

Meeting of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont
Topic: Library Structures and Organizations
Friday, May 26, 2023, 9:01am to 3:02pm

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

VTLIB staff members: Thomas McMurdo, Janette Shaffer, Josh Muse, April Shaw, Lauren Kelley, Karen Gravlin, Joy Worland, Jonathan Clark, Lilly Talbert, Kevin Unrath, Gina Hruban

Begin Recording Part I link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtcR4TfocCM>

I. Call to Order [00:00:30]

Catherine Delneo welcomed everyone and called to order at 9:01am.

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/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont>

Written comments can be found at:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont/testimony-working-group>

II. Approval of Minutes [00:07:54]

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

Explanatory document: April 21, 2023 (Draft Minutes)

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/2023_04_23_WorkingGroupMinutes_Draft_Updated.pdf

Catherine Delneo invited changes to the document. No changes were requested.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup made a motion to approve the minutes. Kelly McCagg seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by the Working Group.

III. Public Comment [00:09:44]

Catherine Delneo invited public comment.

Meg Allison shared comments from the Vermont School Library Association.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/CharlesDabritz_VSLA_President.pdf

Catherine Delneo thanked Meg Allison for sharing her comments.

No other public comment.

IV. Vermont Department of Libraries History [00:18:55]

April Shaw, Library Consultant Government Services, Vermont Department of Libraries

April shared her presentation.

Supporting Document:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/AboutUs/LibWorkGroup/History%20of%20the%20Vermont%20Department%20of%20Libraries.pdf>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo thanked April for her informative presentation.

Meg Allison asked: I wonder with such a decrease in department of library staffing, what is the impact on the services provided to the community? I just want to have that question on record. I don't expect you may know the answer.

April replied: I will say that we are never not busy.

Tom McMurdo added: I just wanted to add a comment about that question. I think one of the things that April traced in this presentation with the change from I think it was 57 people in 1970 - is there's also been a change obviously in technology which has changed the way that the department does business. I think today we're in a position where we do so much that is technology-based and so I think in many ways, it mirrors the evolution of the library service. I've been with the department just over 10 years and we had 26 employees when I started, and we have 18 now. So, to echo what April said, we are never not busy.

Jeannette Bair commented: I do want to get it into the record the closure of the Mid-State Library and the purging of massive numbers of books that were held at the regional libraries was a tremendous hardship on public libraries around the state because not only were those books taken out of the state interlibrary loan, a network, and many of us relied on regional libraries like Mid-State to keep the older back catalog of authors that we didn't have room for anymore. And those books were then gone, but also the huge increase of interlibrary loan load on small public libraries. The department does give grants of 50% of the courier fee, and that is a huge help, but it's the time for small public library staff to pull and process interlibrary loans for other libraries. So, you know that workload that was removed from the Department of Libraries in your staff removed, then fell on small public libraries as unfunded mandates.

Susan O'Connell commented: It would be really interesting to know a comparison of the per capita staffing of the Vermont Department of Libraries compared to other departments of libraries. Catherine Delneo replied that upcoming speaker Jeremy Johannesen from COSLA might have some information to offer on that topic. April Shaw replied: I think that would also be hard to compare because different department of libraries and state libraries offer different services.

V. Overview of Vermont Statutes relevant to Libraries [00:42:15]

Catherine Delneo, State Librarian and Commissioner of Libraries, Vermont Department of Libraries
Catherine shared her presentation.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Supporting/VermontStatutesAndStandards_052623_Corrected.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup thanked Catherine for her very comprehensive presentation.

Kelly McCagg commented: Here in Colchester, we are municipal, but we also have a town charter and so that town charter actually specifies that the town manager is the one who is my direct boss and is the one who hires me, and the board is more advisory. I know that's unique compared to most libraries.

Catherine Delneo added: We do get questions from municipal libraries about 'who is my supervisor?' It is interesting if the state statute says the board appoints the director, but the town charter says that the municipality appoints. I am curious about it, and this may be something that the Working Group wants to make a recommendation about improving the clarity of statutes so that it's less confusing. The supervision of the municipal library directors is not super clear in statute to me.

Meg Allison commented: The privacy of library patron records is what piqued my interest. Because in school libraries there are a lot of questions and it's murky because we have our state statute, and we have federal law. I would love to see a recommendation, some language, clear language, that's communicated to all school librarians who work in high schools with students who are 16, 17 and 18 around the privacy of their records. Because if I'm struggling with it year after year, reading it, I'm making sure I'm doing the right thing, no doubt others are as well.

Catherine Delneo replied: In our most recent meeting on Intellectual Freedom last month, we had some discussion around should the Working Group recommend a change to Chapter 4. My guess is that recommending a lowering or removal of the age for children to have privacy of patron records would only impact public libraries, but the schools would still have to follow the federal guidance.

I think that's an area that we should look at more closely because I think in the public library, the public librarians were saying why is it so high and it is 16 - quite high compared with other states, some of whom don't have that caveat or some of them have a much lower age like nine.

