moving away, so the fabric of the community is changing. The library will need to grow and change to accommodate these changes.
- Lack of housing and employment.
- Rapid, almost out-of-control growth. Limited water supply. Salaries do not match the extremely high cost of housing, so hard to hire and hard to retain staff.
- Getting information out. There is no clear way to make sure people get the information they need in a timely manner.
- Economic development
- Lack of volunteers and keeping businesses open
- They lack the capacity to unify effectively to speak up for what they need and to get adequate help/investment from their local government. In addition to being decentralized, they are also pulled in many different directions, have heavy commitments, and more times than not work more than one job.
- The community's greatest challenge is keeping the library relevant to members of the general public. Promotion is tough here as there is no real avenue for communication - except for notifying groups individually.
- Rapid growth,
Lack of affordable housing
- Our town is struggling with growth and how to manage or not manage it, depending on your views. Community demographics and needs are shifting rapidly and difficult to assess due to the flux.
- It seems that we are all struggling with a lot of the same things, but we haven't been able to address them collectively.
- Housing shortage and managing community growth – library resources are not matching the rate of growth in our community
- Inability to hire and retain staff – people leaving because of the cost of living. Businesses and libraries are cutting hours, days because of staffing issues. Staff is wearing thin trying to cover open hours.
- A lot of new residents – easier to bring on volunteers for a few hours a week than to try to hire someone part-time
- Volunteers may be afraid of COVID, however; older volunteer population
- Retirees working; people working 2-3 jobs
- Increased wages makes the library budget tighter
- Greatest challenge is affordable housing, and trying to retain our small, hometown ambience.
- How to house folks who are experiencing homelessness. The housing market has skyrocketed and many individuals have been displaced.
- We have a very serious drug problem in our area, which has trickled into our library on occasion. The influx of people from out of state tied with a lack of housing has driven the cost of living in Polson to an all-time high. Our staff are lucky, but have had trouble finding housing. The high COVID spread in our community is very concerning and we have lost quite a few well known, wonderful people to COVID.

- Affordable housing! This is far and away the biggest challenge. The rental market is incredibly expensive with few options (\$1200 for a 2 bedroom, 1 bath house in town?!?!?) and this is negatively impacting those who live here and rent as well as those who might be trying to move here for work. It would be incredibly difficult for the library to recruit folks to work at our library, even for senior positions with pay at or above the median income for our county, if they don't already live in the area. We are also seeing more folks experiencing homelessness in our community and we lack resources to help them.
- Very low-income area, so many families use the library as an informational resource and for entertainment.
- Jobs, housing, and the lack of knowledge about available resources in the community
- I am sure it's the same with all Montana communities: affordable housing!
- Poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse and homelessness.
- The Town governance has a lot of conflict but the library is a district so although not a direct effect on us, it still can add to a negative atmosphere in town. We have a challenge in that we serve the towns next to us but they pay no taxes to us and we do not have funds for a suitable library building.
- Fear
- The biggest challenge I have is getting more people to come to the library.
- Our community has a great deal of poverty. The community is divided on how to best address issues of homelessness and safety.
- The ability to let go of the past and move forward.
- As a low-income community life is a challenge. There are no rentals available. volunteers are hard to come by.
- Our community is struggling economically with few opportunities for employment. There is a racism problem. Political divide.
- We have a substantial number of families who struggle to get by, something COVID made very clear. We lost a lot of foot traffic during COVID and it's been a struggle to get that back. People who used to come in and use the computer found other ways to access the Internet. Our WiFi usage increased and has stayed up, but our internal usage has not come back.
- 1. Until we can see more COVID vaccinations in our county, I feel large community gatherings will make some people feel uncomfortable. 2. We need to encourage people to "shop local" throughout the year, not just at Christmas time. Along that line, we need more businesses to open, especially on main street.
- Welcoming new people that aren't necessarily outgoing and helping them "find a place in the fabric that is our town."
- Local government
- Our town and county can be very insular, and that kindness and generosity I mentioned above can seem like it's only available for a certain type of people.
- Attendance and participation in smaller community events. Some events do have high participation (ie: football games and Summer Celebration) but book talks, small musical performances, drive in movies, etc. don't always get high numbers.
- Communication is one of our community's greatest challenges. Our library has been partially open since June and we are still getting patrons who come in saying we are so glad you are back

open finally. We have advertised in the paper, did Facebook posts, and posted flyers around time, but still can't seem to reach some of our patrons who use to be weekly visitors. Another challenge in our community is support from the County. Our library has been through some crazy situations these last few years due to the county's financial issues. This has led some County officials to view the library as nonessential and we need to change that opinion.

