

Comments on Inclusive and Accessible library Service for the Working Group on the status of Libraries in Vermont

Ruth Shattuck Bernstein

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Libraries today are increasingly central to our communities' vitality. Given all the many challenges and changes of this time, the need for the very things we provide so well is increasing. We offer programs, services, and resources to often hard to reach populations. Libraries are community centers, a space where everything is ALWAYS FREE for EVERYONE; clearly one of the most equitable spaces of society. We fill the void for community togetherness everyday and at special events; we share connections to resources of all sorts; provide the most personal service you will find; and are an environmental and economical way to share resources between all community members. Perhaps most importantly; we are always here, whatever you need or whoever you are, we are here to help or chat anytime. For the community members who might not see or talk to another person all week, or feel isolated raising kids through a pandemic, or have lost a loved one, or love learning and books, or not have access to the internet, or need to save money on movie streaming, whatever else; we are always here for you!

Here at the tiny (but-tons-of-heart!) Salisbury Library, we offer 24/7 wifi, computer use, physical books, movies, games, puzzles, ukuleles, snowshoes, game cameras, seeds (very popular!), a 'Little Free Library' out front, and much more. E-books, audio books, movie and show streaming, and more are available virtually. And to access all of this we offer stepside anytime pickup, delivery (including to child-cares and residential living facilities in town), interlibrary loan, and general technology support and troubleshooting!

This summer we also partnered with a number of local agencies to really expand on our mission of providing equitable access to resources. With HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects) we were able to offer free produce to anyone! This was hugely popular and very well used by our community. When I first contacted HOPE to set this up, they were immediately enthusiastic. I see libraries as great satellite locations for service agencies to provide resources to rural communities. HOPE indicated they have been looking for ways to reach more people in our community and the partnership benefited everyone and potentially serves as a model of what a central role libraries can and should play. Another local nonprofit ended up joining us too with a FREE snack truck and wonderful company.

We offer many other events; performances and shows, an annual (hugely popular) local photo contest, programs with the school, book clubs, storytimes, StoryWalks on town trails, wild edibles and foraging walks, holiday parties, author events, and much more. Without a town library these services, programs, and resources would all be further remote and mostly inaccessible to our small, rural community, with many people living in poverty.

We are thankful for your support.

Ruth Shattuck Bernstein

Librarian

Salisbury Free Public Library

802-352-4198

[*https://salisburypubliclibrary.wordpress.com/*](https://salisburypubliclibrary.wordpress.com/)

[*www.facebook.com/SalisburyLibrary*](http://www.facebook.com/SalisburyLibrary)

[*https://www.instagram.com/salisburyfreepubliclibrary/*](https://www.instagram.com/salisburyfreepubliclibrary/)

Open:

Tuesdays 10-6pm

Thursdays 1-4pm

Saturdays 9am-12 noon

Step-side pickup and delivery available

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