

February 6, 2023

Public Comment for House Bill 2 – Education & K-12

**Montana State Library**

- I am testifying today in favor of the State Library's request for e-resources. E-sources are an integral part for the success of students in college. Students use these resources in so many ways. To conduct research for papers, to look at newspaper articles, to get accurate statistics, to find information to answer health and wellness questions and the list goes on. By providing students with an authoritative source for information we help them to be able to identify what a quality resource looks like and allows them to become critical thinkers and process information in an information heavy world. This request by the State Library would help level the playing field across Montana for students K-higher Ed. At the higher ed. level, we currently spend a lot of time introducing these resources and getting students to the level they need to be successful doing college level course work. In the past when e-resources were provided to all libraries across the state there were very few students who had not been exposed to them and they could hit the ground running with their college work. When I went into a freshman class to conduct an information literacy session and would ask who had used a database to conduct research almost everyone would raise their hand. Now only a few students raise their hands. Thus, I spend valuable time explaining what a database is and we usually only get through the basics. Having e-resources available statewide will save Montana residents money. The average cost of accessing a single journal article according to research done by Duke University Libraries ([https://sites.duke.edu/library101\\_instructors/2018/09/05/paywalls-and-information-costs/](https://sites.duke.edu/library101_instructors/2018/09/05/paywalls-and-information-costs/)) is \$33.41. Just looking at our Ebsco Database access if our students had to pay the average cost to access full text articles, there were 6219 full text articles accessed between January and December 2022, it would have cost \$207,776.79. When they leave college, they will lose access to this valuable resource. If there were statewide access, they could continue to use this resource in their jobs, daily life, and lifelong learning. In a time when we are bombarded with so much information it is imperative that people have access to information that is authoritative and trustworthy. That is what e-resource access provides. Our students now are digital natives. They're not like us who learned another way and have adapted. They have a familiarity with and expectation of finding all the information they need "online." As such, e-resources are about meeting them where they are, to speak their language. Even if the same resource exists in print on the shelf, they do NOT excite our student researchers the way online full text does. They expect it. They want it. We should do everything possible to give it to them. I realize there are pros and cons to everything, but digital resources are undeniably the path of the future--why allow our citizens to lag behind and then play catch up later. We should just face these facts now and give all Montanans a leg up.

-Bobbi Otte