I think we would need to get legal counsel on this, but it could also be that the Working Group make a recommendation that the legislature look at changing the age and that the Working Group doesn't recommend a specific age.

VI. Presentation by Tom Frank [01:28:16]

Chair, Vermont Board of Libraries

Tom Frank shared his comments to the Working Group. He spoke of the Board's main responsibilities; Geographic Naming and as the advisory group for the State Librarian. He elaborated on what is involved with both responsibilities.

Catherine Delneo commented that the Board of Libraries is involved in appointing and removing the State Librarian and provides recommendations to the Secretary of Administration.

Supporting link: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00601>

Board of Libraries Statute: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00602>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo asked Tom: How much of the time of your meetings in general is dedicated to advising the State Librarian and how much is dedicated toward Geographic Naming?

Tom replied: Historically, since I've been on the board, about 80% has been Geographic Naming and very little advising.

Tom McMurdo commented: I was surprised when I came to the Department of Libraries to find out that the State Librarian has geographic naming responsibilities. Are we aware of any other state library agencies that have that responsibility?

Tom Frank replied: I am not, Vermont is unique.

VII. Presentation by Jeremy Johannesen [01:45:27]

Executive Director, Chiefs Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)

Jeremy shared his presentation.

Supporting document: https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Susan O'Connell asked Jeremy: Is there anything on the top of your mind that seems like it works

really well in another state that you'd like here?

Jeremy replied: Every single public library in New York that holds a charter through the state library has a path to direct ballot access and can go directly to the voters for the approval of funding. I think that's tremendous because anytime a library is funded through the municipality, it means that it's on the same budget document with siren services, your fire, your police, your ambulance services and in Vermont, I would include snow plowing services. So, anytime where you're able to go to the citizens within the library service area and say, would you be interested, do you want to pay money for your library services in New York - library budgets pass it - over 95% people say 'yes'.

Catherine Delneo commented: I think one thing that I want to be sure the Working Group is aware of is that when we're looking at the SLAA there's about a two year lag time on the charts and reports. We complete the survey locally and then it takes years to parse the data and do the comparisons from the Public Library survey that all of our public library directors are filling out.

VIII. Break

IX. Presentation by Michelle A. Robertson Ph.D., MLIS, NBCT [02:29:38]

ALA Ecosystem Initiative, Assistant Professor/Program Coordinator Library Media in Education, University of Central Oklahoma

Michelle shared her presentation.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Supporting/MichelleRobertson_LibraryEcosystem_052623.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo asked Michelle: How did the states that are participating – how did they get activated, what steps does it take for a state to become engaged in this program?

Michelle replied: I'll use Tennessee an example; they got started with conversations about how to kind of pull together as one voice – they had kind of already started that within their main library association, and the school libraries and academic libraries are all part of that.

Sometimes, like in Maine right now, they're just trying to get everybody on the same page. We sent out an invitation to whoever wanted to participate.

It looks different for everybody and that's why the tools look different for everybody. So, all it takes is a couple of people willing to kind of start the charge up the hill and to start the conversations and to say, OK, who wants to participate?

[End of Recording Part I]

X. Break

Begin Recording Part II link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDqrfuXM4-Q>

XI. Community Comments on Library Structures and Organizations [00:00:48]

Laura Richardson, Institutional Library Services, Washington State Library [00:01:00]

Laura shared her comments.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/LauraRichardson_WashingtonStateLibrary_052623.pdf

Catherine Delneo thanked Laura for her valuable presentation.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

There were no questions or comments.

Wendy Hysko, Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) [00:15:57]

Wendy shared the services and collections that GMLC provides.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/WendyHysko_GMLC_052623.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Susan O'Connell commented: I think GMLC has done so much for the state and so I'll start just by saying thank you. I wonder if GMLC has any thoughts on the possibility of a statewide library card, if that's something that has been discussed and if that's something that GMLC has any opinions on?

Wendy replied: It has certainly been discussed and we feel like this really should be something that comes from the Department of Libraries to be able to link the different libraries across the state.

Lawrence Webster, M.A., M.L.S. [00:29:58]

Lawrence shared her comments on library governance, library systems, and resources.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/LawrenceWebster_052623.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Susan O'Connell asked Lawrence: Taken as a given that that we're at least interested in exploring some sort of cooperative system that would allow us to keep our local control but benefit from some larger systems, what would our next steps be?

Lawrence replied: Because Vermont is so small in terms of population and geography, I think it would be interesting to consider a statewide library system not like Hawaii's, because that would be consolidated. But a statewide federation of public libraries, which we have the beginnings of with Catamount, and somehow sit down with and first of all, study what's happened in other states and what can work, and then sit down with the key players in the current efforts and design something and try it out. There are a number of questions, but those are my next steps. Study and get together and talk about it seriously.

Denise Hersey shared: I just want to add that, as a library patron, and not as a librarian (particularly one that doesn't run a public library), having lived in a state with a broader public library system, I found the benefits to be incredibly useful. It also encouraged me to visit many other public libraries outside of my own town, something I don't do here in Vermont.

