

Meeting of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Topic: Inclusive Library Services

Friday, January 27th, 2023, 9:00am to 3:00pm

Meeting Minutes

Working Group members present: Meg Allison, Maria Avery, Jeannette Bair, Catherine Delneo, Denise Hersey, Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, Andy Kolovos, Kelly McCagg, Karen McCalla, Susan O'Connell, Wendy Sharkey

VTLIB staff members: Jeanette Shaffer, Tom McMurdo, Josh Muse, Gina Hruban, April Shaw, Karen Gravlin, Jonathan Clark, Lilly Talbert

Guests: Xusana Davis, Shalini Suryanarayana

I. Call to Order (9:02 am-9:06 am) [00:00:00]

Catherine Delneo welcomed everyone and called to order at 9:02 am.

Roll Call of Working Group Members.

As a reminder to the public and Working group members, the Working Group website can be found here: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/testimony_record

Testimony can be found at:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group/testimony_record

II. Changes to the Agenda (9:06 am-9:07am) [00:04:44]

Catherine Delneo went over the agenda and called for the following changes: Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup from Vermont Humanities will present at 2:00-2:15. Also added was a request to discuss the scheduling of the next Working Group special meeting on Intellectual Freedom. Agenda item added to discuss content of today's presentations.

Changes to the agenda were unanimously approved by the attendees.

III. Public Comment (9:08 am-9:09am) [00:06:39]

Catherine Delneo called for any public comment. No public comment was offered.

IV. Approval of Minutes (9:09 am-9:14am) [00:07:00]

Catherine Delneo moved into the next business portion of the meeting, which was the approval of past meeting minutes.

Explanatory document: December 21, 2022 (Draft Minutes)

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/draft%202022%2012%2016%20Minutes%20Working%20Group.pdf>

Catherine Delneo called for any revisions or changes to the document.

Wendy Sharkey stated that she noticed an extra 'that' in one of the sentences but could not recall the location. Catherine Delneo recommended any duplicates of the word 'that' be edited and removed.

Motion made by Wendy Sharkey to approve the minutes. Kelly McCalla seconded.

The Working Group voted approval with the deletion of any duplicate of the word 'that'. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

V. Inclusive Library Services – Karen Gravlin, Department of Libraries (9:14am-9:59am) [00:12:49]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/VTLIB_ReportOnInclusiveServices_Updated_012723.pdf

New Americans as defined by the American Library Association:

<https://newamericans.ala.org/white-paper/part-1/#who>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Jeannette Bair asked if the ABLE Library carries any books on how to learn braille. Karen Gravlin responded that the library currently does not carry such books, but the ABLE staff refers those in need of braille instruction books to contact the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI). VABVI has staff who are experts in braille, whereas the ABLE staff does not read braille.

Catherine Delneo suggested that going forward, ABLE staff could get recommendations from VABVI about which braille instruction books would be appropriate and perhaps ABLE could acquire those titles. She added that the Working Group could make suggestions on what categories should be included in the ABLE collection.

Kelly McCagg asked if ABLE has any books geared towards those with reading disabilities. Karen Gravlin replied that ABLE's new collection of Wonderbooks is available. Kelly McCagg asked if ABLE has any promotional materials that she could share at the Stern Center in Williston. Karen Gravlin replied that the collection is brand new, so they do not have any printed promotional materials yet, but more information is on the ABLE website.

Supporting link: <https://able.vermont.gov/collections> (Wonderbooks under 'Accessible Youth Collection')

Catherine Delneo mentioned that she received a question recently from a legislator regarding decoding books. She suggested that such books could be another type of material that might be helpful for the youth literacy collection.

Members of the Working Group thanked Karen Gravlin for her very informative presentation.

VI. Presentation by Staff of the Office of Racial Equity, Xusana Davis (10:00am-10:34am) [00:57:13]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/ORE_LibraryWorkingGroup_012723.pdf

"If you don't think representation matters, you're probably well-represented." – Bernice King

Supporting document, Language Access Report - see page 83 for list of language access advocacy organizations:

<https://racialequity.vermont.gov/document/2023-language-access-report>

Supporting link, 28-day Black History Month series:

<https://racialequity.vermont.gov/2023-black-history-month-series-0>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Meg Allison commented that the past Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) president spoke of barriers to education/libraries and did an identity audit survey of librarians. Public and school libraries could possibly communicate and stand together regarding inclusive issues and share digital resources.

