

# STATE LAW LIBRARY OF MONTANA

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## Legislative Update – Program 3

The mission of the State Law Library of Montana is to provide legal information and resources, to enhance knowledge of the law and court system, and to facilitate equal access to justice, statewide.

### 1. Helping Montana’s citizens when they are in crisis.

When Montanans call, email, or visit the Law Library, it is usually not because they are having a good day. Our patrons are navigating the messy and hard parts of life: probate papers for the death of a loved one, a parenting plan for a family in crisis, neighborhood infighting over HOA rules, or the need for a temporary restraining order. We are an institution that helps citizens when they are in crisis. **Over the past two years, seventy-three percent (73%) of our patron interactions have been with members of the general public.** It is wonderful to have a job where we are helping people in need; additionally, we are improving the Judicial Branch’s efficiency and management of clerk’s offices and courtrooms.

Having a Law Library with open doors and open access to legal information is critical for a functioning democracy. In the United States, there are many court libraries that are closed to the public. We are proud to *not* be in that category.

### 2. Providing reliable, current, and freely available legal information to all Montanans.

Libraries reflect a community’s ideas, history, and aspirations. The State Law Library is charged with capturing and maintaining an accurate record of Montana’s legal landscape. We are the point of contact for all branches of government, County Attorneys, City Attorneys, private attorneys, and citizens when it comes to finding reliable legal information. We comprehensively collect, maintain, and make available Montana’s constitution, statutes, regulations, judicial opinions, and related resources. Additionally, we keep current federal laws, the laws of other states, treatises, and practice aids. The Law Library has served as a federal depository library since 1977, providing access to selected federal publications throughout the state.

The Law Library maintains a digital library with access to treatises on all major legal topics, including a series of books written for nonlawyers. **In 2023, the Law Library worked with our eBook vendor to open the digital library to all Montanans.** This has been a fantastic development in our mission to provide access to justice statewide. We only have one physical location; consequently, providing materials to all citizens in a geographically large rural state is a challenge. Opening the digital library to all who are interested has been a success for both citizens and our organization.

**Our commitment to making government information accessible is about to see a major upgrade in 2025 when our digital collections will include legislative histories from 1974 to the present.** Since the early-1970's, when Montana committed itself to open government, the Law Library staff has been arduously compiling legislative histories when requested. While not comprehensive, our collection is impressive, especially compared with the forty-nine other states. While these legislative histories have been stored in file cabinets for decades, they are some of our most sought-after resources, including requests from the Legislative Services Division. After years of scanning these documents, the Law Library is now building the digital infrastructure to make these valuable documents available to online users.

### **3. Collaborating with governmental departments to develop better lawyers.**

Our collection and services are empowering when they are being used; therefore, we are always building bridges with state agencies to help educate attorneys and staff about best practices when conducting legal research. We have developed working relationships in training attorneys/staff at the Office of the Public Defenders, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice (Appellate Division), and the Department of Revenue. **Montana's most powerful resources are our human resources, and the Law Library is proud to assist in developing our workforce.** When Montana's attorneys are doing their best work, we all win.

## Appendix A: Patron Statistics

### Patron Interactions

Patron Type	2023		2024	
	Transactions	Percentage	Transactions	Percentage
General Public	3369	76%	2257	70%
Attorneys	490	12%	468	14%
Inmates	234	5%	205	6%
Judicial Branch	194	4%	183	6%
State Employees	140	3%	143	4%
Totals	4427	100%	3256	100%

**Appendix B: Strategic Plan for the State Law Library of Montana**

# State Law Library of Montana | Strategic Plan

Fiscal Year 2024

Last Updated: September 26, 2023

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## Mission Statement

The mission of the State Law Library of Montana is to provide legal information and resources, to enhance knowledge of the law and court system, and to facilitate equal access to justice, statewide.