- The biggest challenge I see is keeping young people in the community. There is a serious lack of affordable housing and jobs. There is no reason for younger people to stay here.
- Meth, hopelessness, uncertain economic future, geographic inequality, internet access, negative perception of the community, challenges with tourism and accommodating residents who work in the service industry, cost of living, funding, lack of access to appropriate, quality services such mental health services, social isolation, lack of healthy opportunities to network and socialize.
- Hard time finding employees to fill open jobs
- Addictions
- Dysfunctional families

Is there an audience in your community that you would like to serve better? If so, who are they and what are the obstacles?

- yes, the youth (5th-highschool)
The obstacles are that the youth are very busy with school activities. As with many of our tried programs, not many participate.
- All audiences are our priority. We try to keep everyone in mind so we can provide the best for everyone.
- Our Senior citizens. Transportation for around town is a big problem for them unless they have family available to bring them into/around town.
- We would like to reach the school-aged children that have been programmed to read for points & prizes, not for enjoyment. We are finding by the time students hit high school they don't even want to pick up a book.
- How do we instill a love of reading in young people?
- Programs with community experts sharing their knowledge with each other has been popular.
- Accelerated Reading and other classifications can restrict children's reading selections. They are required to read certain things that may be more of a chore than a pleasure. They should be able to choose their preferred genres.
- However, incentives can sometimes draw in people who might not otherwise use the library.
- Drawings including name of book that they read
- We should accept that readers are at different levels and should try to meet them where they are, whether at higher or lower levels. Sometimes readers at a higher level are not served as well as they could be.
- We would love to serve teens better. It's difficult to encourage the teens who are not really involved in school to stop by the library for our programs. On the other hand, the kids involved in school activities simply do not have a schedule that allows for additional library programs.
- High school students. They are busy with sports and so many other activities that it is hard to entice them to come into the library.

- Lack of government aide, i.e.. welfare, job service etc. We used to have someone who would come to Phillips County to help people with these services. Now, people have to travel to Havre to receive assistance with filling out Job Service applications. Filling out unemployment forms. This is very time-consuming for library staff. Helping people do online job interviews.
- We do limited work with some of the elderly in our community, but I think there are opportunities for the home bound and their caregivers. I think the biggest obstacle is in finding out who might be interested in what the library can do; how we find them.
- Teens and young adults. Having the funds to create cool programs or services that would capture the attention of this age group.
- The homebound and/or others living far distances from the library. A bookmobile could reach more of these citizens but we don't have staff power or funding to run a bookmobile.
- Children and young adults
- It can be hard to know where to prioritize our energy.
- ethnic/racial minorities
obstacles: not wanting to be or appear to be condescending and/or patronizing; awareness, on both sides

cultists (religious and political)

obstacles: immune to evidence

- Teens. Trying to get them interested in what is happening at the library. They always think we just have books.
- Veterans and the elderly. Obstacles is money, lack of data, and staffing programs.
- individuals without physical or technological access to the library's resources. the obstacles would be lack of internet and physical impairment.
- Teens Difficult to get them to engage with the library-especially due to all the digital access they have.
- We would like to serve nursing homes and assisted living facilities. We just don't have the staff or volunteers to help.
- Our library could better serve our middle-aged community. It is an obstacle to find activities and programs that appeal to patrons who have not used a library since they were in school and don't realize there are resources that aren't necessarily available on their personal devices and computers.
- Homeless folks.
- Older adults but not sure what the obstacles really are...
- We would like to provide more services to the public and the school through programming. We lack paid staffing to do so. As well as knowing what programs would be well attended, at what cost, and were to find them.
- As our population ages, perhaps it would be advantageous to focus more on services to older adults..
- Teens. I have tried getting them engaged, but have been unable to do so.
- Service to the growing Latino population; need more staff who speak Spanish.
- Young Adult. How do we even get them in the door???