Catherine Delneo suggested that the Working Group dedicate more time to topic of barriers to access that disproportionately impact traditionally marginalized Vermonters. For example, a fee for service excludes some people, or requiring a driver's license or proof of residency to acquire a library card. The Working Group can explore impacts and making recommendations about changing systems to enable people to access libraries more easily.

VII. Break

VIII. Comment on Inclusive Services (10:47am-12:04pm) [01:45:10]

- **Nathan Cleveland, Agency of Commerce and Community Development (10:48am-11:03am)**
[01:45:25]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/NathanCleveland_CommunityDevelopment_VCDPOverview_012723.pdf

Accessibility Modification Grant:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/NathanCleveland_CommunityDevelopment_AMGrantHandout_012723.pdf

VCDP Program Guide:

https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/VCDP/Applicant/CD-VCDP-Program-Guide.pdf

Historic Preservation grants:

https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/HP/HP-Grants/HP_Grants_FY2023.pdf

Historic Preservation Grants page, ACCD website:

<https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup asked is libraries can apply for the ACD-administered grants if their plan involves adding a new addition to the library, rather than renovating old structure.

Nathan Cleveland replied: Yes, modifications can be within the existing building or attached to the building. Funds must go towards ADA improvements.

Nathan Cleveland shared that the ADA has self-check list to provide to applicants, which covers all indoors/outdoors aspects. Other eligible costs include program management, which could include architectural design.

Catherine Delneo told Nathan Cleveland that her department may be in touch to schedule another conversation with him regarding these grants and available funding for libraries.

• **Martin Hahn, VT Coalition to End Homelessness** (11:04am-11:21am) [02:01:37]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/MartinHahn_VermontCoalitionToEndHomlessness_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo remarked on the statistic that the number of homeless households that include children is increasing and that the percentage of homeless persons statewide who are Black or African-American is disproportionately higher than the percentage of Black or African-American individuals in the state.

• **Karen Holmes, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Department of Corrections** (11:22am-11:37 am) [02:19:54]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/NortheastCorrectionalComplex_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup shared that he didn't realize people from the public could donate books to correctional facilities. Karen Holmes shared some of the restrictions of books they can accept, but they could definitely use more resources for quality donations.

Catherine Delneo shared that her department's annual budget includes \$36k to support the needs of correctional facilities and considers it an important obligation to supply books to these facilities.

Meg Allison asked what kind of services are provided for incarcerated parents when their children visit them, i.e., story time. Karen Holmes replied that currently only facilities for female inmates provide a dedicated space for mothers and children and that none of the male facilities provide such space for fathers and their children.

• **Lisa Ehrlich, Veterans Affairs** (11:38am-11:46am) [02:38:31]

Lisa Ehrlich shared veterans' feedback on the books available for them to borrow from the library. The majority of the veterans shared that they really like the talking books.

Veterans would really prefer to be able to select their own titles to borrow, rather than receiving eight books on one thumb drive. They really enjoyed The National Library Services' book catalogs to make their selections, in the past, and those have been discontinued. A method for selecting books or preferences would be very helpful.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo asked Lisa Ehrlich if she is aware of any particular needs or interests the veterans have when visiting public libraries and if there is a way to better serve veterans in public libraries.

Lisa Ehrlich replied that the veterans who use the library love using public libraries; they like chatting with staff, being directed to large print books, etc. The human contact component is important to them.

• **Retta Dunlap, Vermont Home Education Network** (11:46am-12:04pm) [02:44:23]

Retta Dunlap spoke of the particular needs of homeschoolers when using the public libraries.

