

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

Topic: Continuing Education

Friday, November 18, 2022, from 9 am to 3 pm

Meeting Minutes

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

VTLIB staff members present: April Shaw, Janette Shaffer, Tom McMurdo, Lauren Kelley, Tonya Ryals, Joy Worland, Jonathan Clark, Joshua Muse, Karen Gravlin

Guests present: Deborah Ehler-Hansen, Bree Drapa, Johnny Flood, Wendy Martin, Cassie Willner

I. Call to Order (9:04am-9:05am) [Part 1 - 00:00:00]

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

Roll Call of Working Group Members.

II. Public Comment (9:05am-9:05am) [00:03:38]

Catherine Delneo called for public comment.

There were no comments from members of the public.

As a reminder to the public and Working group members, the Working Group website can be found here: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/testimony_record

Testimony can be found at:

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

60 Washington Street, Barre in person attendance is available.

Hearing no public comments, the meeting moved to the next item.

III. Approval of Minutes (9:05am-9:14am) [00:03:49]

Catherine Delneo moved into the next business portion of the meeting, which was the approval of past meeting minutes.

Supporting document: September 23, 2022 (Draft Minutes)

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/2022%2009%2023%20Minutes%20Working%20Group%20DRAFT.pdf>

Catherine Delneo asked Working Group members if there were any proposed changes to the meeting minutes, hearing none, Catherine Delneo made a motion to vote to approve the previous meeting minutes of the Working Group meeting from September 23, 2022.

Wendy Sharkey approved the motion to vote on accepting the minutes.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup seconded the motion.

The group voted unanimously, and the minutes were accepted.

The Working Group discussed the best practice for sharing out the availability of the minutes.

Catherine Delneo asked members to share out the minutes to various Vermont library email groups.

- Susan O'Connell offered to post minutes to the LibStaff Listerserv for Public Librarians and share with VLA.
- Maria Avery offered to identify the best email group to use to send minutes out to academic libraries.
- Meg Allison offered to share out with the Vermont School Librarian Listserv.

IV. Topic Overview: Continuing Education for Library Staff (9:14am-10:00am) [00:10:13]

Guest: Joy Worland, Continuing Education & Small and Rural Libraries Consultant, Vermont Department of Libraries

Supporting Presentation can be found here:

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

Certificate of Public Librarianship Program: This is a state-specific program to supplement the library workforce (aspiring librarians, working librarians, directors, board of trustees members) as there is no graduate program in-state for a Masters in Librarian and Information Sciences degree. The ability to attend meetings virtually that developed during the pandemic, along with increased promotion has boosted enrollment, and the program has been growing steadily since Joy joined the Department in 2018.

9:31am [00:27:35]

Guest: Tonya Ryals, Governance Consultant and management, Vermont Department of Libraries

Supporting Presentation can be found here:

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

The Vermont department of Libraries offers training and support (digital and physical resources, live and asynchronous) for Library Board of Trustees and connection to uphold the LSTA Grant Five-Year Plan for the Vermont Department of Libraries and Vermont State Statute Title 22.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments on both presentations.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup asked about compensation for participants of programs and considering this as a diversity incentive as a possible recommendation. He also asked if training materials address book bans or materials challenges? These topics are being considered for trustees and have been offered to staff.

Jeannette Bair brought up the contention between if Continuing Education (CE) should be on paid time or not, especially for one staff libraries or part-time librarians, with a focus on time and training considerations from front desk workers.

Kelly Mccagg brought up the qualification of the consultants for the Vermont Department of Libraries and the importance of CE.

Wendy Sharkey brought up maintenance of CE or longevity of the training as a possible recommendation.

Catherine Delneo suggested that the working group could recommend that CE be considered by a future group that reviews public library standards.

Joy Worland stated that there are individual libraries that require their staff to do a certain amount of CE each year.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup brought up the friends and trustees in person conference that had occurred previously.

V. UVM School Media Specialist Program Overview (9:56am-10:30am) [00:52:18]

Guest: Deborah Ehler-Hansen, Coordinator of the School Library Media Studies Program and Lecturer, University of Vermont

Supporting Presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/ContinuingEd/University%20of%20Vermont%20School%20Library%20Studies_11_18_2022.pdf

Presentation begins at [00:55:45] after technical difficulty.

The UVM School Library Studies Sequence Graduate training program is the only in-state program, within the Department of Education at The University of Vermont, for training school librarian specialists. The program supports state of Vermont Agency of Education Standards and the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards. The program recognizes the intersection of Teaching & Learning and Librarianship, and aims to aid in the current statewide school Librarian shortage. Currently, participants may have to take it out of sequence and class sizes are over capacity.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Susan O'Connell asked for clarification of the requests from the presentation.

Meg Allison inquired about the ALA accreditation of a MLIS from UVM.