Barbara Ball, Director, Windsor Library [00:46:27]

Barbara shared her comments.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/BarbaraBall_Windsor_052623.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.
There were no questions or comments.

Katie Buckley, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) [00:59:20]

Katie shared her comments about VLCT.

Supporting document:

https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/LibraryStructure/KatieBuckley_VLCT_052623.pdf

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo asked Katie: Around the building ownership, something that has come up even today in earlier testimony is really the question of, the municipal libraries seem to have access to a lot of resources and benefits and the incorporated libraries don't, but they serve the same function in a municipality. Do you see any way to resolve that short of all of the incorporated libraries switching over to becoming municipal libraries? Are there any ideas that you have ever had on that front?

Katie replied: It's a tough problem that needs a creative solution, and I think that's how you advance a lot of work in local government, is you need creative solutions when you have limited resources. I'm happy to brainstorm through that problem with anybody who wants to brainstorm through that

problem, because it's really less about library operations and what they do programming services, all that great stuff, and really resolving the real estate issues - real estate is such an anchor around most organizations, and libraries are no different than that.

XII. Working Group Discussion [01:17:31]

The Working Group discussed the content shared today.

Catherine Delneo provided an update on the staffing and salaries survey, the Department of Libraries now has a contract with a survey consultant, Constructive Disruption.

Also, instead of having the July Working Group meeting with the survey consultants, the topic for the July meeting will be Safety, and the August 25th meeting topic will be the results of the staffing and salary survey.

Catherine also commented: In my career, having started as a librarian in 1999, and I've worked in two other states, both of them with county systems, both with cooperatives and both with consortia; my impression is that there are different roles for state librarians, distinct roles for state libraries, libraries, systems, consortia and that many states have multiples of these things. We certainly had that in New Jersey and that they're not supposed to be something that's competing with each other.

This isn't like a competition. We all do this together. It takes all of us, and it's also, I've just got to say, as the department head here, it's not just my small teams' job to fix every problem. So, as we enter into this conversation, I really encourage the Working Group to think about everybody's role and not just create a laundry list of that which you would like the department to do, because I think we're going to run into some strange issues with that and that we might not have the best solution.

Sometimes I think we've forgotten some of the history because when people start talking about the Courier, for example, I'm looking at a document here that has both GMLC and the Department of Libraries letterhead from October, 2015, the Department of Libraries has been involved with the Courier since the beginning. And I think we need to get that on the record because I've heard a lot about great work that people have done, and I acknowledge that great work.

Meg Allison shared: I like this concept of an ecosystem and the points that you raised about not being in competition. I'd love a whole number that would be interesting to find out exactly how many libraries are in the state and how much that equals per capita. It begets the point that we have to share our resources. We have to figure out ways on to share licensing agreements, database access, the fees, the costs, you know, Listen Up is really popular and yet there's a long waiting lists. Also, this idea of a statewide library card, if not like a regional or county card, some sort of a statewide card, seems like that's something we should pursue to keep in step with what other states are doing.

Denise Hersey would like the group to explore different public library systems – they can be

statewide but also be regional.

Catherine Delneo spoke about reciprocal borrowing agreements.

Susan O'Connell: If we could pull together organizational structures that already exist would be very helpful. Make the information readily available – so that future groups have access to it.

Catherine Delneo is interested in who hires municipal library directors, she wants that topic to be clearer in the statute. She said the Working Group should recommend to the state that the statute be clarified. Currently, the information is ambiguous.

Denise Hersey asked: Would it make sense for the Working Group to recommend some sort of investigatory body to look into models of cooperative systems and with the funding available for them? Could we hire a consultant or a graduate MLS student?

Catherine Delneo replied: Why don't I try to put out some feelers about what types of groups there are that can do these things?

Catherine added: We could recommend a legislative study like there was one prepared by the Joint Fiscal Office in the Legislative Council for the Vermont General Assembly in January 20, 2008, about state aid to public libraries.

Catherine Delneo shared: We need to update the Minimum Standards; we need to do something with them. I think it would be great for the Working Group to recommend that the Department begin the rulemaking, begin the process of updating the 1986 Minimum Standards, and I'd like to do that as the Department, not to recommend that we have a working group on it because I think what we can commit to for the Department would be that we get the whole team who have been here on all these meetings. We do our best shot at it and then we bring it out to regional meetings of directors and things of that nature and get people's input, which seems a lot more like our natural way of working together. Then once we've got a good draft, we go through the formal rulemaking process, rather than all of these people have to meet every week, every month. I think we would involve the full public in the rulemaking process, but we would also easily commit to having meetings about it with library directors.

Susan O'Connell asked: Would the Working Group want to recommend that the Geographic Naming be removed from the Board of libraries responsibilities?

Tom Frank replied: Actually, most of the board members like that the most, that's what they're most interested in, but we could have more meetings. Have like two meetings a year for Geographic Naming and then two or three or four meetings for doing the other advisory part.

Catherine Delneo adjourned the meeting.

XIII. Adjournment (3:02pm) [02:02:53]

DRAFT