

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

For the April 12, 2022 State Board of Libraries meeting

By Catherine Delneo, Vermont State Librarian and Commissioner of Libraries

### **Hiring Updates**

**Catherine Delneo**, State Librarian effective February 13, 2022. Most recently Catherine served as the Chief of Branches for the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) in San Francisco, California overseeing 27 neighborhood branch libraries. She had been at SFPL since 2006 and previously served as Assistant Chief of the Main Library and as the Park Branch Manager at SFPL and spent eight years in the Somerset County Library System in Bridgewater, New Jersey. Catherine has an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Vassar College and a Masters of Library Service from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

**Tonya Ryals**, Governance and Management Consultant, effective February 28, 2022. Tonya has recently relocated from Northeast Arkansas and brings 14 years of public library experience to this position. She has extensive experience working with library boards. Most recently, she was the director of a multi-branch library in Arkansas. Tonya attended Williams Baptist University and was an English major. She obtained her Masters in Information Science from the University of Michigan.

**Lauren Kelley**, Technical Services Librarian, effective March 28, 2022. She is from Hinesburg, Vermont and has worked as a cataloger at the Stowe Free Library and Burnham Memorial Library. She received her Master's in Library and Information Sciences from Syracuse University and studied philosophy at St. Michael's College for undergrad.

**Executive Assistant Search** continues.

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

The working group met on March 25<sup>th</sup> to hear testimony from staff of Vermont's libraries on the topic of Facilities. Per the bill establishing the working group, the working group "may study whether library facilities and buildings could be improved with regard to energy efficiency, flexibility, human health and safety, historic preservation, and intergenerational needs."

Through these meetings, we are developing an improved sense of library services throughout the state. Tom McMurdo did good work in convening the Working Group and beginning the process of gathering testimony and engaging library professionals from around the state in sharing testimony. The video of the four meetings is available online through the working group's page and the Dept of Libraries' YouTube channel.

During the March 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting eleven (11) members of the library community provided testimony and a total of twenty-two (22) individuals provided written testimony, which is available online.

We are working to elevate the working group's online presence, by creating a link directly to the working group's page from the VTLIB homepage. Information on how community members can provide testimony on the various topics within the working group's purview.

Upcoming meeting dates:

- Friday April 29<sup>th</sup> from 10-11am to discuss work processes.
- Friday May 20<sup>th</sup> from 9am-11am and from 1pm-3pm. Topic: Technology.
- July 29<sup>th</sup> time TBD. Topic: Staff.

### **Legislative Update**

Through the Capital Bill, Governor Scott has requested \$15.9 million dollars of federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan) funds to states in support of capital improvements to Vermont's public libraries that would ensure Vermonters have internet access needed to perform core functions such email communication and virtual medical and legal appointments. In Vermont and across the country, there has been a demonstrated need for high-speed internet access throughout the COVID19 emergency, which highlighted the consequences of the digital divide. Vermont's public libraries provide many community members with their only access to fast broadband needed for video calls and other online services, so this funding would ensure that libraries have resources to improve and/or continue to provide internet access. We envision the projects could range from the addition of ramps or other ADA improvements to improvements to HVAC to improve air circulation and filtration.

Of the \$15.9 million included in the Capital Bill, the Department of Libraries included \$900,000 to fund two limited-service positions that would help our team to administer this funding while continuing the other important work we already do in our department. The Capital Bill has been approved by the House and is now with the Senate.

### **Request for Congressionally Directed Spending**

We've been hearing from libraries around the state that their aging facilities are in need of maintenance and/or updates so that staff can provide the public with modern library services. We know that the need for renovations and improvements in Vermont's libraries likely exceeds the \$15 million requested through the Capital Bill, and that not all capital improvement projects will fall within the scope of the federal ARPA funds sought through the Governor's Capital Bill.

We also know that many of the improvements needed will be smaller projects, in the 4-6 figure range, so aren't likely recipients of the Congressionally Directed Spending funds.

For that reason, the Department of Libraries has requested \$10 million of Congressionally Directed Spending funds through Senator Leahy's office. Our hope is that if we receive this federal funding we can subgrant them out to public libraries throughout the state.

### **IMLS ARPA FUNDS**

VTLIB received \$2,135,819 in ARPA funding this year through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Grants to States program.

VTLIB has already disbursed more than \$900,000 to 163 public libraries across the state through the **Grants to Public Libraries for Equipment and Supply Purchases** program. These funds we received through the IMLS were leveraged by local public libraries to purchase equipment so they can provide continuous library service to their communities during the COVID19 pandemic.

The Vermont Department of Libraries (VTLIB) is about to issue a *second round* of the [IMLS ARPA Grants](#) to public libraries for specific purchases. We will make over \$300,000 in total grant funding available to public libraries for one-time purchases (pending VTLIB and IMLS approval\*). The grant application for this program opens later this week on April 15<sup>th</sup> and our team will host an informational session that day to support libraries around the state in applying for this funding. [https://libraries.vermont.gov/ARPA\\_PL\\_2](https://libraries.vermont.gov/ARPA_PL_2)

While Vermont's public libraries may request additional equipment, we are strongly encouraging that they use this funding to enhance their Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, New American, ADA, or multi-lingual library collections. We're also encouraging people to request funding for formal diversity audits from a reputable company.

VTLIB is also leveraging these one-time IMLS ARPA funds to purchase collections for each of Vermont's six correctional facilities, allocating \$8,000 in collections to each site. Additionally, VTLIB is reaching out to other state institutions we routinely support to offer a collections refresh. These purchases will aid in restoring access to print materials to these underserved community members, whose access to library materials was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

### **Summer Reading**

This year the Summer Reading theme is "Oceans of Possibilities"!

To support programming for youth at public libraries across the state our team at the Vermont Department of Libraries has been busy processing \$300 grants to public libraries that apply and are eligible for this grant funding.

### **Vermont Board of Libraries webpage**

Proposal to update the Vermont Board of Libraries webpage so that it is easier to navigate and has current information available with fewer clicks.

The recommendations for improvement include:

- Listing each of the elements of the “naming packet” separately
  - State Librarian letter re: naming (update w/ my name and signature)
  - VT State Statutes relevant to naming
  - Geographic Naming Petition form
  - Geographic Naming Signature form
- Adding an email address and phone number at the Department of Libraries instead of a “contact us” form
- Adding a “supporting documents” PDF for topics with additional resources at each meeting (e.g. naming)
- Add full list of meeting dates and times for the year (every 3 months on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday) so board and community members can plan attendance at meetings in advance.