

## **Report from the State Librarian Catherine Delneo to the Vermont Board of Libraries**

July 9, 2024

### **Department Staffing Update**

The Department is happy to welcome Mark McClary to our team. Mark will join us in the Library Contracts & Grants Administration Manager position supporting the Capital Projects next Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. Mark comes to the Department of Disabilities Aging and Independent Living in the Agency of Health and Human Services.

We expect to post the Grants Specialist position, another limited-service position that will support the Capital Projects in the coming month.

### **Public Library Capital Projects Update**

The Department continues to process applications for the highly competitive U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries grant program. We understand all who applied are eager for updates and decisions from this multi-step and multi-agency assessment process.

Please rest assured that we are diligently working on the evaluation of all applications and hope to make grant awards this summer.

We appreciate the communities' continued patience as we work through this selection process, which remains confidential under the Vermont Public Records Act until awards are determined and grant agreements are executed. Updates will be published to this page when publicly available.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/capitalprojectgrants>

### **Act 150 (S.220)**

Senators Hardy and Gulick introduced S. 220 - An act relating to Vermont's public libraries in response to the report of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont, which was submitted to the House and Senate Committees on Education in November 2023. During the session, the State Librarian was called on frequently to provide information to the Senate Committee on Education on the bill. Governor Scott signed the bill into law on June 3, 2024.

Leaders from the Vermont Library Association and the Vermont School Library Association worked in concert with the Department on this landmark legislation in support of Vermont's libraries. In a statement from the Vermont Library Association applauding passage of the new law, VLA President Oceana Wilson said, "Vermont has set a new precedent by integrating public accommodation laws directly into library policies, reaffirming libraries as foundational pillars of democracy and inclusivity."

Much of the bill went into effect on July 1, 2024, including a change to the age of confidentiality of library records (decreased from age 16 to age 12) and clearer language about the duties and roles of both incorporated and municipal public library trustees in managing public libraries.

The sections of the bill related to the updated duties of the Department, including the authority to develop model policies for public libraries, will go into effect on January 1, 2025.

Effective July 1, 2025 all public and school libraries in the state will be required to adopt materials selection policies and procedures for reconsideration that comply with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and State and federal civil rights and antidiscrimination laws.

Act 150 (S.220) As Enacted:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/ACTS/ACT150/ACT150%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

Act 150 (S.220) Bill Summary:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/ACTS/ACT150/ACT150%20Act%20Summary.pdf>

On June 5, 2024, the Department hosted a webinar for the Library community and provided a walk-through of the bill, which responded directly to many recommendations of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont. <https://libraries.vermont.gov/2024-changes-library-state-laws>

Department staff have been supporting staff and trustees of public libraries big and small in adjusting to the changes Act 150 brings. Operations Consultant Kevin Unrath and Consultant for Small and Rural Libraries, Joy Worland, have hosted round table conversations and consultants have made space for conversation about the law in recent county meetings of library directors. The Department encourages libraries to implement “evergreen” policies that refer to state statute rather than stating an age. This type of flexible, adaptable policy would require less revision should the age of confidentiality change in the future.

### **FiberConnect Sunsets**

The FiberConnect network, which served as a successful bridge for many communities in Vermont, providing them with high-speed internet access until internet service providers were available to serve them locally sunsetted on June 30, 2024. Josh Muse, Consultant for Library Technology, did excellent work overseeing the grant program that supported 40 libraries in transitioning over to local internet service providers.

### **Upcoming IMLS Visit**

The Department welcomes Cindy Boyden, its Senior Program Officer for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Program. Cindy will meet with staff of the Department and Agency of Administration Finance Staff next week, and will tour libraries in the Northeast Kingdom, Washington, and Addison Counties. Assistant State Librarian Janette Shaffer, the Department’s LSTA Coordinator has taken the lead in coordinating the visit and preparing documents and materials for review during the three-day visit.