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Working Group on the Status of Vermont Libraries Testimony on Collections in School Libraries

Library Name: Mill River Library

School Name: Mill River Union School

Town or towns served: North Clarendon, Tinmouth, Shrewsbury, Wallingford. Students from other towns such as Ira, Rutland Town, Chittenden and Mendon who have school choice.

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Karen McCalla, Librarian

Would you be willing to offer in-person testimony and answer questions during the public hearing on January 14, 2022? If you answer yes, we'll be in touch with more details. If you'd rather not testify in person, we will submit your testimony in written form for the Working Group members to read, and your written testimony will also be included as a part of the public record. YES _____ x _____ NO _____

Collection size (number of volumes): 11,921

Number of students at your school: 368 in grades 7-12

Please share any other statistics about your collection that might be helpful to the working group. Some examples could include the percentage of fiction versus nonfiction in your collection, the numbers of items you circulate per month or per school year, or anything else that helps us get insight into your collection and its use in your school.

Our collection is 62.4% fiction. We're in the process of completing a big deselection in our non-fiction collection. We cycle through the whole collection every five years or so, but this year, we focused on tuning our non-fiction to be very responsive to current needs. We focus primarily on narrative non-fiction, and encourage students needing to do research to use on our online resources. With our budget, it's hard to keep enough current resources in print. Our deselection this year has removed about 3,000 titles.

What are the strengths of your current collection?

Our fiction collection is strong and we genrefy our fiction for ease of student browsing. We use 18 genres and plan on adding a couple of more. We've been genrefyed for about 5 years. The

strength of our collection is our breadth and our focus on materials that our students will like to read.

What are the weaknesses of your current collection?

We don't generally collect printed research materials (country books for our younger students, supreme court case analyses for our older students, for example) because we don't have the shelf room, and students don't turn to books first for research. However, we still have some faculty who like to require "book sources" for research projects. I'd love to have the budget and space for a more robust research collection, but even if we had it, it wouldn't get used very often.

We also used to have a great collection of print magazines that we had to give up last year due to budget cuts. We have some students who hesitate to pick up a book but who will happily read a magazine. We had a wide range of titles that addressed many student interests and curricular areas, but now we don't have any print magazines. We've saved back issues of a small selection of titles, but with the current budget outlook, I don't anticipate being able to add print magazines back to our collection any time soon.

Do you participate in resource sharing and interlibrary loan, either through Clover, between libraries in your school district, with your local public libraries, or through other resource sharing programs? Tell us about how resource sharing works for you and your students.

Yes, we participate in Clover and also share resources among our district libraries. We've borrowed from other libraries through Clover 14 times this school year, and sent items to other libraries 12 times.

Do you offer any special collections at your library? These could be a specific collection designed to support targeted learning programs at your school, a Vermont or local history collection, or other groupings designed to serve specific needs. Please tell us about these collections and the populations they serve.

We have a small Vermont collection, primarily containing books bequeathed to the Library upon the death of a faculty member. We've recently trimmed down the size of our Vermont collection dramatically because the materials were not used. We are in the process of donating the materials to local historical societies and the public libraries in the towns that we serve.

We also have a special genre in our fiction collection that has books with very low Lexile levels (down to BR) because we have a significant population of students who read well below grade level. We've collected titles that are appropriate topics and maturity levels, with the lower reading levels needed by these students. They are in a genre called "quick picks" and the addition of these materials meant that students can come to the Library and find a book they can read for the first time in their middle/high school career.

Do you offer ebooks and audiobooks in your collection? If so, how do you provide access to them? Through the Shared Schools Collection (Overdrive), Vermont Online Library, through another vendor, through direct access from your catalog, through physical devices such as Kindles or Playaways, or some other method? Are you happy with the balance of ebooks, audiobooks and print books in your collection?

We're part of the Shared Schools Collection and also have a small collection of additional titles that we've purchased through Overdrive. We also use Vermont Online Library for research needs, and have a small collection of additional ebooks served through the Gale platform. We have a very limited selection of Playaways, but have found that the audiobooks available for listening on phone or Chromebook circulate better. I am currently happy with the balance of materials, although with an increased budget, I'd buy more digital resources.

Do you catalog and circulate things besides books in your library? Some examples could include games and puzzles, maps and globes, learning tools or other physical items.

We have games and puzzles in the Library for students to use, but they generally don't circulate beyond the Library. We have a Makerspace attached to our Library with robots, 3D printers, VR headsets, vinyl cutters, 3D pens and more available for students to use. We also have a green screen room with 2 walls of floor-to-ceiling green screen for recording student projects, plus some sound recording equipment, lights, a portable green screen, tripods, etc.

What else would you like the working group to know about your school library collection? How has your collection changed over time? What changes do you hope to make in the future? What are the biggest challenges you anticipate, and how do you plan to solve them?

Our print collection has gotten smaller, but also more focused on student needs and wants. When I first started at Mill River, the collection was based on research and had a limited collection of fiction. Now our focus for our print collection is on student requests and recreational reading, both in fiction and nonfiction. Moving our research materials online and the support of the Vermont Online Library resources is crucial for curricular support.

The biggest challenges we face in the future are budgetary. In my 20 years at Mill River, our budget has been reduced from more than \$30,000 per year to less than \$5,000 per year. I still have a full time assistant, who is vital in making sure that I have the flexibility needed to get out into classrooms to collaborate. While we can still purchase state award books and the basics, gone are the days when I poured over review sources to find new titles to order.