Jeannette Bair asked what percentage of courses are online. Deb responded that 12 hours of class time is online. At least since 2012 there has been a hybrid approach, with the program being largely online with in-person components.

Susan O'Connell inquired whether UVM has any undergraduate LIS course opportunities, as seen in other states.

VI. Public Comment on Continuing Education (10:32am-11:15am) [01:28:00]

Testimony can be found at:

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

10:32am [01:28:38] Cassie Willner, Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF) Program Manager

CLiF does book distribution and grant opportunities. There's consideration of the capacity of librarians or trustees to write grants and the potential hurdles of that process. Professional Development opportunities (for VT and NH) from CLiF are The Annual Community Literacy Conference and the Bi-Annual Rural Library Conference which offer 4.5 hours of training and has worked well virtually.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Catherine Delneo asked how many libraries per year get chosen for these grants. Cassie Willner responded that for the rural grant program, there are 12, with 6 in each state, and for the at-risk grant program (a community one-off grant) there is not a concrete statistic. Cassie also spoke to how CLiF is sustainably funded.

Jeannette Bair wondered about evaluation of grant requests. Cassie Willner explained that there are many evaluation points (location, need, frequency, qualitative, photos/stories).

10:49am [01:44:42] Jonny Flood, Literacy Programs Manager, and Wendy Martin Vermont Early Literacy Initiatives (VELI)

The goal of VELI is to improve cognitive content of libraries' early literacy programs (mostly manifested by intentional storytimes). 98 libraries during 2010-2020 were trained in many topics, with connections to childcare providers. Vermont Humanities now houses VELI, and the program was pivoted by the Covid-19 Pandemic, with a cohort of 11 libraries. A one-size-fits-all approach is not the approach for Vermont libraries. The program works to facilitate partnerships between librarians to each other and Vermont Humanities.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Susan O'Connell asked specifically for plans to introduce VLIE to a new cohort. Jonny Flood responded with a definite yes, and with a focus on longevity with expansion of the cohort program.

11:00am [01:56:50] Bree Drapa, Westford Public Library Director

Bree highlighted the connections developed for her in the certification cohort through the Vermont Department of Libraries. The certification came at no cost to the library or librarian, and should remain free and available to all. She highlighted the importance of longevity of continuing education and being a lifelong learner. A big positive has been the consultants externally that are brought in and community partners for workshops and webinars. Via VELI, being able to support and educate childcare providers has been important work in the community. No in-state MLIS program is a problem, as is the cost for online (a nonpreferred medium personally) programs. Bree Drapa highlighted that there is lots of in-state talent and gave compliments to Joy Worland!

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Meg Allison amplified harnessing the expertise that is in the workforce and wondered about the potential for a scholarship fund for continuing education.

Bree made the point that programs need to remain updated and stay with current trends (changing landscape and community need).

Kelly Mccagg gave kudos to Bree Drapa for the creativity and ability of being a “solo-ish librarian” and shared that with much experience to be gained from being on the job, obtaining a masters degree doesn’t seem necessary for many public librarians in Vermont.

Wendy Sharkey, Catherine Delneo, and Bree Drapa mentioned some of the skills that benefit from a master’s program course or from on the job learning and discussion on the pros and cons of the different professional development routes.

11:19am [02:15:01] Meg Allison, School Librarian, U32 High School, Montpelier

Professional development goes hand in hand with school librarianship for being re-licensed, and something similar for public libraries would be great. Years of licensure depends on credit hours completed (conferences, coursework, etc.). Continuing Education can be inequitable for school librarians and teachers with differences in different districts. The Vermont Information Technology Association Conference (Vita-Learn), VSLA and VLA spring conference, Professional Learning Communities are all utilized by school librarians for continuing education.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup brought up the cost prohibitive situation of continuing education (nation-wide), some places require CE which costs money and time, and you then do not get that back in the job.

Catherine Delneo asked for clarification about requirements for school librarianship in Vermont – and whether school media specialists require School Media Endorsement and a teaching degree in Vermont. Meg Allison expanded upon Vermont requiring the School Media Endorsement and that the Agency of Education offers a transcript review process to determine qualifications to teach in the school library. Different states in the northeast have different certification.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup noted the “our love of local control” and so there are not standards across the board.

Discussion of the group around the current requirements for school media specialists and whether every school in Vermont must provide students with access to a school library and school librarian.

Susan O’Connell and Catherine Delneo shared that there may be some schools/ school districts that believe they do not need a school media specialist due to small size of their student body.

Deborah Ehler-Hansen stated that the school library requirement does not seem to be enforced, and that there are several schools without school librarians, and recommended looking into this further.

VII. Recess (11:38am-1:00pm) [02:33:39]

Recess called at 11:38am. Recess adjourned at 1:00pm.

