

## **State Librarian's Report to the State of Vermont Board of Libraries**

For the October 11, 2022 meeting of the board

Catherine Delneo, State Librarian and Commissioner of Libraries

### **Hiring Update**

The Department is conducting interviews for a Library Communications and Administrative Coordinator position in the Advancement team.

The position of Executive Assistant to the State Librarian has been vacant since September 17, 2022. The position was posted on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and applications were accepted from is October 9<sup>th</sup>. The job was advertised on the State of Vermont's site, the Department's website, and on Seven Days.

### **Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont**

The working group met on July 22<sup>nd</sup> on the topic of Staffing. The working group heard from nine individuals provided comment on this topic during the meeting and fourteen provided written comments. The minutes of this meeting can be found at

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Working%20Group 7 22 22 Minutes.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Working%20Group%207%2022%20Minutes.pdf)

The working group met again on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The agenda began with a resumption of discussion on the topic of survey development, which had been touched on at the end of the July meeting. The working group voted affirmatively on a motion to allocate up to of the \$12,000 funding provided for their work by the legislature toward working with a consultant to develop a salaries and staffing survey. The group was also tasked by the legislature with gathering feedback from Vermonters about library services. As the funding allocated to the working group is not sufficient to fund two surveys, the Department of Libraries has offered to fund this statewide survey, which falls within the Department's scope. The group voted in favor of that approach and authorized the State Librarian to develop preliminary scopes of the surveys and work on contracting with a consultant through regular state processes. Per the group's discussion, the aim is to work with a consultant that has experience in Vermont or a similar environment with small libraries serving rural communities (e.g. Maine, New Hampshire, upstate New York).

The group then went on to discuss takeaways and learning from their November 2021 meeting on Programming, the January 2022 meeting on Collections, the March 2022 meeting on Facilities, and the May 2022 meeting on Technology. The draft minutes of this meeting can be found at <https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/2022%209%2023%20Minutes%20Working%20Group%20DRAFT.pdf>

## **Budget Development**

Initial budget proposals are due to the Governor on Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. This year, departments have been instructed to submit a budget proposal with no more than a 3% increase. The Department of Libraries is submitting a budget that meets that requirement and is also submitting a second version of the budget with a request for additional funding to support the annual purchase of materials for correctional and psychiatric facilities and a modest increase to accommodate the rising costs of online databases.

## **Intellectual Freedom**

This year, Banned Book Week was held from September 18-24 with the theme “Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us.” In recent years, there has been a rise in challenges to library materials across the country and 2021 saw the most book challenges of any year since ALA began tracking this metric 20 years ago. While book challenges used to be local in nature, they now can include coordinated calls organized across regions or the nation to remove specific books from library collections. In 2021, 729 challenges to materials in public, school, and university materials were tracked by the American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom. Challenged titles frequently featured or were written by people of color and members of the LGBTQI+ community. <https://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/state-of-americas-libraries-special-report-pandemic-year-two.pdf>

This year’s Banned Book week included a number of ALA-hosted programs to support library professionals, library supporters, and intellectual freedom advocates. <https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2022/09/american-library-association-highlights-increasing-censorship-attempts-during>

In an opinion piece published in the Washington Post on September 30<sup>th</sup>, Deborah E. Mikula, Executive Director of the Michigan Library Association, and Loren Khogali, Executive Director of the ACLU of Michigan, put out a call to the American public to stand up against censorship in libraries.

They wrote, “Libraries fill a role central to any functioning democracy: upholding the rights of citizens to read, to seek information, to speak freely...It is especially crucial to serve people who belong to traditionally marginalized groups — such as the LGBTQ community — which have historically been underrepresented in the publishing industry.”

Mikula and Khogali lauded the Board of Directors of a public library in Jamestown, Michigan who have stood firm against those who called to defund the library if the board would not remove nearly 90 books with LGBTQ themes from the library’s collection. Instead, the library board has gotten the matter on the ballot in November.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/10/02/jamestown-patmos-library-defund-book-bans-lgbtq>

The Department of Libraries supports local libraries in locally determining which materials meet the needs of the community they serve. We recommend that library staff and trustees work together to develop clear collection development policies and procedures for responding to materials challenges. Because library programs can also be challenged, we recommend that library staff and trustees develop programming policies as well. We also encourage libraries to include a wide variety of materials to meet the varied interests of their many community members, and to develop inclusive collections that reflect the diversity of their communities and the world we live in.