*Note: Located that the end of enumerated goals are the initials of the staff member(s) who has expressed an interest in leading or working on that project.*

## Access Services

The **Circulation Team** members act as professional guides who assist patrons in accessing our collections, resources, and services.

**Goal 1.** Generate and implement procedures for legislative history requests that address staff time and a reasonable pricing structure. (KP) (SG) (FR)

**Goal 2.** Train the circulation team to be able to manage interlibrary loan requests. (EM)

**Goal 3.** Investigate the SirsiDynix procedure of ending patron accounts after two years. Is there a set of procedures that would allow us to extend that timeframe? (EM)

**Goal 4.** Review our computer access policy. Is there a better procedure for allowing patrons to access our public terminals without requiring staff members to log patrons into machines? (EM) (FR)

**Goal 5.** Improve our communication with Montana judges. Generate an outreach campaign to set up Law Library accounts for all judges. (FR)

**Goal 6.** Generate staff profiles for the website.

## **Technical Services**

**Technical Services** acquires, processes, and catalogs resources; maintains our Integrated Library System (ILS); and plans for our Law Library's evolving collection.

**Goal 1:** Complete an inventory of our physical collection. (ST)

**Goal 2:** Generate a plan for updating location codes in the catalog. This will provide more accurate data about where materials can be found in our collection. (EM) (ST)

**Goal 3:** If our budget allows, explore the value/feasibility of purchasing and uploading Cassidy Cataloging for our digital holdings. (EM) (ST) (FR)

**Goal 4:** Generate and implement a plan to move select Montana resources from the Reserve section to the Montana section. This will allow for easier public access. (EM) (ST)

**Goal 5:** Review and update our online catalog for materials that have shifted from looseleaf (integrated) format to softbound (serial) format. Maintain a list of materials that are looseleaf to assist with making collection development decisions. (EM) (ST)

**Goal 6:** Review and edit (if needed) the Government Printing Office list of materials that we receive as a selective federal depository.

**Goal 7:** Continue the project of adding cover art to our catalog records. (EM)

**Goal 8:** Review our collection of legal treatises for outdated materials and call number ranges that could use new materials.

**Goal 9:** Investigate the purchase of a binding machine. (ST)

**Goal 10:** Review and discuss the statistics that employees are keeping on their technical services efforts. Are we keeping good statistics? What statistics would be valuable? (FR)

## Reference

The **Reference Team** provides resources and training to meet the legal needs of our diverse patron base. We deliver nonjudgmental, supportive, and efficient assistance through in-person, telephonic, and electronic communication.

**Goal 1:** Coordinate efforts with the Court Help Program to offer training videos on the website focused on basic civil topics such as family law, wills and estates, housing, and civil litigation. (SC) (FR)

**Goal 2:** Coordinate efforts with the Court Help Program to create reference tools for use at the front desk to help with simple forms and information requests. (SC)

**Goal 3:** Promote the Family Law Resolution Project in reference interactions, increase signage about the project, edit forms where needed, and assist the Family Law Resolution Project in planning informational videos for the public.

**Goal 4:** Update and condense the legislative history guide. (SC)

**Goal 5:** Work with the Access to Justice Commission's Forms subcommittee to review and update online forms. (SC)

**Goal 6:** Draft and implement a policy on reference requests from incarcerated individuals outside of Montana. (KP)

**Goal 7:** Work on clarifying the functions of the reference team and the Court Help Program. (SC)

**Goal 8:** Review and reorganize the forms page to make it more intuitive and easier for our patrons to access. (SC)

**Goal 9:** Generate a plan to coordinate and communicate with court clerks.

## **Digital Initiatives**

To meet the evolving legal information needs of Montana’s citizenry, we provide resources, services, and programming in **digital formats**.