- Teen and elderly. I would like to see the teens participate in more activities. One of the obstacles I've noticed is that the teens are working and can't make our programming. Elderly... I think that we aren't offering programming that really interests the elderly, although I was told that if I hosted it, they would not come because of COVID.
- I'd like to be able to do more community building--to connect people and build support systems. We have a significant influx of newcomers (but after the last few years I think everyone would benefit) and I'm more and more aware of how disconnected they feel. We help as much as we can, but it usually is very targeted problem solving. We are strapped--our money stays the same but prices go up and up--our staff time stays the same but there is more and more to do. The thing is though that so are our patrons. They've been hit again and again and again from covid to increased taxes. At some point we will be forced to ask for more--but we are intensely aware that most of our patrons don't have that more to give.
- The school part of the library serves our students and youth as well as possible, and the older population seems satisfied with services. I would like to better serve the middle-aged population, but they are the most reluctant to use the library services. Perhaps because of busy work schedules, reliance on Google and social media, and lack of awareness of what the library can offer.
- Young adults
- We are trying to reach our teen population. Covid is a major obstacle at the moment in that in person events seem to be the best way to serve them, and we are hesitant to proceed. I also recently realized there is an entire politically aligned demographic that have never set foot in the library; I'm still evaluating the obstacles here.
- Middle schoolers are more likely to come into the library; high schoolers may have jobs or have lots of extracurricular activities that take up their time; lots of homework
- Homeschool families' schedules are much more flexible than public, so they may be more interested in programs and services.
- I strongly believe we are able to service our community well. We survey our community asking that very question: "how can we serve you better?". The strongest suggestion is that we expand our open days and hours.
- There is always the group you never hear from or know about. COVID helped to force us to use technology to do programming etc and many groups that did not participate before began joining in. We do many of our services in hybrid ways now but we are probably still missing someone.
- We would like to serve middle school and high school teens better. Kids have so many extra activities outside of school, which makes it difficult to find good times for programs. This is also a difficult group to reach as they have excellent school libraries (which is great), so they don't "need" the public library.
- Like most libraries, I'd say that the audience we most want to serve are folks that don't use the library for whatever reason. We'd love to figure out how to help them find value at our library (especially since they already pay for the library via their taxes). A few specific groups that come to mind would be persons who are homebound, who don't have reliable transportation, or have other barriers to visiting the library.

- Non-readers, people think the library is just dusty books. Trying to educate them that we have computers, puzzles, board games, and dvds, and all the other services we provide (tech help etc). We are trying to increase awareness via word-of-mouth, social media and future flyers.
- Getting teens to come to the library; getting more homeschoolers to come in
- I feel we do a good job meeting the needs of our community and the comments we receive seem to support that.
- We would like to better serve the young adults.
- We serve all people currently and always look for ways to improve, and once found then implement it. If we discover a gap then we will fix it. I don't see any obstacles, except Covid (masks and vaccinations.)
- Right now we would like to work towards in person programming again. The virus is everywhere we have to go so perhaps it's more important that we start building community again.
- People who have limited access to technology
- Low-income population
- I'd really like to see more people in the 20-50 age groups coming in. The biggest challenge is not many people in that age group are readers because they have so much other stuff to deal with, work, family etc.
- We would like more of the community to be aware of the services of the Library. We would especially like to do a better job serving teens and seniors.
- The grade area. Once they leave story hour they don't return. The 20-40 year old don't seem to find their way in.
- We would love to see teens in our library. They are so wrapped up in activities-sports, etc.- they don't have time for other things.
- Adults- both young and old. We need to find out what they want & figure out how to reach them & get them to participate in our programs. Obstacles- Time availability of staff & patrons.
- Young adults. They're busy :)....school, sports, jobs, etc.
- The elderly ~ we used to be very good at promoting healthy lifestyles, offering services that encouraged staying active and staying connected with each other, but since the COVID we haven't really found a way to do this.
- Teens. We seem to lose them about 6th grade.
- I wish we could serve our entire community better. It feels like I am constantly fighting with our local government to prove the library's value. It's hard to even keep what we currently have alive and well, much less flourish and grow.
- Teens are the hardest group in our community to reach. Getting them to engage at our facility has been the hardest thing. We would also like to increase our senior population engagement. Will soon be offering "Senior Hours" with options of puzzles, card playing, etc. Also exploring options for tweens.
- I would like to serve all of our community better. Currently our Branch Library is open around an hour a day for curbside services due to water damage that was discovered in February of this year. It has been a long process to get anything moving on this and nothing has been done currently to repair the building. This is one of the biggest obstacles we have to overcome before we can begin providing more library services. In a normal year, I would have said teens. We usually see many young children in with their parents and over the course of their lives they

become constant library users; however, I do notice that once a child hits middle school age they become less of a constant user and by the time they are in high school we rarely see them again. I'm not sure if more programming geared towards that age group would help or possibly a revamp of our YA section to peak teens' interests, but I definitely would like to see them better served.

