

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

July 12, 2023

Staffing Update

We are pleased to announce that Kevin Unrath has joined the Department of Libraries staff in the role of Consultant for Library Operations on May 22, 2023. Kevin's duties include supporting public library Trustees and Board Members in their work and supporting library staff with operational processes like strategic planning, budgeting, and building management. Kevin most recently served as the Director of the Pierson Library in Shelburne and brings many years of experience to his new role.

The Department now has its full complement of 18 permanent, full-time staff members.

Annual Public Library Survey (PLS)

This spring, the Department conducted its annual survey of public libraries across the state – the Public Library Survey (PLS). This survey, which state library administration agencies administer on behalf of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is used to rank and benchmark public library services provided in US states and territories. Through the PLS, the Department gathers information from individual public libraries on numerous topics including finances, collections, circulation, and programming. Data from this survey will also be used by the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont in their report to the Legislature later this year.

This year, 154 libraries completed the survey or 83%. This was a 5% increase over the number of libraries that responded to the survey in fiscal year 2022 and is aligned with the response rate that the Department had achieved pre-COVID. Because we are very interested in getting survey data from all public libraries in the state, this year we extended the deadline for submission by 15 days, did some additional direct outreach to public libraries that had not responded in previous years, and provided those public libraries with additional supports. The Department is glad that the return rate has reached pre-COVID levels and will strive to increase participation in this important survey in future years.

Technology Consultant Josh Muse has done the lion's share of work on this survey and report. Josh submitted the preliminary report to IMLS and will respond to any questions they may have before they finalize the data, and we make it available to the public on the Department's website.

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public_statistics

IMLS makes all data from all responding states and territories available on its website. The data and ranking tables available on the IMLS website typically lag by two years (e.g. 2020 is the most recent year posted now). <https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey>

Public Library Capital Projects Grants

Since the last Board of Libraries meeting, the Department received word that the U.S. Department of Treasury has granted the State of Vermont \$16.4 million in Capital Project funds toward capital improvements to Vermont's public libraries. These ARPA funds will be distributed to communities in Vermont by the Department of Libraries through a competitive grant process.

As you'll recall, the Department also received a grant award of \$10M from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the Congressionally Directed Spending process and received word of that award in late December 2022. These funds will also be distributed to communities in Vermont by the Department of Libraries through a competitive grant process.

Because we want to develop capital project grant programs that meet the actual needs of Vermont's communities, the Department conducted a Capital Projects Needs Assessment from February 28 through April 15, 2023. This Needs Assessment provided public libraries statewide with an opportunity to share information about their existing and anticipated capital improvement needs.

The link to the Needs Assessment is still live so that public libraries that have not yet responded have additional time to provide the Department with information about upcoming capital project needs.

Libraries that already completed the Needs Assessment and wish to supplement or correct their submission are not required to fill out the entire form again, but may send additional information and corrections to lib.capitalgrants@list.vermont.gov

In the longer term, information provided in the Needs Assessment may also be used by the Department to understand future funding and resource needs. Importantly, the information gathered through the Needs Assessment may also be utilized by the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont, which is tasked with studying library facilities. <https://libraries.vermont.gov/upcoming-capital-project-grant-funding-opportunities>

The Department has participated in events held in each of Vermont's 14 counties at which the Administration shared information about ARPA funding

The Department plans to have open a combined application for both Capital Projects Grants in the fall of this year.

The Department is in the process of recruiting for two full-time, limited-service positions to support both federally-funded Capital Grants projects.

Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Since the last Board of Libraries meeting, the Working Group has met twice. On April 21st it met on the topic of Intellectual Freedom and on May 26th it met on the topic of Library Structures and Organizations.

Board of Libraries Chair Tom Frank presented to the Working Group at its May meeting to provide an overview of the role of the Vermont Board of Libraries.

Those interested in watching the meeting or reviewing the presentations or written comments shared with the Working Group can find these materials on the Working Group's website: <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont>

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held on Friday, July 28th and will focus on the topic of safety in libraries. This topic that was added to the scope of the Working Group at the request of the House and Senate Committees on Education during the 2023 legislative session.

Summer Reading

Summer Reading is underway at libraries across the state! The Department of Libraries facilitate the participation of public libraries throughout Vermont in the national Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP). Through the Department's contract with CSLP, public libraries in our state have access to a summer reading programming manual that includes graphics, booklists, and programming resource ideas. Through the Department's contract, public libraries in Vermont also have access to professionally developed and printed graphic promotional pieces.

This year, the CSLP's theme is All Together Now and focuses on themes of kindness, friendship and unity. The CSLP graphics feature youth with diverse backgrounds celebrating the joys of reading together.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/youth-services-children-and-teens/summer-reading-program>

The Department's goal for this program is to provide centralized resources to public libraries and alleviate some of the administrative and creative burden that public libraries would face if they each needed to develop summer reading themes, graphics, programming, and displays independently. This program also ensures a consistent level of quality in programming and promotional materials across to support summer reading across the state – regardless of the capacity and skills of individual staff in each library. This year, 142 public libraries (76%) are participating in CSLP through the Department.

This work is important to the Department because studies show that when kids don't read in the summer months, their academic performance stagnates – or even declines when they return to school in the fall. For more information about the importance of summer reading, visit the Department of Education's Summer Slide website: <https://www.ed.gov/content/stopping-summer-slide>

In addition to supporting summer reading statewide by facilitating participation in CSLP, the Department also promotes summer reading by providing grants of \$300 to each public library in the state that applies. These grants are funded by disbursement from the Elva S. Smith Fund, which the Department receives annually, and which is specifically dedicated to supporting youth services efforts of the Department. A full list of the libraries that received this funding can be found on the Department's website. <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/grants-public-libraries/summer-programming-grants>

Departmental Outreach

The Department continues to conduct outreach to libraries and communities around the state. On the 4th of July, the State Librarian, Assistant State Librarian Tom McMurdo, and Continuing Education Consultant Joy Worland marched with the "Mad River Libraries and beyond" contingent in the Warren 4th of July Parade. The Board of Libraries was also represented as Vice Chair Adriene Katz also marched!