3,100 Vermont children are enrolled in home study as opposed to 2,800 children enrolled prior to the Covid pandemic.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Jeannette Bair commented that she has noticed that pre-Covid, a number of homeschoolers came into the library but now the number has dropped to zero. She asked Retta Dunlap for her feedback; are the homeschoolers now getting all their needs met online? Retta Dunlap replied that yes, homeschoolers are now using more online resources.

Catherine Delneo asked about the impact on homeschooled children regarding books needed for curriculum.

Retta Dunlap replied that homeschoolers create their own curriculum and books they would typically use are readily available at the library.

IX. Break (12:05pm-1:00pm)

[End of Part 1-2 recordings – Part 3 begins here]

X. Comment on Inclusive Services (1:00pm-2:00pm) [00:00:14]

Loren Polk, Aldrich Public Library, Barre (1:00pm-1:15pm) [00:00:50]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/LorenPolk_AldrichLibrary_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Andy Kolovos asked Loren Polk how her library came up with the idea of implementing a noise meter which she mentioned her library is using for quiet areas, etc. Loren Polk replied that the idea came up in a discussion with staff around the issue of the inequality of certain patron groups being asked to reduce noise while other groups were not.

Tom Frank, ABLE Library Advisory Board and Vermont Board of Libraries Chair (1:15pm-1:31pm) [00:15:25]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/TomFrank_ABLEAdvisoryBOL_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Esbey Hamilton, Vermont Migrant Education Program (1:31pm-1:47pm) [00:31:14]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/EsbeyHamilton_VermontMigrantEdProgram_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Jeannette Bair asked Esbey Hamilton, “What is your experience reaching out via the farm owners to their workers?” Esbey Hamilton replied that her organization’s approach stresses going to the farms in person to meet workers. They also contact farm owners about certain events to share with their workers, plus she tells the workers directly about events when possible.

Catherine Delneo asked that if a public library has patrons who are migrant workers and the staff would like to share information with the workers, can they contact VMEP for guidance? Esbey Hamilton replied ‘yes’, and they can also contact the Vermont Department of Migrant Justice as they are helpful, too.

Wendy Sharkey shared that there is an Afghan community in Bennington, and she has found that one of the biggest barriers for them and other migrants is that the symbols on computer keyboards are not in their language.

Supporting link, interpreter and translation services for Vermonters:

<https://www.aalv-vt.org/interpreter>

Keyboard stickers in other languages to add to existing keyboards:

https://www.amazon.com/Keyboard-Stickers-Lettering-Transparent-Background/dp/B004QBDLP0/ref=sr_1_4?crid=MRUI7HM3Y316&keywords=dari+keyboard&qid=1674845543&s=pc&sprefix=dari+keyboard%2Ccomputers%2C108&sr=1-4

Nate Eddy, Winooski Public Library (1:47pm-2:02pm) [00:47:44]

Supporting presentation:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/InclusiveServices/NateEddy_Winooski_012723.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Kelly McCagg asked about bilingual story times; what other languages are covered? Nate Eddy replied that Arabic is available. The Winooski Library applied for a grant from CLP and received a grant which enables them to bring in an instructor for Arabic learning.

Also, he shared that Americans Against Language Barriers (AALB) has services to translate library card applications.

Kelly McCagg asked what is the support of your board like? Nate Eddy replied that they have a library committee, not a board, appointed by city council. They provide good ideas for policy and procedures,

but they do not have oversight over the library budget but do help advise on the library's budget.

Kelly McCagg asked Catherine Delneo if the Vermont Library Association can lobby for individual libraries to get increased funding for that library. Catherine Delneo replied that advocacy depends on the organization's bylaws. Including writing letters of support for library budgets and participating in community meetings.

Jeannette Baird commented that 501(c)(3) organizations are only permitted to spend a very small amount of resources to do lobbying, in order to protect the 501(c)(3) status.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup commented to Jeannette Baird that he would be happy to have a further discussion about rules around lobbying, which are often not as restrictive as foundations fear.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, Vermont Humanities (2:02pm-2:16pm) [01:02:10]

Items mentioned in his presentation; historically, libraries have been a welcoming place for the LGBTQ community. There's a long history of LGBTQ people seeing/using libraries as safe places. He offered a reminder that not all LGBTQ people are white, many brown/black/indigenous/migrant farm workers. Outreach is needed to make sure to reach these groups.