- I'd like to serve everyone better. The biggest obstacle is just getting them into the library and aware of all the things we have to offer. It's hard to be available when the library is only open 30 hours a week.
- 6th grade and up; older children, tweens, and teens; low-income residents; people transitioning to different jobs or dealing with unemployment; people dealing with addiction; adult education; rural residents who cannot easily visit the library; seniors. Homebound residents and residents without internet.
- Challenges: We need training with unemployment and working with poverty issues; getting teens into the library and engaged in activities that maintain their interest; Limited staff availability; COVID; low interest from community; might need a county bookmobile; youth peer pressure.
- Limited physical space in the library building
- People are unable to physically visit the library.
- Public relations – advertising is more complex and it is difficult to reach people, especially people with no/limited internet.
- Library audience and expectations are constantly changing. The role of the library is changing. Less of an emphasis on books and reading, more need for internet access, printing, copying, programming needs are different.
- Seniors, since the senior center closed. Obstacles: limited staff and funding

If additional support for your library were available at the federation or state level, what would you want that support to be?

- At this time, I cannot think of any additional support needed.
- Recognize by putting more requirements on us being standards, etc, we are small and we are few with great needs that have to be met. Some don't have the staff/funding or enough people who will volunteer (Board Members) their time and efforts and we most days just try to keep our heads afloat.
- I would like to see more middle school, high school, and young adults. I think part of this may be sports related, but I don't think much effort was made in years past to reach out to those age groups, nor any effort to ensure that we had titles that were interesting to them. In two years a lot has been done to try to rebuild these collections, but there is a lot more work left to do in this area.
- traveling technology personnel – providing in-person IT services throughout the federation – Sagebrush has a person based in Baker who has provided services across the federation.
- Help with costs on the regional newspapers, for us The Billings Gazette. More people would read it than the Wall Street Journal, in our area. It cost us around \$850 a year for this paper.

- I would like support to try out new services that would be cost prohibitive to try. If we can show data from patrons using the service we would have a better case to get the funding to continue the service individually when the federation or state level funding ends.
- Streaming for tv, movies – such as Hoopla
- Trying things out will provide the data to make the case for sustained funding
- Our budget is a constant battle.
- Money, technology, and technology help
- Not sure.
- I feel like we are supported by the State in so many ways. This is a combo of continued support and additional:
 - Building upkeep and expansion.
 - Programming for all ages. Having some programs already designed and ready to go for libraries (at least the plans).
 - Help with staff wages and benefits - Directors communicating with boards on the importance of these things.
 - Technology advancements and resources.
 - Continued education for all staff.
 - Marketing and PR support for various library promotions.
 - I already feel like we get complete support from the state.
 - Capital improvements would be very helpful. Applying for grants.
 - assessing services and delivery of services
 - Technology
 - Programming ideas, and legal advice
 - technological
 - Funds for Outreach in our community.
 - Hot Spots.
- We have appreciated support through pilot programs and group projects. Our small library can't always justify standalone programs or services. For instance, many of our patrons used Reference services such as Ebsco Host, Gale databases, and Homework Helper, Auto Repair databases, etc. but it wasn't enough to justify funding it ourselves when the group services were no longer offered. The ones who used it LOVED it!
- Training. Learn about tools that would help us identify ways to support and more effectively interact with our homeless populations.
- Older adult programming specifically computer classes and I would love to have an exercise program.
- Library law in the Covid environment.
- The most likely answer to this question would be for technology.
- Technology support and teen programming
- Bilingual materials in English/Spanish. More hotspots.
- Program development. One thing I appreciate about our federation retreats is learning about the programs being done at all the other libraries. How do we share that information more regularly? How do we find out what works and what doesn't from people who have tried it

before? I do browse the other facebook pages, but I would love to have a better way to get that information amongst the libraries.

- Technological support - funds to purchase and maintain new computers and software as well as funds to subscribe to databases
- I'm not sure. I need to think more on this.
- The help and interest with physical building issues is extremely important as libraries tend to put their patrons ahead of stuff (building needs). Our buildings for the most part are older and are heavily used.

A second place where state/federation help would be very helpful is to build positive precedents/relationships/established practice with MACo/League of Cities and Towns. More and more libraries need the support of and the capacity to partner with their local governing authorities--but case by case things get derailed and become political because there is a lot of gray and misunderstanding and lack of leadership/direction from the organizations that they trust and that they refer to for guidance.

