



# **Missoula Public Library Strategic Plan**

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*We acknowledge that the Missoula Public Library sits on the ancestral homeland of the Bitterroot Salish and Kalispel peoples. These lands were acquired by dispossession and attempts at deliberate and systematic destruction of Indigenous culture. We recognize that acknowledging the colonial past of Montana, and upholding Indigenous voices, helps us all to move forward collectively. Missoula Public Library commits to actively working to increase Indigenous engagement and access by providing a welcoming space on their homelands, which celebrates and showcases Indigenous voices through programming, art displays, our collections, and Salish language signage.*

**Credit: Aspen Decker of X<sup>w</sup>lx<sup>w</sup>ilt**

Photo from the K. Ross Toole Archives & Special Collections,  
Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Dear community member,

I'm so proud to share with you this new strategic plan for Missoula Public Library. This is a document born of collaboration. We heard your thoughts in online surveys, and met with all our staff, local stakeholders, and experts. This plan is our best attempt to craft everything we've learned into a smart, cohesive strategy that will guide our library into the future. It's a statement of who we are and what we stand for. It contains our highest aspirations and steps we'll take to achieve our goals. We hope this plan reflects and nurtures the spirit of Missoula County, *all* of Missoula County.

We know challenges lie ahead. In Montana, the freedom to read is under attack from those who try to censor and restrict our access to knowledge and materials. Social inequities and lack of representation persist. Some in our community feel too isolated, unable to access everything MPL has to offer. Our plan addresses these challenges, turning them into opportunities. Our deepest strength lies in our connection to the people we serve. This approach has always been at the heart of our success. We'll build on that to increase engagement and expand access to all those in the community who may be struggling.

Our plan is thorough but not exhaustive. We need something to inspire action right now and produce tangible results. Our plan will guide us while preparing MPL for emerging issues, based on the needs of Missoula community members. You're a vital part of this process so please continue to share your love and insightful feedback. Always feel free to reach out to share your thoughts with me. You can contact me at [slavenl@missoulapubliclibrary.org](mailto:slavenl@missoulapubliclibrary.org) or stop by and say hello when visiting the downtown library.

I feel wonder and excitement when I think about the opportunities that lie before us. As we move forward we'll aspire not only to meet your needs but also exceed expectations. With your help, we can use these strategies to create a future full of curiosity and connection, a future where we all thrive together.

**Slaven Lee**  
Executive Director



# OUR MISSION



**Spark Curiosity**



**Make Connections**



**Thrive Together**

***"The Missoula Public Library is a beacon of collaboration and inclusion. I am proud to see our library fulfilling their mission of being an open and accessible place of gathering and learning for all, and the Missoula community is better off because of it."***

**Devin Carpenter**

Director of New Student Success, University of Montana  
Missoula Pride Co-Director





## OUR VISION

**Missoula County is vibrant, creative, and healthy. MPL gives compassionate, inclusive service to all and is the first place everyone goes to learn, engage, innovate, and have fun.**



# OUR VALUES

## KINDNESS

- We promote the well-being of staff and the community
- We treat all people with compassion
- We seek to understand the needs of the people we serve

## REFLECTION

- We reflect the diversity of our community
- We actively listen to our community
- We are intentional in our actions and decisions

## INTEGRITY

- We act in ways that foster trust and confidence
- We are accountable to the community and to each other
- We abide by the ethical principles that define modern librarianship

## ACCESS

- We put people at the heart of all we do
- We support discovery and lifelong learning
- We commit to equitable access for all

## INNOVATION

- We anticipate changes and challenges and respond with agility
- We celebrate the creativity of staff and patrons
- We consider sustainable practices as core to our identity



## Strategic Priority 1

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community members express that they experience isolation, siloing of resources, the need for connection, and lack of time to visit the Library. Missoula Public Library will extend the Library's reach to underserved and geographically isolated populations by leveraging its branch network, developing new community resources, and expanding on the downtown flagship's "All Under One Roof"<sup>1</sup> model.



