

Meeting of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Topic: Review of Learning and Future Plans

Friday, September 23, 2022, from 9:04 am to 2:35 pm

Meeting Minutes

Working Group members present: Maria Avery, Jeannette Bair, Catherine Delneo, Denise Hersey, Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, Andy Kolovos, Kelly McCagg, Karen McCalla, Susan O'Connell, Wendy Sharkey

Department of Libraries staff present: April Shaw, Josh Muse, Janette Shaffer, Tom McMurdo, Lauren Kelley, Karen Gravlin

I. Call to Order (9:00am-9:10am) [00:00:00]

Action: Meeting called to order at 9:04 am.

Roll Call of Working Group Members.

Catherine Delneo welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting and shared that information about attending the meetings either online or in-person at 60 Washington Street, Barre is posted in the agenda and online on the Working Group's webpage.

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/

II. Changes to the Agenda (9:10am-9:11am) [00:19:29]

Catherine asked Working Group members if anyone had changes to the agenda.

Hearing no changes to the agenda the meeting moved to the third agenda item.

III. Public Comment (9:11am-9:11am) [00:20:00]

There were no comments from members of the public.

Hearing no public comments, the meeting moved to the third agenda item.

IV. Approval of Minutes (9:11am-9:14am) [00:20:46]

Catherine moved into the next business portion of the meeting, agenda item four, the approval of the Minutes of the July 22, 2022 meeting on the topic of Staffing. The minutes had been posted online for review by Working Group members.

Explanatory document: July 22, 2022 (Draft Minutes)

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/WorkingGroup_2022_07_22_Minutes_Draft.pdf].

Susan O'Connell made a motion to approve minutes of the Working Group meeting of July 22, 2022. Wendy Sharkey seconded. All in favor, with none opposed.

The motion passes. The approved minutes of the July 22, 2022 meeting will be posted online.

V. Survey Development (9:14am-9:46am) [00:22:40]

Catherine recapped the conversation from the July 22, 2022 meeting related to conducting a Public Engagement Survey and a Staffing & Salaries Survey. As agreed to by the Working Group, Catherine had a preliminary conversation with a potential consultant and learned that each survey done with a professional consultant could cost roughly \$15,000.

The Working Group has \$12,000 that it could choose to allocate toward the Staffing & Salaries survey. The Department could cover the cost of the Public Engagement Survey.

The scope of work will need to be developed and formal quotes received before a final costs of each survey will be known.

The Working Group discussed funding and the process of coming up with the scope and questions for such surveys. Considerations include budget, timeframe, data that already exists depending on the type of library (e.g. Agency of Education data on school library staffing allocations and salaries), and the general variety of Vermont Libraries.

The Working Group consensus was to have an initial meeting of the Consultant with the full Working Group, and then potentially form a subcommittee to work more closely with the consultant in open meetings.

Working Group members would potentially get input from VSLA and Academic librarians before the Working Group finalized the survey with the consultant.

Qualifications of consultants were discussed, favoring experience in Vermont or a similar environment such as in rural similar states (Maine, New Hampshire, Upstate New York) and professional experience with this type of survey.

Kelly Mccagg made a motion for Catherine, as the working group chair, to create a scope and to engage consultant in survey development work, with the cost funded by the Working Group not-to-exceed \$12,000 for the Staffing & Salaries Survey.

Jeannette to approve the motion.

All in favor, with none opposed. The motion passes.

Kelly Mccagg makes a motion for The Vermont Department of Libraries to use funding solely from the General Fund for Public Engagement Survey.

Wendy Sharkey Seconded.

All in favor, with none opposed. The motion passes.

VI. Discussion of the Working Group: Programming (9:46am-10:44am) [00:55:20]

The Working Group discussed key takeaways from the oral on the topic of Programming as heard on Friday, Nov 12, 2021 and written testimony available online.

