

**VERMONT BOARD OF LIBRARIES
MINUTES OF MEETING**

**July 11, 2017
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Midstate Library Service Center
Berlin, Vermont**

Members present: Bruce Post, Chair; Deborah Granquist, Vice Chair; Josh Fitzhugh, Scott Murphy (State Librarian)

Others present: Maxie Ewins (previous board member), Cherie Yaeger (Executive Assistant to the State Librarian); Mara Siegel (VTLIB), Judy Dow (Educator), Kim Chase (Educator), Cass Mabbott (VTLIB), Helene Lang (Educator), Thomas Mulholland (concerned citizen), Jesse Haas (Author)

Call to Order: Chair Bruce Post called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and introduced himself, and gave a brief explanation of what the Board of Libraries is and does. Post then asked for introductions from all the Department of Library staff in attendance.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of April 11, 2017 were passed unanimously with these corrections:

Page 2, in the section Leadership Search for State Librarian correct the spelling of the first name of the Secretary of Administration, to Susanne.

Deborah Granquist made a motion to approve the April 22, 2017 minutes with the change to Susanne Young's name. Josh Fitzhugh seconded this motion. All members approved unanimously.

Discussion of Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award:

Tom Mulholland asked that everyone have equal time to speak and asked people speaking for keeping the book award known as the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award could speak first, since the opposing view had the chance to speak at the last Board of Libraries meeting. Post said he would be as fair as possible to everyone who wanted to speak on this topic. Post then invited Helene Lang to speak. Lang stated that she was at the board meeting to argue with an opposing view of what was written in the article published in 7 Days, and she was there to speak on behalf of Dorothy Canfield Fisher.

Lang introduced herself, and spoke on her education, work, and volunteer history in the discipline of literacy and literature. Lang spoke on how, as a college professor, she taught a course on race and culture. Lang has spent many years telling the story of Dorothy Canfield Fisher by representing Fisher in 64 presentations.

Lang spoke to many people, about Fisher, in preparation for the board meeting. Lang gave a history

on eugenics, and where it originated. Lang described Fisher's work, volunteerism, and education. She explained that Fisher was filled with good works locally and abroad.

Lang gave a background on the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award. Fisher was also the first woman in the Book of the Month Club as a selection judge. Lang stated that while in the Book of the Month Club Fisher advocated for non-traditional authors and books to be on the book list. Upon her retirement from the Book of the Month Club, in 1951, the club donated \$5,000 annually to a library in the U.S. in honor of Fisher. Lang said that the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award was created to honor Fisher and the award was patterned after the Book of the Month Club.

Post then asked Lang to sum up her comments on Fisher. Lang said that the Rural Vermont committee wanted people to come to Vermont. The committee was not looking for the rich elite to come to Vermont, but the educated, well-read people who would contribute to society.

Post opened the floor up to questions from the board for Lang. Josh Fitzhugh asked Lang if the Book of the Month Club still existed, to which Lang said, she did not believe so. Post then gave the floor to Judy Dow. Before Dow gave her statement in support of removing Dorothy Canfield Fisher's name from the book award she posed some questions to Lang concerning some statements she made. One question Dow posed was, if Lang had read any of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher files from Amherst College, in which Lang said no she had not. Judy Dow also spoke with Nancy Gallagher, and shared a statement from Gallagher that supports Judy Dow's argument about Fisher being a eugenicist.

Dow then read a statement she wrote addressed to the Board of Libraries and Scott Murphy, the State Librarian; and Cass Mabbott, Youth Service Consultant. She said that the time has come to make this a teachable moment, and to no longer suppress the eugenics movement that happened in Vermont. Dow shared quotes from a number of books, and explained that the effects of Fisher's books, plays, and other writings have had a bad effect on Vermonters. Dow said that the writing of Fisher was not just the words of the time, and specific people from the eugenics study are targeted in Fisher's stories and plays.

Dow finished her statement by noting that historians have a responsibility for sharing the past and educating people. Fisher forced books out of print and she was the author of hate letters to F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Thomas Mulholland introduced himself to the board, and spoke in favor of keeping Dorothy Canfield Fisher's name on the book award. Mulholland does not deny that eugenics existed, but wants to denounce the accusation against Fisher. Mulholland spoke on the membership of the rural Vermont committee she served on, Fisher's opinions on heredity, learning the Montessori style of teaching and bringing these types of schools to Vermont, and the overall beliefs of Fisher. Post asked Mulholland what he wants the board to come away with concerning Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Mulholland said that he wants to board to know she was a product of her time, and how innocently pure she was.

Kim Chase clarified three things for the board; Judy Dow has a degree, that Cari Buck was not an

imbecile, and that Fisher was trying to improve her image when she wrote the book of letters.

Jessie Haas read a quote from the Fisher book of letters, and she stated that Fisher's wrote to get a person reading her books to visualize the story.

Post asked the board if they wanted to share anything. Fitzhugh told everyone that the board is here to listen to all sides, and to then give a recommendation to the State Librarian. Granquist thanked everyone for coming and talking very passionately about this topic. As a lawyer Granquist said that she looks to connections and precedent to make decisions. She mentioned that when Yale University was looking at renaming buildings on campus they created a commission that would look at the guiding principles and policies to help make decisions on renaming. She thought this might be something that would help the State Librarian to look at renaming or keeping the Dorothy Canfield Fisher name on the book award.

Fitzhugh recommended that the board finish up comments on this discussion, and then move on to other agenda items. Due to the length of this discussion, he also recommended the board defer the remainder of the board discussion on this topic until the board meeting in October.

Fitzhugh asked for a copy of the statement that Dow read to the board. Dow stated she would send the statement to Scott Murphy.

Break

The board went on break at 12:40, and returned at 12:45. On the return from break Fitzhugh stated, "let the record note, we are $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour over schedule."

2017 Capital Bill (H.519)

Scott Murphy gave an update on the Capital Bill (H.519) and the Department of Libraries move out of 109 & 111 State Street. Scott told the board that the move is definitely happening, however the location of the move is still up in the air between the Midstate Library building and the Vermont Historical Society. Post asked if it would help if the board sent a letter concerning their preference in location. Murphy said not at this time, however he would let the board know when or if this is needed.

Hiring Update for the Department

Murphy & Tom McMurdo gave an update on the status of filling vacant positions at the department. Post asked Cass Mabbott, recently hired Youth Service Consultant, to introduce herself and give a little of her background.

Deborah Granquist asked the Department to keep thinking about the small libraries around the state, while we are hiring new employees to the department, so we have people who will be able to help those librarians who don't have the resources available to them, especially librarians with no MLIS degrees.

Geographic Naming: Statutory Responsibilities and Future Role of Board of Libraries

Post said if the requestor has submitted all documents needed to look at the renaming Mt. Ascutney than the board should get to it soon. Josh said that the idea that Deb mentioned earlier in the meeting, in reference to a committee to look at renaming buildings on the Yale campus would also work for geographic naming. This discussion is tabled until the next meeting.

Board of Library Appointments

Murphy told the board that the Governor's office requested that he submit three names to appoint to the board to fill the empty positions. He asked the board for recommendations, and told them he had to get the names to the Governor's office by July 19th.

Other Business

Deborah asked if the board could look at changing the date of the board meetings from the second Tuesday to another day.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.