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Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

I have worked in Vermont libraries since 2002, in very small libraries, and now a larger library. I have worked in Incorporated libraries and municipal ones. Have I ever felt the library I worked in or directed was adequately staffed? No. Do I think staff members are adequately paid as related to professional development? Again, no.

The St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, for instance, does not presently have an IT person on staff. I made the choice to add a half time outreach position to be able to increase our work with children of homeschool families, daycare centers, and other allied organizations. We need both positions. Where will the money come from? There is no funding bucket waiting to be dumped onto the 184 public libraries in Vermont. I do not believe one is forthcoming.

So I make this proposal: increase the number of persons working for the Vermont Department of Libraries.

All libraries in Vermont depend on the great people of VTDOL. Just last week an employee met with me and an Athenaeum volunteer to discuss interaction between Northeast Kingdom Libraries and Communication Union Districts regarding near and future IT needs. I know Josh Muse did not have an extra hour in his schedule to meet with us but he graciously did so because he has knowledge in this area, and like every other member of the Department of Libraries, he is working unbelievably hard on our behalf. I am keeping this note short but I could thank every person at VTDOL.

I have worked in Vermont long enough to remember when the Department of Libraries was three or more times its current size. I am also aware that the Green Mountain Library Consortium was founded during a time when the Department of Libraries could not or would not take on needed initiatives. The current members of the Department work very cooperatively with GMLC, and many other organizations, to bring benefits to libraries we cannot afford individually. I cannot say enough about how much VTDOL accomplishes with so few folks.

Honestly, if someone creates a pot of money as a result of this study, pour it all over us. If the money is a lot more modest, fund additional positions at the Vermont Department of Libraries. We will all be the beneficiaries.