

Report from the State Librarian Catherine Delneo to the Vermont Board of Libraries 4/11/2023

Annual Public Library Survey (PLS)

The Department is currently conducting its annual Public Library Survey. This survey, which state library administration agencies administer on behalf of the Institute of Museum and Library Services is used to rank and benchmark public library services provided in US states and territories. Through the PLS, the Department gathers information from individual public libraries on numerous topics including finances, collections, circulation, and programming.

Technology Consultant Josh Muse puts in a significant effort coordinating the PLS for the Department each year. This year, Josh is offering direct support to those who have issues with the final “edit check” step of the survey submittal process and is also providing additional support to those libraries that have not completed the PLS in recent years.

This year the Department did significant work aligning our survey questions with the language in the national survey. While states have some discretion about the exact wording of their questions, many states use the same language, which enables them to compare the responses they receive with those of other states with a higher degree of accuracy. Because we recognize that the survey wording can be confusing for respondents, we provided libraries with additional materials and by hosting a webinar when the survey launched.

States can add to the set of national questions based on their local needs. This year, we included questions to address data needs identified by the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont including a series of questions about the age of library facilities. When developing new questions, the Department used other states’ questions as a model.

The rate of return for this survey by Vermont’s public libraries is typically around 84%. While a return rate of 84% would typically be a strong response to a survey, the return rate in other states is so high that we are typically ranked in the bottom three states for participation in this national survey conducted by IMLS.

We have extended the deadline for public libraries to respond to the PLS to **April 15th** in hopes that we will increase participation. Gathering the 2022 responses from libraries takes on special importance in light of the efforts of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont.

The Department of Libraries currently provides access to Vermont’s PLS data via our webpage. We hope to incorporate this data into the state’s Open Data Portal in the near future.
https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public_statistics

IMLS makes all data from all responding states and territories available on its website. The data and ranking tables available on the IMLS website typically lag by two years (e.g. 2020 is the most recent year posted now). <https://www.ims.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey>

Public Library Trustee Training

Considering that each public library has at least 5 trustees we estimate that there are at least 1,000 library trustees in Vermont! The Department recognizes that strong public libraries require knowledgeable library board members and so regularly hosts trainings and workshops to support library trustees in their work.

The Department typically hosts Trustee Training each year after Town Meeting Day, when many new public library trustees are elected across the state. As our Operations Consultant position is currently vacant, this year Joy Worland offered to step in to provide the training and share her expertise with the library trustee community. As always, Joy did an excellent job preparing for and delivering the training on March 23rd, which was very well attended.

During the training, Trustees were provided with an overview of resources available to support them in their work. The training introduced library trustees to relevant state statute and the framework within which public libraries operate in Vermont. Topics included the roles, duties, and responsibilities of public library trustees, resources for trustees of municipal and incorporated libraries, library policies, confidentiality of patron records, intellectual freedom, records retention, and running meetings.

The Department has received many questions about the differences between municipal and incorporated public libraries in recent months, and had also heard from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns that they were fielding a number of similar questions. For that reason, we tried to incorporate more information in this year's Trustee Training to highlight the similarities and differences between Vermont's two types of public libraries – and to provide resources specific to each type.

Vermont Youth Book Award Voting

Nominees for all three student-choice literary awards, the Red Clover Books Award, the Vermont Golden Dome Book Award, and the Green Mountain Book Award were announced at the Vermont Library Conference on Monday, April 4th by Youth Consultant Jonathan Clark and members of the book awards committees.

Student voting began on April 6th and will take place through May 4th. The Department will announce the winner of the three awards the second week of May.

Last year nearly 18,000 students cast votes and the Department hopes to engage even more of Vermont's youth in participating this year! Voting submission forms are posted to the pages for each award. <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/youth-services-children-and-teens/vermont-youth-book-awards>

2023 Vermont Library Conference

The Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) and the Vermont Library Association (VLA) held a joint conference in South Burlington on Monday, April 4th. This year's joint conference theme, "Be the Place: Libraries Are for Everyone," reflected the shared goal for all librarians to create inclusive, accessible, exciting, and sustainable spaces both in-person and virtual.

Department staff were well represented throughout the day through presentations, facilitating roundtables and group discussions. State Librarian Catherine Delneo and Assistant State Librarians Janette Shaffer and Tom McMurdo delivered a presentation on the upcoming capital project funding. State Librarian Delneo then introduced keynote speakers Jane Lindholm and Melody Bodette of Vermont Public's "But Why?" podcast. State Librarian Delneo and VLA President Kelly McCagg then co-presented a two after outreach session to solicit feedback from VLA and VSLA membership related to the efforts of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries. Jonathan Clark, Youth Services Consultant, introduced the three youth book award committees' youth book award nominees. Joy Worland, Continuing Education Consultant, presented the Certificate of Public Librarianship to five graduates. Worland also facilitated a panel discussion on library career paths. Josh Muse, Technology Consultant, April Shaw, Government Services Consultant, and Lauren Kelley, Technical Services Consultant, introduced our respective vendor-partners Gale and Lyrisis for their presentations. Karen Gravlin, Inclusive Services Consultant, introduced the conference ending-keynote Jason Broughton, Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.

The Department table was bustling throughout the day and was well-placed at the top of the stairs in the convention center so that department staff could greet and engage with members of the library community. Department staff were happy to see Board of Libraries members Maxie Ewins and Adriene Katz, who were in attendance.

Palace App Includes New Collection of Non-English Books

The Department of Libraries has leveraged IMLS ARPA funding to create a collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks in multiple languages that is available to Vermonters at via the Palace Project App. This collection includes materials in the most common non-English languages spoken in Vermont including books languages spoken by many refugees resettled in the state. The Department added 217 Arabic books, 61 Farsi books, 326 French books, 161 Spanish books, 62 Ukrainian books, 104 Urdu books, and 83 Vietnamese books. In addition to materials in non-English languages, this online resource of more than 1,000 items includes resources for English language learners.

This online collection of books is a part of the Department's approach to bolster shared, statewide resources to support local public and school libraries in serving communities of migrant workers, existing refugees, and new Americans in the state, at no cost to participating libraries.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/find-books-and-more/ebooks-and-audiobooks/palace-project-downloadable-books-all-vermonters>