Intellectual Freedom Resources for Libraries:

American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom Challenge Support

<https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport>

Vermont Library Association Intellectual Freedom Toolkit

<https://www.vermontlibraries.org/ifc/ift>

Vermont School Library Association Position Statement: Why Do Vermont School Districts Need Materials Selection Policies? <https://vsla.wildapricot.org/Ma>

### **InterLibrary Loan (ILL) Update**

In July, the Department provided the annual opportunity for libraries to join the courier network, through which ILL materials move throughout the state. Effective October 1<sup>st</sup>, four more libraries have joined the courier network: Abbott Memorial Public Library (Pomfret, VT), Bethel Public Library, Fairlee Public Library, and Manchester Community Public Library.

The courier network now includes 134 libraries in the state: 123 public libraries, 7 school libraries, 3 academic libraries, and our own Department of Libraries.

The Department provides public libraries that participate in the courier network non-competitive grants of \$571.35 to offset the costs incurred through participation in the Courier network.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/ILL/courier>

Libraries that opt not to participate in the courier network are able to access materials owned by other libraries. They do so by sending and receiving items via US mail.

Patrons can see the collections of Vermont's automated public libraries and several schools online via Clover, the Department's online interlibrary loan system. Community members can also borrow materials that aren't available from libraries in Vermont by placing a request for the item through their local library. Local libraries route those requests to the Department of Libraries where Library

Assistant Linda Willis-Pendo process these requests through WorldShare ILL, a global network, with the help of Library Clerk Vance Asselin.

April Shaw, Government Services and Reference Librarian for the Department, coordinates statewide ILL service and has done a fabulous job of increasing participation in this service. Lucie Fortier, the Contracts and Grants Administrator for the Department, has been hard at work completing all of the state's grant processes for each of the libraries that applied for courier grants this year. We appreciate her expertise and her efforts!

### **Vermont State Employee Book Club**

Thanks to support from Vermont Humanities, this fall the State Employee Book Club returns! We are reading **The Most Costly Journey: Stories of Migrant Farmworkers in Vermont Drawn by New England Cartoonists**, which is this year's Vermont Reads title. Any state employee can join this virtual book club.

### **Author Jason Reynolds**

The Department of Libraries co-sponsored two events put on by Vermont Humanities that brought best-selling author Jason Reynolds to Vermont to talk about writing the book **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You**. Reynolds spoke about his journey to write this work, which is a reimagination for a teen audience of Ibram X. Kendi's work **Stamped from the Beginning**. On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Reynolds spoke to a packed house in at Middlebury College. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, Reynolds and a panel of teens addressed students from Burlington, South Burlington, and Winooski schools at the Flynn Theater. Both events were free, ticketed, and sold out – and they both were live-streamed to enable Reynolds to reach a broader audience throughout Vermont.

One attendee of the event at the Flynn said, "Jason Reynolds reaches and resonates with nonreaders and disengaged learners, and speaks straight to their soul. He provided 'windows and mirrors' opportunities for our community and our students [who] need more of these enriching cultural moments. He was an absolute pleasure!"

Another attendee commented, "Jason's candid nature with students was impressive! For our first "field trip" post pandemic, it was great to have someone who spoke to kids like they're the most important people. He showed deep respect for young readers and truly seems to understand why his work is so important."

### **Departmental Outreach**

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, the Sherburne Memorial Library hosted its **Fairytales Festival** in Killington Vermont. Library Director Jane Ramos put a lot of time and energy into organizing the event, which returned for the first time since 2019. Librarians from around the state convened in Sherburne to



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bring fairytales to life in each of their booths. More than 850 people attended the event, which took place on a beautiful, crisp fall day. The festival is a real celebration of creativity and enthusiasm for reading, and it was a real joy see so many kids and families participating in crafts and games with fairytale themes. I had the opportunity to be “Queen for a day” at the event and knighted more than 100 kids, who will now defend the fairytale realm by continuing to read, read, read!

<https://www.facebook.com/VTfairytalefestival/>

Assistant State Librarian Janette Shaffer, Inclusive Services Consultant Karen Gravlin, and Technical Services Librarian Lauren Kelley tabled at the **Pride Parade and Festival** in Burlington. They promoted libraries in general, shared information about the ABL library’s services for blind and print disabled Vermonters and gave out free books and rainbow VTLIB stickers to hundreds of visitors to the Department’s table.

This Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, Assistant State Librarian Tom McMurdo, Continuing Education Consultant Joy Worland, and I will be tabling at **Hispanic Heritage Day** on the statehouse lawn. We’ll be giving out books and Department of Libraries stickers so if you’re in the area, please drop by and say hello!