### INTENTIONAL SERVICES TO PRIORITY COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUTREACH<sup>2</sup>

- Assess greatest community needs in context of projected Library capacity.
- Determine and assign funding sources/uses for new outreach initiatives.
- Unveil first resource for expanded cross-town or rural Library access and launch first program/service for underserved population (e.g. Bookmobile).

### MORE WELCOMING SPACES FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS, TEENS, REFUGEES/IMMIGRANTS, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Co-create with priority communities to determine what modifications are needed and what additions would be helpful.
- Expand access by bringing elements of MPL to locations outside of the libraries through outreach (e.g. activities at Kyiyo Pow Wow) and passive programs (e.g. mini libraries at laundromats).
- Allocate more resources to branches for improvements, programs, collections, and signage.
- Provide staff training opportunities with an emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion and apply concepts to work tasks.



### DIVERSIFIED COLLABORATIONS AND INCREASED REPRESENTATION ORGANIZATION-WIDE

- Form Community Engagement Department to define collaboration options, develop outreach plan, and build and strengthen community relationships.
- Leverage the AUOR model and expertise of Partners to strengthen and expand relationships with priority communities and cultural organizations.
- Form Community DEI Advisory committee based on models established by local organizations like Missoula Food Bank and Community Center.<sup>3</sup>

### COMMUNITY-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

- Adopt a future forward and curious approach to anticipating trends.
- Develop mission-driven programs that spark curiosity; connect people to ideas, information, and each other; and contribute to a thriving community.
- Provide civic-oriented opportunities to participate in activities related to current affairs, community partnerships, and County-wide initiatives.
- Create better evaluation tools to understand the impact of programming and gauge MPL's response to the needs of priority communities.

## Strategic Priority 2

# CORE SERVICES

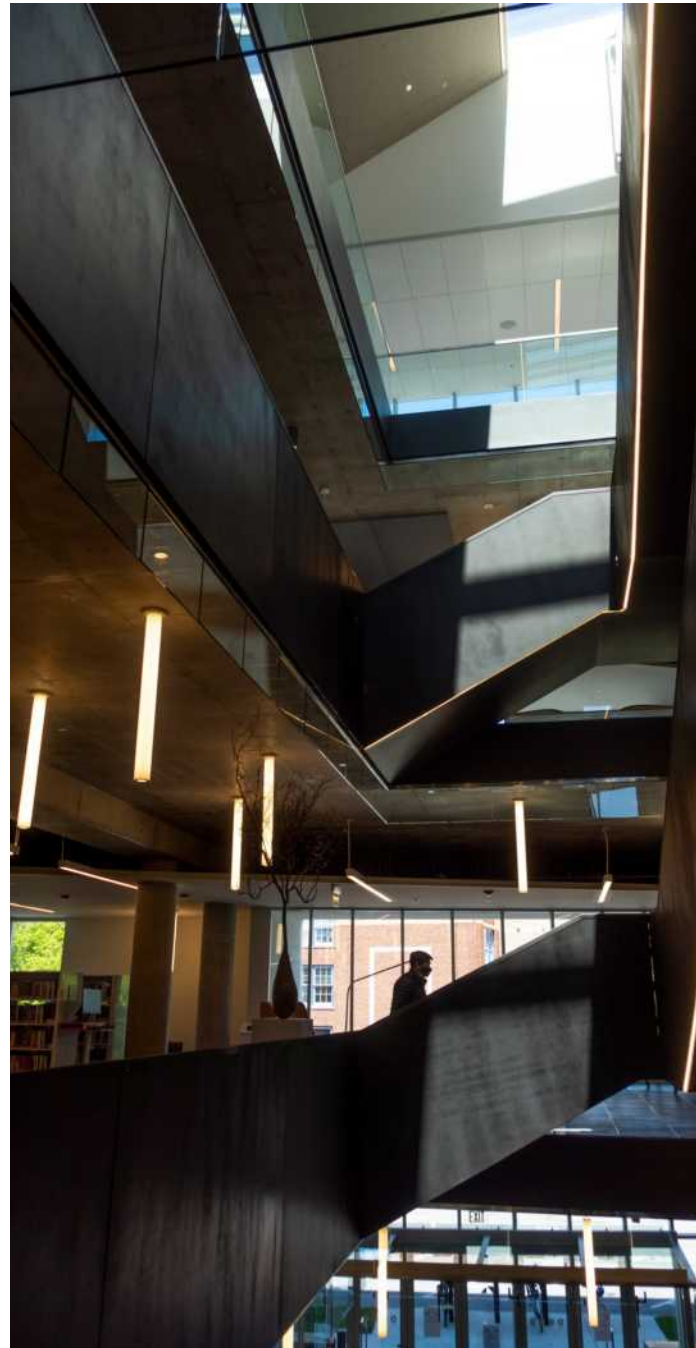
Adapting to Missoula Public Library's new base of operations presents unique challenges for the Library. These challenges are compounded by the growth in collection sharing obligations MPL experiences as a leader in the Montana Library Collective and Montana Shared Catalog. The Library will continue its commitment to meeting customer service expectations, improving collection access, maintaining efficiency, and leading in statewide projects.