- I appreciate the support we currently receive, but I would appreciate additional support with more shared services and databases. Because our library is so small, it is difficult to justify costs for some services and databases. However, when we participated in sharing groups, it is possible to justify our portion of the costs for the number of patrons who use them.
- I would enjoy a hands-on visit now that I have been here.
- Raincheck, and I'll think on this one some more. Thank you for helping to evaluate our needs.
- Appreciate advocacy training
- Sustaining hotspot program; there has been an effective media push for the hotspots
- MSU Extension Local Govt training program – may be helpful to revisit this training
- Help providing services during COVID; mask guidance
- Would like more info about MPL's mask policy decision
- There has been a lot of strife surrounding the pandemic and people's decisions about how to handle it.
- Because the state valuation of property goes down yearly, we could use help with funding for collections. That is the only place in our budget that has any flexibility but funds go down yearly and the demand goes up as well as the price for databases, MTLIB2GO, regular books and audio materials. The continuation of hot spots is great. They are checked out all the time. We had a few prior to the State program but not enough to keep up with demand. Users really appreciate them.
- Education opportunities for our Board of Trustees. It is difficult for everyone to attend training, especially if they are still working. A series of Board Training video programs in 15-20 minute segments that could be run during a regular board meeting would be ideal and would help them achieve the required 3 hours of CE on the new Standards.
- I think support for community-wide surveys would be great. This would also be scalable across the Federation. Something like paying for a consultant to conduct surveys would be incredible -- mailers to all homes in library service area, creating a digital survey, meetings, etc. and compiling the results.
- In-person training, increase titles on Library2Go, add a service such as Kanopy.
- help in building expansion, and updated space
- I can't think of anything that the Federation or the State don't already provide.

- a.) Group health insurance for libraries that are not in a large group plan already, so it is not so expensive and better plans. We only have 3 full time employees. Only a few health insurance companies even offer insurance plans to small groups in Montana. The threshold for cost savings for group plans is 50+ members.
- b.) Library building and site assessments and help with getting libraries achieve the benchmarks. Just as the State library and technology assessments of library, a building/site assessment would be helpful. Evaluate current libraries based on accessibility, safety (including air quality), lighting, usability for children to seniors, does the space match the population and its growth rate etc.
- I have no idea at this time.
- Shared federation IT person
- I'm not really sure what I would need. The state library has been really great about supporting the library during our very difficult take over by the city. Tracy Cook has been to many of our board meeting and several city council meetings to advocate for the library. Jennie Stapp joined us in a joint meeting via zoom. They have really gone out of their way to help the library and we truly appreciate it.
- Our biggest need is for funding.
We would also love technical support with eRate. (I talk to the wonderful Suzanne all the time and I still seem to mess up eRate!)
Better statewide marketing of MontanaLibrary2Go and other consortium services
- To expand the hot spot services, both devices and subscriptions.
- Tech support and PR support
- Money---our budget is continually being cut. We are grateful for all the support we do get!
- The State Library does a great job of providing support, sometimes that is as simple as listening to us vent! An area where we could use more support and training, would be with technology, which is sometimes overwhelming. Although we have an IT person at the county, it is a struggle to get him to help. Mil levy guidance would be great. Every year it seems like we have to beg for money and justify why we need it, and we usually still get a budget cut. It would be nice to not have to do that every year, and a dedicated mil levy seems like the way to do that.
- Not sure
- I really can't think of anything that the State Library doesn't already provide amazing support for! It's just a matter of finding time to tap into it all=).
- ?
- Right now I am thinking a lot about library districts. I personally feel like I need help with that for my library, but I know many librarians are not interested in pursuing that option.
- In-person technology support. Training, troubleshooting, etc. Both how to use programs and how to do actual upgrades, etc.
- Grants and monetary support are definitive ways to help libraries. Infrastructure grants relating to building and safety needs would be helpful. Electronic support such as providing funding for laptops, tablets, and e-resources. After the past two years, I feel mental health resources for library staff and patrons would be very beneficial.
- I would like more computer training beyond the one-hour sessions at conferences. Even suggestions on college courses locally or online that would benefit me in learning. As a sole librarian, it is hard to offer as much as larger libraries.

- Extra funds
- a full-time position
- a new building
- education and guidance on developing, implementing and maintaining library programs in rural areas. I would also like that support to be in-person whenever it's safe and possible.
- library-specific trustee training
- political advocacy for small public libraries
- resources such as programs in a box, PR resources, technology services such as the Gigabit Toolkit assessment, which bring in new ideas and save time; a larger collection budget.
- The funds to provide the "extra" items like music software, office productivity software, etc.
- Programming guidance would be welcome.