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/testimony_record

The group discussed the following regarding programming at Public Libraries in the state:

- The underlying issues of staffing, money, and space are relevant to the topic of programming.
- Programming draws people to the library who might not visit or use library services otherwise.
- Programming is a way to engage with community members on a cultural level with programs of quality as opposed to solely entertaining. Programming provides equitable socialization, education, empowerment, and belonging to various ages and economic backgrounds.
- Librarians tend to hear more community feedback about programming than collections.
- Programming can be used to share diverse voices and topics.
- Library programming is a community-building activity as programs provide a reason for people of different backgrounds to convene and communicate with one another.
- Children’s programming supports youth literacy and is an educational offering for the community, however the community is not always aware of that aspect of public library service.
- Library programming is an opportunity for learning without grading, whether after school, in conjunction with school.
- Programming shares information with community members in a non-evaluative and non-judgmental relationship.
- Staff time is needed not just to present programs, but to develop high quality programs and evaluate programs delivery and impacts.
- Partnerships with educational entities, VT Humanities, and local groups is popular.

The group discussed the following regarding programming at School Libraries in the state:

- High quality programs impact children in a variety of ways and can positively impact performance in other areas.
- In schools, like in public libraries, time, money, and staffing levels impact teacher librarians’ ability to provide rich programming for students.
- Demands on school librarians related to technology needs and Post-Covid behavior can negatively impact their ability to build and share rich programming with students.

The Working Group discussed if there was a common definition of “programming” at a school library. Karen McCalla shared her perspective that “programming” is a term used frequently in public libraries and much less frequently in school settings. She shared that she considers special events such as author visits to be “programming” in the context of schools – but that some library instruction could also be considered “programming”.

Karen articulated that losing a consultant for School Librarians was impactful and that it would be good to rerun that position either to the Department of Libraries or the Agency of Education. She also shared that there are currently no state standards for programming within school libraries.

Programming reflects the variety of Vermont's libraries as it can be "fiercely independent."

The Working Group discussed whether to highlight the best practices in programming within the report in order to create actionable takeaways or recommendations for the report.

The Working Group discussed that best practices might include:

- Consideration of the needs of community at every age: children, tweens and teens (manga, steam, stem, volunteerism), adults (citizen, language tech, workforce development), seniors (estate planning, will planning, memory, health, art, travel), programming for youngest should support learning needs (literacy).
- Programming time and location should meet the needs of the group the program is geared toward.
- Programming locations should be easily accessible and comfortable for group the program serves.
- Professional development and training around programming can support enhanced program offerings to the community.
- Partnering with community organizations and partnerships for speakers/authors. This could look like a librarian bringing an expert to connecting with the community (museum, art, state departments) or librarian sharing their expertise with the community in a non-library setting. It could also look like public libraries connecting with schools and after-school programs to connect youth with programs.
- Publicizing/Marketing sharing/collaboration.

Catherine shared that a question has been added to the upcoming Public Library Survey about funding for programming in public libraries.

Preliminary discussion of recommendations from the Working Group related to programming:

- Incorporate standards related to programming in future public library standards. Recommend standards be scalable to support community needs at libraries of different sizes.
- Importance of funding for programs (and all other topics)
- Reinstatement of a consultant for school librarians at the state level
- Raise the level of understanding about the importance of programming to public library board members and trustees.
- Recommend including mention of programming in mission statements of all libraries.

Next steps:

A report from VTLib on programming will be on the agenda at a future meeting (likely from Youth Consultant Jonathan Clark and Inclusive Services Consultant Karen Gravlin).

VII. Brief Recess (10:44am-11:00am) [01:53:36]

Recess called at 10:45. Recess adjourned at 11:00.

VIII. Discussion of the Working Group: Collections (11:00am-11:36am) [02:09:35]

The Working Group discussed the key takeaways from the oral and written testimony on the topic of Collections, as heard on Friday, January 14, 2022 and written testimony available online.