### EASIER ACCESS TO MATERIALS AND SERVICES

- Continue to promote accessibility to resources via the website, video tutorials, signage, etc.
- Reassess points of service based on user experience design.<sup>4</sup>
- Provide statewide leadership for and collaborate with the Montana Shared Catalog and Montana State Library to improve systems, such as courier routes, catalog records, reports, and batch updates.
- Develop practices for effective merchandizing to formalize how materials are shelved and displayed.

### INCREASED ACCURACY AND SPEED IN CIRCULATION FUNCTIONS

- Evaluate procedures using the Lean<sup>5</sup> assessment to determine if and how many unnecessary steps are being taken in each process (e.g. PCI).
- Maintain automation tools so they work effectively.
- Recruit and train volunteers to support daily tasks, and reevaluate volunteer policy for best practices.



### RENEWED COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING PATRONS ACCURATE INFORMATION

- Keep up with emerging trends in patron-centered services (e.g. database subscriptions).
- Provide trust-worthy sources of authoritative information. Encourage independence through patron education and supporting information literacy.
- Renewed commitment to providing patrons accurate information.



### IMPROVED RESPONSE TO EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, SERVICE AUTOMATION, AND PRIVACY NEEDS

- Adopt a future forward and curious approach to anticipating trends.
- Create 3-5 year technology plan.
- Reevaluate IT budget.

### STAFF ENGAGEMENT

- Leverage staff talents, interests, and skills in innovation and improvement of library programs and services.
- Cultivate highly trained, motivated, and engaged teams by developing innovative resources and support, such as training plans, dedicated time for professional development, etc.
- Develop and strengthen internal communications and information sharing.



### MORE DIVERSE, RELEVANT, AND CURRENT COLLECTIONS

- Use vendor resources to enhance selection and provide collection analysis.
- Implement updated Collection Development policies.
- Abide by the American Library Association standards for Intellectual Freedom.<sup>6</sup>

## Strategic Priority 3

# SUSTAINABILITY & WELLNESS

Our community faces major challenges related to the intersection of ecological vulnerability, economic viability, and social equity. Missoula Public Library aims to create a holistic model of sustainability through resources and programs that address these resiliency issues.

### CERTIFICATION IN THE SUSTAINABLE LIBRARIES INITIATIVE PROGRAM <sup>7</sup>

- Provide training for MPL leaders and staff in operational sustainability, whole-systems thinking,<sup>8</sup> and the SLI's "triple bottom line" concept (environmentally sound + economically feasible + socially equitable).
- Establish a Sustainability Team, drawn from a cross-section of the Library's workforce and leadership, that will field recommendations and monitor the Library's sustainable operations goals.
- Assess MPL in the context of the SLI's certification criteria; begin and follow through on the certification process.