(1:00pm-1:03pm) [Part 2 - 00:00:00]

The Working Group returned from recess and roll was taken.

VIII. Department of Libraries' LSTA 5-Year Plan (1:03pm-1:30pm) [00:02:23]

Guest: Janette Shaffer, Assistant State Librarian for Advancement, Department of Libraries

Supporting Document: Vermont's Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027)

<https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/state-profiles/plans/vermont5yearplan.pdf>

The Library Services Technology Act Grant Five Year Plan for 2023-2027, administered through the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant's to State Program. Priorities of the 3 goals of this plan need to match up with the grant's priorities, the governor's priorities, and the department's priorities. Every state has one of these grants. The Needs Assessment section, addressing the status of libraries in the state and surrounding area, was created with a consultant.

Working Group members asked questions and were able to give comments.

Catherine Delneo added that an assessment of needs has been done for each of the Department's 5-Year plans, so there could be some use of previous plans in collecting the trend of needs in the state.

Catherine Delneo shared that not all states receive all available funding for all the proposed years and that the Department of Libraries must be good stewards of federal funds to ensure our state keeps receiving all available federal funds. Catherine Delneo noted, when VTLib makes grants and allocates LSTA funds, the grant program and its deliverables need to line up with the goals of the state's LSTA 5-year plan. The high bar with federal reporting is important for the Department to meet.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup noted the similarity between this and the National Endowment for the Humanities for the Vermont Humanities Council and how they have a 100% match. Christopher asked how IMLS Grants to States funds fits into the overall budget of the Vermont Department of Libraries?

Catherine Delneo, Janette Shaffer, and Tom McMurdo expanded that approximately one third of the budget comes from the federal LSTA funds. Funding goes towards staff and services, including the Vermont Online Library databases. This is an approximately 50% match which is typically general funding from the State of Vermont and the Department's Smith funds (but can be any non-federal funds).

Catherine Delneo noted that the Needs Assessment can be surprising and each element needs to be looked at carefully to understood in the context. For example, Vermont's number of Interlibrary Loans across state lines is very high, which might look like a positive, but it means that no library in the state had the material that was requested (especially in light of having a high print materials per capita from The Public Library Survey). Another metric that can be misleading is the number of volumes held by libraries. While Vermont ranks high in this category, the consultants who worked with the Department believe that the average age of collections in Vermont is quite high and that the large collection size per capita likely reflects a need for deferred maintenance of library collections (weeding).

Another federal activity, the Public Library Survey, provides as a good source of information about where Vermont ranks along with other states and the country.

Supporting links:

Vermont Grant Program: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grants-state/state-profiles/vermont>

Overall Grant program for States and territories: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grant-programs/grants-states>

Five Year Grant Evaluation: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grants-state/five-year-evaluations>

IX. Discussion of the Working Group: Continuing Education (1:42pm-2:45pm) [00:41:43]

Catherine Delneo noted there is a written testimony from a long time school librarian, Judith Kaplan, who did not share oral testimony and asked working group members to review that testimony.

Susan O'Connell commented that online Continuing Education was highlighted positively, but that she hears a fair amount of negative reaction to virtual-only CE options. She stated the need for that perspective to be considered, especially as there is some engagement lost through doing things only online.

Wendy Sharkey noted that part of Bree's testimony was about being in person to make contacts and get support of peers, rather than doing it online. There are pros and cons no matter which way you do it.

Catherine Delneo shared that she believes the Department of Libraries now serves more people and from a wider geographic area, but that it would be helpful to look at the numbers of participation over time. Virtual trainings can be recorded and watched after the course while in-person trainings cannot. The Department can also share links to the recordings out, reaching a wide audience. The gold standard might be a hybrid meeting that gets recorded. The first Wednesdays program via the Vermont Humanities Council might be an example of being able to have hybrid depending on different factors.

Kelly Mccagg plans to submit written testimony. She noted that a lot of her thoughts have been reflected in what has been heard from others. She reiterated the continued friction between people with MLIS and Certificate holders. Kelly also shared that the Vermont Library Association (VLA) offers in-person continuing education and is partnering with The Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) to host a joint annual conference in 2023. The 2022 VLA unconference illustrated different perspectives: the Ditching Dewey workshop for example, where she learned a lot from other librarians.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup feels very mixed about all virtual. Positive aspects include the accessibility (an example being with the connections between VELI and Never Too Early and home daycare providers the access for them is huge). Christopher also pointed out the positives: that virtual training has less of an ecological impact and that there's less of a time commitment when no travel is required to attend training and the negatives: the culture of being online even when you're sick, Zoom or virtual fatigue is real, and community relationships can be hindered.