**Goal 1.** Investigate increasing public access to our Digital Library. (EM) (ST) (FR)

**Goal 2.** If the budget allows, find ways to add more titles to the Digital Library. (EM) (ST) (FR)

**Goal 3.** Complete a comprehensive review our website for erroneous content and link rot. Generate and implement a plan to annually investigate the website to keep it up to date. (EM)

**Goal 4.** Generate a video tour of the Law Library and its services for our website. (FR) (ST)

**Goal 5.** Review the usefulness of our “chat bot” platform. Are there ways to expand upon its content? Do we like the chat bot? Is it being used? (EM)

**Goal 6.** Investigate ways that would allow for public printing in the reading room without requiring staff supervision.

**Goal 7.** Generate procedures for when the court is live-streaming events. That information should be highlighted on our homepage. (KC) (FR)

**Goal 8.** Edit and improve the Court Orders page on our website. (FR)

**Goal 9.** Generate a plan for whether Moodle (learning platform) should be used by the Law Library.



## **Outreach Services**

**Outreach** efforts generate awareness of our services and resources through education, information, and engagement.

**Goal 1.** Generate and implement a communication plan with public libraries across the state. (EM) (SG)

**Goal 2.** Create campaign to advertise to the general public (*e.g.*, posting fliers in public spaces, radio, online, etc.).

**Goal 4.** Host a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) event each month. (FR)

**Goal 5.** Generate a plan to work with the Montana State Library on Legislative Library night. (SG) (FR)

**Goal 6.** Generate a plan to host an introduction or legal research seminar for new attorneys. Work with Clerk of Court to provide information during swearing-in ceremony.

**Goal 7.** Generate communication strategy for the different types of Montana courts and Tribal Courts. (EM) (FR)

**Goal 8.** Generate procedures and distribution method for current awareness email to judges of the weekly legal news in Montana. (SG)

## **Collection Development**

The Law Library maintains a relevant and comprehensive **collection** that meets the information needs of our diverse patron base.

**Goal 1.** Review and revise the Law Library's Collection Development policy. (EM) (FR)

**Goal 2.** Review the Thomson Reuters contract on print materials. Complete a line-by-line review of the materials we purchase. Align this contract with our Collection Development policy. (FR)

**Goal 3.** Review the LexisNexis contract on print materials. Complete a line-by-line review of the materials we purchase. Align this contract with our Collection Development policy. (FR)

**Goal 4.** Generate and implement a weeding policy with a particular focus on our treatises, state laws, and federal materials. (ST) (FR)

**Goal 5:** Generate and implement a procedure for buying new books and advertising those items. (EM)

**Goal 6.** Collect and review data from SirsiDynix twice in the fiscal year. (EM)

**Goal 7.** Develop a policy for patron material requests. (EM)

**Goal 8.** Examine copyright protection and behaviors for valuable/popular items in our collection. (EM) (SC)

**Goal 9.** Contemplate and generate a long-term plan for our collection of law reviews. (FR)

## **Administration**

The Law Library's **administrative efforts** are focused on: empowering staff to meet or exceed professional goals; ensuring good financial stewardship; building internal and external relationships that help patrons and the Law Library; and assisting in short- and long-term programs that serve the Law Library's mission.

**Goal 1:** Reconfigure our internal bookkeeping procedures to be able to track account codes and set baselines for fiscal year spending from the different accounts. (KP) (EM) (FR)

**Goal 2:** Host brief monthly meetings with the Law Library staff about the department's budget. The goal of this initiative is to create fiscal competence in all our librarians. (EM) (FR)

**Goal 3:** Have a process for continually monitoring the strategic plan. (FR)

**Goal 4:** Generate and (attempt to) fund staff professional development goals.

**Goal 5:** Generate a procedure or plan for updating staff about Law Library functions on Teams. (FR)

**Goal 6:** Begin a process for future budget planning when our Thomson Reuters and LexisNexis contracts are up for renewal in 2025. What steps should we take to be ready for that budgeting timeframe? (FR)

**Goal 7:** Determine methods of assessing our services. (EM)

**Goal 8:** Plan social events for the staff, with a sensitivity to people's schedules and boundaries. (SG)