### STREAMLINED HEALTH/WELLNESS RESOURCES, LIBRARY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES, AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY TOOLS

- Develop a programming matrix that guides the Library to intentionally and consistently offer programs related to: (a) economic stability; (b) health and wellness; and (c) diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Establish one or two new collaborations with other community groups in each of these areas: health/wellness, economic stability, social equity.
- Work with staff to explore new and innovative ways to address workplace wellness, work-life balance, personal growth, and belonging.



### AN MPL ACTION PLAN FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY USE AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN CONJUNCTION WITH COMMUNITY-WIDE CARBON NEUTRALITY GOALS

- Assess the downtown facility's current energy performance, and compare to engineers' projections, 301 Main, and/or industry standards (2023).
- Work with City's Climate Action office, County's Sustainability Program, Climate Ready Missoula, and Climate Smart Missoula to determine MPL's role in broader community's net zero emissions goals (2023-2024).
- Identify short/long term goals for reducing fossil fuel reliance and increasing efficiency; finalize, publish, and launch an MPL five-, ten-, and twenty-five year carbon neutrality plan (2025).

### EXPERT MANAGEMENT OF DOWNTOWN LIBRARY'S ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS, ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING, AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

- Launch and complete effort to re-commission building's mechanical systems with engineering firm Morrison-Maierle.
- Partner more closely with County Facilities with an emphasis on achieving building efficiency and long-term sustainability.
- Increase training in various systems (HVAC, lighting, security, information technology) among relevant management and staff leadership.
- Explore the concept of a Facilities Advisory Team that draws from expertise internally and externally and can field issues related to building maintenance, property concerns, and design integrity.





# GRATITUDE

Gordy Pace, Strategic Plan Consultant  
Amy Capolupo, UM Office of Disability Equity  
Alex Kim, HereMT  
EmpowerMT Youth Group  
Barb Cowan, Partnership for Children  
Jenn Banna, UM Rural Institute Family to Family  
Lisa Davey, Missoula Interfaith Collaborative  
Spider McKnight, Six Pony Hitch  
Chris Young-Greer, Montana Racial Equity Project  
Meg Denny & Becky Margolis, YWCA  
Andy Nelson, Western Montana LGBTQIA+ Center  
Clair Bopp, Poverello Center  
Lisa Sheppard, Missoula Aging Services  
Megan Stark, Mansfield Library

Kelli Hess, (formerly) Missoula Food Bank & Community Center  
Lorna Buckingham & Taylor Stein White, Free Verse  
Western Montana Mental Health Center  
Josh Kendrick, Opportunity Resources Inc.  
Wilena Old Person, Missoula County Public Schools Trustee  
Library Staff  
Library Volunteers  
Library Board of Trustees  
Friends of Missoula Public Library  
The Missoula Public Library Foundation  
MCAT Media Resource  
Families First Learning Lab  
spectrUM Discovery Area  
University of Montana Living Lab

## NOTES

1. "All under one roof" (AUOR) is the moniker for the site-sharing partnerships between MPL and Families First Learning Lab, MCAT, spectrUM, and the UM Living Lab. AUOR is a unique collaborative approach to lifelong learning services inspired by the Swedish kulturhuset (culture house) model of librarianship.
2. MPL's priority communities include Indigenous individuals, teens, refugees and immigrants, and people with disabilities.
3. DEI: diversity, equity, and inclusion
4. User experience (UX) design is an empathetic process for creating a successful product or service through (a) conducting research, (b) defining problems, (c) brainstorming ideas, (d) developing a prototype, and (e) testing iterations.
5. Lean assessment: a management tool that (a) identifies value, (b) maps value stream, (c) develops flow, (d) establishes pull, (e) continuously improves.
6. American Library Association standards for Intellectual Freedom and the "Library Bill of Rights" can be found at: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>
7. Sustainable Libraries Initiative: <https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/>
8. Whole-systems thinking is a method for understanding how elements, facets, and surroundings are connected and influence each other.