Meg Allison likes having a menu of attendance options available. Satellite cohorts along with in person days is the model that was put in place before the pandemic at UVM. Without fiber optics and the state infrastructure, it's a problem to ask everyone to be online. Judy Kaplan's testimony that talks about the report on the NEA Grant, which VLSA is discussing the sustainability of that program.

Susan O'Connell reminded all that this is not an either/or situation. You can do both. The human connection is important, especially to connect and meet people. She also did an online MLIS program with an all-online cohort. Providers do not need to choose one or the other.

Catherine Delneo noted that at VTLib planning trainers, outside consultants, workshop lecturers, or authors, are more affordable when virtual. She noted that the Department's reduction from six regional facilities to just one central Vermont office means that it is hard to gather physically in each region. Catherine shared that the national average of public libraries that have a person with a MLIS is 45.53% vs VT's number being 15.43% (from the LSTA plan). She reiterated the tension between having the degree or not. She also talked about how the MLIS perpetuates itself – states with masters in library of science programs seem to have more degreed librarians and higher wages. She also talked about the high cost of making a program at UVM (staffing levels and qualifications of staff required for ALA accredited) and whether that is really feasible in our state.

Meg Allison brought up how the way the current system is hampers the diversity of the workforce. If there was a program in-state people might stay (housing shortage noted), and advocated for the pay of lecturers.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup reiterated the issue of adjunct faculty being compensated or not compensated. He also brought up the jobs librarians do that aren't covered by a degree (historical building management, nonprofit building, running a small nonprofit in a community that is under resourced etc.) and how many libraries rely on your friends groups along with management your local town budget.

Wendy Sharkey brought up the regard for the Certificate Program, the image of it isn't as regarded as an MLIS. She wonders if that has to do with the trustee training and believes the image should be bolstered.

Catherine Delneo reiterated that the certification program is intended for those entering the library profession with little or no training. Work experience is valuable and it is experience coupled with the certificate program that might be more equivalent to having a masters degree.

Susan O'Connell stated that the Depart of Libraries Certificate Program fulfills a specific need and that a degree should be more general. They are different and they should be.

Wendy Sharkey stated that the the certificate program needs to be bolstered so that trustees and those who are running the libraries understand the true value of the certificate – and that the masters degree might not be a requirement for many positions in Vermont.

Catherine Delneo brought up that the goal of the Vermont Department of Libraries Public Library Certificate program is to gain the basics of the field. There may be things that librarians want in the certificate program that the Department cannot fulfill. Part of the program also puts importance on bringing in experts from out of state and trying to connect libraries to experts in different fields. The idea that there be some continuing education, tracks, or more specialization could be something to look into. Catherine posed the question: What are the areas that need more training? The Working Group has heard a lot about the needs for technology and youth services trainings, for example.

Meg Allison wonders if there's a program that could partner for a MLIS.

Catherine Delneo polled the desire for training on technology, early literacy, nonprofit management (Christopher suggested), adult literacy (Wendy suggested), mentorship for experienced librarians (Susan), preparing for pushback/policy and procedure (Meg), trauma informed library practices (Meg), and social-emotional learning (Meg). Catherine brought up Touch-Point training, as SF public library did. The Working Group could make recommendations about enhancing and expanding training in these areas.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup noted that collating all trainings might be helpful.

Susan O'Connell noted that it can be overwhelming, but after a one-on-one talk with a mentor your attitude can change.

Meg Allison it can be a lot to ask for participation in workshops and conferences, an additional challenge is lack of coverage.

Catherine Delneo says that when staffing gets tight training takes a hit. When recommendations are to be made the Working Group should bring up to boards the importance of trainings and using paid time for CE.

Meg Allison wonders what the number of libraries that use the CE program is.

Josh Muse was called on and commented that based on the most recent annual report, about 90 libraries reported hours for folks who have completed the certification.

The Working Group concluded this discussion and moved on to the next agenda item.

X. Future Meeting Topics and Dates (2:45pm-2:53pm) [01:44:25]

The Working Group discussed a possible change to the January meeting date – Catherine Delneo will make a Doodle Poll to the working group to look into whether this meeting can be rescheduled.

The Working Group decided to add a new meeting focused on the topic of Intellectual Freedom. The Department will also share an overview on the topic of collections during that meeting.

Calendar of Future Meetings:

December 16, 2022 – Special meeting, Survey Development with Consultant, Programming Overview by Dept. of Libraries staff

January 27, 2023 – Inclusive services and access, with presentation from Karen Gravlin from VTLib.

March 24, 2023 – Libraries & social services and Emergency Preparedness

May 26, 2023 – Library Management, Structure, and Organization

July 28, 2023 – Survey Findings with Consultant

September 22, 2023 - Final Recommendations and Report Writing

November 17, 2023 – Report Due

XI. Adjournment (2:53pm) [01:52:41]

Respectfully submitted,

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