Intellectual freedom and freedom to read is under attack in the country from politicians and others. Bills are being introduced across the country to limit the ability for librarians to provide access to all. A lot of protest comes from people out of state, coordinated by national groups. They find ways to use Vermont as an example to attack programming, i.e., drag queen story time.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Meg Allison suggested the creation of a directory of LGBTQ Vermont authors who are willing to give talks at libraries, or a directory of essential LGBTQ books that a library should have in its collection. This might take the pressure off local librarians when carrying certain books; they would be following a State-created list. She also stated her concern about having a sufficient number of diverse titles in the books awards list.

XI. Discussion on content presented today (2:17pm-2:53pm) [01:16:39]

Kelly McCagg stated that CE or workshops should be offered on racial equity. Also, education on soft censorship is needed.

Meg Allison stated that more education is going to be necessary, and possibly coaching or mentoring librarians. This might make librarians feel 'braver' and more supported if a certain issue is a 'policy'.

Wendy Sharkey commented that today's presentations illustrate that there's still much work to be done in every single aspect of accessibility throughout the state.

Karen McCalla concurred with Meg Allison's statement. She also said that it is so good to hear from this variety of people across the state. Great speakers and very informative.

Catherine Delneo suggested that Working Group might recommend plan a conference with a focus on inclusivity.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup commented that doing continuing education on inclusivity is so important. This issue isn't a one-day event, it's perpetual. Catherine Delneo agreed and suggested to the group that an annual event could be set up around this topic – it could be very powerful for library workers. Karen McCalla commented that if we were to do an annual event, we consider how to engage those who need more support in terms of feeling comfortable in the space/conversation about inclusion.

Jeannette Bair shared that her takeaway from today is that we don't do enough of going out into the community, looking for what needs to be done. Kelly McCagg agreed that maybe it's not about doing more but perhaps changing priorities.

Denise Hersey commented that potentially there's a way for the UVM library to complement what public libraries are doing regarding access issues/solutions. UVM has considered broadening their materials – i.e., books in more languages. The UVM library is open to the public and can also help in supporting underserved populations.

XII. Revised calendar of future meeting on Intellectual Freedom (2:53pm-2:57) [01:49:14]

The Working Group discussed the special meeting on Intellectual Freedom scheduled for February being rescheduled to occur to April.

The Working Group unanimously agreed to schedule the meeting on April 21, 2023.

XIII. Staffing and Salaries Survey Refinement (2:57pm-3:04pm) [01:53:40]

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/DraftStaffingAndSalariesSurvey_012523.pdf

Catherine Delneo shared a suggestion from Gary Deizel at the UVM Extension that under position "Number of years in position" be added and asked if Working Group members agreed that should be added under each position.

The Working Group agreed to leave that item listed under all positions.

The Working Group agreed to define the following age groups: Children's Librarian, age 0-12; Teen Librarian, age 12-18; Youth Librarian, age 0-18.

Catherine Delneo stated that a job description is needed for 'Bookkeeper'. Denise Hersey offered to send her a Business Manager description used at her library.

Jeannette Bair offered that in most libraries, the Town Treasurer acts as the Bookkeeper.

Wendy Sharkey offered that she would try and can come up with a brief description of Bookkeeper.

Catherine Delneo read the names of those who provided the Working Group with written testimony but did not attend today's meeting:

Abby Adams/Platt Memorial Library, Dana Hart/Ilisley Public Library, Mona Tolba/Trustee at Fletcher Free Library, Jane Potter/White River Junction resident, Ruth Shattuck Bernstein/Salisbury Free Public Library.

IX. Adjournment (3:05 pm) [02:05:29]

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Hruban, Executive Staff Assistant, Vermont Department of Libraries

Please note all time stamps are recorded as: Hours, Minutes and Seconds with annotation as [HH:MM:SS]

The recording can be found at: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/projects/working_group

DRAFT