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/testimony_record

The group discussed the following:

- Library collections open doors for community members and are an essential element of library service
- Collections should reflect diversity in community and include materials that helps all community members feel seen and heard
- Collections decisions are local and based on deep knowledge of the community served
- People throughout the state deserve equal access to physical and online information and collections. However, Vermonters currently have unequal access to information resources because collections budgets vary significantly from municipality to municipality.
- Shared, statewide resources can help to bridge gaps in local collections
 - InterLibrary Loan
 - eBooks and eAudiobooks
 - Databases
- There's a desire for increased resource-sharing by Vermont libraries including having a statewide library card and/or a stateside ILS. That said, the discussion reflected that
 - it is likely there would be tension between local control and statewide control over resources and
 - increased statewide resources would likely require additional funding and staffing
- ILL and clover serve an essential function in the state in providing community members with access to library collections
 - (25) libraries in the state are not automated, which means their holdings are hard to access locally and aren't included in the ILL materials available statewide
 - Most unautomated libraries do not participate in ILL services, so are not drawing heavily on the resources of peer institutions
- There are extremely limited non-English language materials available in Vermont's libraries
- Providing access to collections that meet refugee populations' needs is challenging
 - Materials in languages to meet community needs can be difficult to find and select
 - Translation of English-language materials is sometimes effective
 - Community members may not be literate in their native language so recording materials may be needed (e.g. Bennington)
 - Cultural differences exist and community members who have recently moved from outside the US to Vermont don't always have a frame of reference for public libraries or understand what materials and resources they can access through public libraries
- Local library budgets impact how many physical and electronic items each library owns
- Local library spaces directly impact how many physical items libraries own.
 - Libraries that are small have very limited space to house physical collections
 - Large libraries can house physical collections with more depth
 - Small libraries often rely on larger libraries to provide materials to their patrons through ILL
- Multiplicity of formats - physical media vs digital, and the budget for these.
- Impacts of closure of the Department of Libraries' regional libraries in 2015
 - Overall reduction in the number of items available in libraries throughout the state

- The regional libraries served as repositories for collections and helped ensure that the patrons at small libraries could access materials without negatively impacting access to local collections by patrons of large libraries.
- Removal of the state's regional libraries placed a burden upon the larger public libraries without putting a new system in place. Larger public libraries now serve as repositories for the smaller public libraries, frequently providing materials to meet ILL requests from small libraries, but receive no funding from the smaller libraries they support or from the state for providing these services (with exception of Courier Grant).
- Work that was done by state staff in regional libraries to fill daily ILL requests now is done by staff at local libraries in addition to their local duties
- School and public library collections support school curriculums
- Staff time is needed to select materials and maintain collections
- Staff expertise is needed to select materials and maintain collections
 - Selection of children's materials (or other specific collections) can be challenging when local library staff aren't expert in that area – children's materials review provided by the state in the past was helpful
 - Selection of online and streaming content is challenging – support for collection development in this area would be appreciated
 - Selection of non-English language collections is a challenge due to limited bilingual library staff
 - Regional consultants helped some libraries to select and maintain local collections
- Staff expertise is needed to provide access to collections through the ILS
 - Training in cataloging is important to ensuring community members have access to materials libraries owned by libraries in Vermont
- Owning physical and electronic collections is not sufficient
 - libraries need to ensure that community members are aware of the collections they have (marketing/publicity/outreach),
 - provide community members with access to these materials (online catalog), and
 - help provide the tools community members need to use the resources (information literacy)
- Local history collections are important elements of many of Vermont's public libraries
- Physical audiovisual materials (CDs, DVDs) are still well-utilized in many Vermont communities
- eBook adoption is not as universal as the public imagines and isn't as generational as people might expect.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/01/06/three-in-ten-americans-now-read-e-books/>

Next steps:

A report from VTLib on programming will be on the agenda at a future meeting including a report on statewide ILL services, physical collections, and databases (availability and usage).

IX. Discussion of the Working Group: Facilities (11:36am-12:00pm) [03:45:50]

The Working Group discussed the key takeaways from the oral and written testimony on the topic of Facilities, as heard on Friday, March 25, 2022.

