In light of the Montana State Library Commission’s decision to sever the State Library’s relationship with the American Library Association, Missoula Public Library’s leadership takes this opportunity to convey MPL’s support for local, state, and national partnerships; our dedication to ethical librarianship and library excellence; and our investment in the value equal access that is at the heart of a public library’s model of community ownership and sharing.

Missoula Public Library joins the ALA, the Montana Library Association, and libraries across the US in supporting intellectual and academic freedom, the Freedom to Read, and free and open access to information. The ALA’s Library Bill of Rights and Code of Ethics, which outline the right to intellectual freedom, protect our community from censorship, and document the values of librarianship, are incorporated in MPL’s policies. Staff and library users alike recognize these values as important for a democratic society. And when polled, Americans consistently demonstrate their support for ethical librarianship and intellectual freedom by rating public libraries among the most trusted institutions in their communities.

Because critics of the ALA have unfortunately centered much of this conversation around issues of sexuality and gender identity, Missoula Public Library wishes to reiterate the message that libraries belong to everyone. LGBTQ2S+ folks: you are welcome here. We oppose rhetoric that is intended to traumatize, dehumanize, or alienate LGBTQ2S+ Montanans, and we celebrate the vital contribution LGBTQ2S+ Montanans make to our library community and to this beautiful state’s diversity.

Missoula Public Library and the Montana State Library have worked together to bolster Montanans’ access to library services and resources since the State Library was founded in 1965. Professional development opportunities offered by the State Library help our workers grow in their careers and integrate best practices in their work, which in turn adds to the quality of life in our community. MPL’s librarians are often invited by the State Library to share invaluable technical expertise with libraries across the state who rely on the Montana Shared Catalog. Missoula is an important regional hub for a State Library-sponsored sharing consortium that gives library users in every corner of Montana equal and bountiful access to books and materials—regardless of a user’s economic background, political persuasion, identity, affiliations, or views.

Although Missoula Public Library is disheartened by the Montana State Library Commission’s decision, MPL will continue to benefit from and contribute to the nonpartisan mission of our State Library. We are grateful for the dedication of State Library staff. And we will always be in awe of what Montana’s libraries achieve together on behalf of their communities when they share respect, trust, and a commitment to intellectual freedom, open access, and inclusivity.