

Vermont Department of Libraries: Working Group Testimony

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Collection Development: When I first started as a youth services librarian, I looked forward to the semi-annual Materials Review sessions with enthusiasm and expectation. While I eagerly soaked up all information about books and other resources, I also discovered the value of time dedicated to developing collaborations and sharing resources. The longer I get to be in the library, the more I realize what an important asset this type of offering is for all librarians, those new to the profession and veterans alike. Learning about new titles in a shared setting makes for a more generous and less threatening means of boosting the quality of collections at individual libraries and across the library community.

Collection-Specific Resources: We are fortunate to have a local history curator on staff here at the Charlotte Library. This person brings interest and expertise to field questions from interested community members and visitors as well as to teach other staff about the resources available in our library. I believe that funds and training should be allocated at a state level to allow more libraries to foster and maintain curated local history collections. The staff position can be especially valuable to the library and community in partnership with a local history society as well as in collaboration with the Vermont Historical Society. Such cooperation can further strengthen library ties within its community as well as throughout the state.

Collection Access: The library should not be barrier to equity but an open door to access. Emmanuel Acho, former NFL player and author of *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*, described visiting a library as “like going to the airport with a passport but without a ticket.” Our job is to make that sure that everyone has the ticket as well as the passport. Making resources available for those who do not (yet) use the library is one key step. Collection development needs to be proactive and provide resources for all. This includes resources for community members who may not feel welcome, due to language or technology barriers. It also includes potential members of our communities such as refugees and new Americans.

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