The group discussed the following:

- Many libraries in Vermont face space limitations – either not enough space or space that is difficult to use for today’s library services
- Many libraries face challenges adapting their existing physical space to meet today’s programmatic needs.
- Many Vermont libraries are in historic buildings, which can limit changes to the building and add to the complexity of space issues.
- Local budgets significantly impact ability of libraries to maintain and improve their buildings
- Deferred building maintenance can threaten the structural integrity of a library building
- ADA accessibility is important in all libraries as libraries serve their entire community
- Professional development is needed as many library directors lack formal training related to building maintenance and improvements
 - ADA Accessibility
 - Routine Maintenance needs of buildings
 - Historic preservation
 - Building Projects
 - Space planning
 - Funding/supports/resources available to libraries in Vermont
- There is often a lack of clarity of roles in public libraries around whether a foundation or a municipality is responsible for maintenance, improvements, and ownership of the library building
- School libraries should be large enough to accommodate class visits
- Access to restrooms is important in libraries of all types of
- Air ventilation and filtration has emerged as an important issue for libraries
- Meeting spaces are expected in new libraries but often were not included in old libraries.

Preliminary discussion of recommendations from the Working Group related to facilities:

- Include a community meeting room or area
- Standards for library size and/or collection space (scalable based on size of community served)
- A state inspection system, for a minimum standard of maintenance or building expert

Catherine called for a recess at 11:59.

X. Recess (12:00pm-1:30pm) [03:08:05]

Recess called at 12:00. Recess adjourned at 1:30.

XI. Discussion of the Working Group: Technology (1:30pm-2:00pm) [04:43:00]

The Working Group discussed the key takeaways from the oral and written testimony on the topic of Technology, as heard on Friday, May 20, 2022.

The Working Group discussed the following:

- There are close connections between the topics of technology and facilities as libraries need a physical technological infrastructure to support public use of the internet, access to online collections and the online catalog, and general computing

- There are close connections between the topics of technology and staffing including staff capacity and continuing education and training needs of library staff
- The technology comments included some discussion of online collections like databases, eBooks, and eAudiobooks
- Libraries provide the public with access to Broadband and WiFi
- The constant evolution of technology makes “learning it” a moving target
- Training of library staff is needed to better support the public in accessing and utilizing information
- Libraries can support the public with improving information literacy through one-on-one or group instruction
- Local budgets impact how robust technology is at each library
 - Funds for technology in school libraries vary by location and by school system
- Supports are needed by local library staff
 - in selecting equipment to keep current with changes and updates
 - in maintaining technology and systems
- Realtime, in-person IT support is a constant struggle for libraries
- Cyber security was not brought up in testimony but is an important topic for the Working Group to think about every library retains some Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and integrated library systems (ILS) and/or technological systems can be hacked.

Preliminary discussion of recommendations from the Working Group related to technology:

- The Working Group may wish to recommend that cybersecurity be included in future library standards

XII. Future Meeting Topics and Dates (2:00pm-2:35pm) [05:10:50]

The Working Group discussed the meeting schedule to accommodate the topics of interest to the group and ample time for report-writing as well as the topics that they wanted to focus on for those sessions.

Revised Calendar of Future Meetings:

- **November 18, 2022**
 - Survey Development with Consultant
 - Programming Overview by Dept. of Libraries staff
 - Collections Overview by Dept. of Libraries staff
- **December 16, 2022 ** Special meeting ****
 - Continuing Education Overview by Dept of Libraries staff
 - Public Testimony on Continuing Education
- **January 27, 2023**
 - Inclusive Services* Overview by Dept of Libraries staff
 - Public Testimony on Inclusive Services
 - Access to Public Programs and Services Overview by Dept of Libraries staff
 - Public Testimony on Access to Public Programs and Services

*“Library service to individuals with disabilities”)

- **March 24, 2023**
 - Social Services in libraries
 - Public Testimony on Social Services
 - Emergency Preparedness in Libraries
 - Public Testimony on Emergency Preparedness

- **May 26, 2023**
 - Library Structures and Organizations

- **July 28, 2023**
Survey Findings with Consultant
- **September 22, 2023**
Final Recommendations and Report Writing

- **November 1, 2023: REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP DUE**

- ~~November 17, 2023~~ - Cancelled

Next Steps:

Christopher and Andy offered to assist Catherine in writing summaries on topics for inclusion in the report to the Legislature.

XIII. Adjournment (2:35pm) [05:44:00]

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lauren Kelley, Technical Services Librarian, Vermont Department of Libraries

Please note all time stamps are recorded as: Hours, Minutes and Seconds with annotation as [HH:MM:SS].

The full recording can be found at: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group