

## Vermont Library Facilities

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

March 4, 2022

Vermont library buildings are public spaces that need to be maintained because these facilities are the center of communities and are meant for all members of the community. At the Fairfax Community Library in Fairfax, Vermont, the library is a joint Public and PreK to Grade 12 School Library. The library facility is in the school building with direct access from a parking lot as well as access through the school. As the public librarian at this library, I find that one of the strengths of my library facility is that it offers daily opportunities to meet the intergenerational needs of patrons with visits from patrons of all ages from school children to retired townspeople. We often have townspeople who visit during the school day and will comment on how much they enjoy feeling a part of what happens in the local school when they are in the library.

My library needs more room for programming so that we can offer programs in a separate space where presenters and participants can have a higher level of noise or physical activity. Examples of these types of programs in the past have been live music programs and yoga classes. Having a dedicated program space that could be separated from the rest of the library would minimize the impact of programs on other patrons who visit the library. This is a problem because at times there are patrons who visit the library when they are looking for a quiet space to read or work.

The best improvement to our library facility was an outdoor wifi access point that provides a free internet connection when parked in the parking lot. Before this access point was installed, internet access for community members was only available inside the library and was limited by the hours the library is open. It helped our patrons/staff/community by allowing anyone to access the internet at any time from the parking lot. Since many of our patrons do not have reliable internet service at home, this allows them to connect to family members, search for jobs, and access health care on their device in the library parking lot.

I think all Vermont library buildings need to offer a safe and welcoming space that provides a variety of services and materials in the physical environment that support equitable access to information, an inclusive library environment, and a diverse collection. Vermont library buildings are public spaces that need to be maintained because these facilities are the center of communities and are meant for all members of the community. A few examples of the types of services and features that are important would be a collection of books displayed on accessible shelving, ramps and elevators for access to and within the facility, as well as a facility that promotes warmth, health, and security for all users.

Respectfully,

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