



TO: Status of Vermont Libraries Working Group
FROM: Bryn Geffert, dean of libraries, University of Vermont
DATE: 23 December, 2021
RE: Support from University of Vermont for Vermont Libraries

Thank you for soliciting testimony regarding Vermont libraries.

The University of Vermont (UVM) Libraries are eager to serve the state, its libraries, and its citizens. We do not presume to know how we can best meet the needs your working group is identifying, but we would appreciate the chance to speak with you and think together how the libraries of Vermont's land-grant and flagship institution can best serve our state.

GENERAL

We have exceptionally strong collections in the fields one would expect of a comprehensive research university. We boast over a dozen subject specialists who aid researchers in disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, sciences, medicine, and nursing.

All citizens of Vermont are welcome to work with our collections in our library buildings. All are eligible to receive a UVM library card without charge.

Question: How can we make these opportunities better known?

We are the only public university library in the state to employ subject specialists serving nearly all disciplines.

Questions: What subject expertise do librarians elsewhere in the state need? How can we connect those librarians with our subject specialists? Can the UVM libraries aid the research specialist now working at the State Library? Can we connect her directly with our collections and our experts? How might UVM strengthen the state's interlibrary loan network?

Dana Medical Library

The Dana Medical Library is the only expertly staffed medical library in the state of Vermont. Given the paucity of good medical libraries in our region, we're concerned about difficulties faced by physicians, nurses, patients, and citizens at large in obtaining good medical information.

Recently, due to budgetary constraints, the library has had to cancel subscriptions to numerous electronic journals in both the sciences and health sciences. The loss of access to these resources has had, and will continue to have, a negative impact on efficiencies in obtaining clinical information within the health care setting, and timely access to literature to support grants and grant-funded research which are impactful to not just the university but to the state as well.

Questions: What does the working group know about Vermont doctors' and nurses' need for medical literature? What literature are Vermont libraries able and not able to provide? How can we better share UVM's medical and allied health literature and the expertise necessary to use that literature?

Government Depository Library

Our federal repository includes about 900,000 items in the physical collection alone. We are obligated to receive, process, and make freely available to the public all material received from the government.

The collection is rich in information relevant to political science, history, agriculture, business, economics, health, and environmental science. Members of the public use the collection to develop business plans, comply with regulations, explore careers, improve their health, plan visits to national parks, and learn about the demographics of their communities.

Perhaps most important of all, people use the collection--and associated reference services—to examine and understand the workings of our democracy by accessing bills and legislative histories; congressional hearings, debates, and reports; presidential speeches and signing statements; publications of all the agencies of the executive branch; and decisions of the federal courts. Such free and open access to this information, along with expert help in discovering it, is essential to what it means to have a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

Questions: How can we make this material better known? And how can we connect Vermont citizens with the expertise required to navigate this material?

Map Room

Our map room contains more than 200,000 sheet maps and atlases covering the globe. It is the largest collection of maps in Vermont and includes several sets of unique and valuable aerial photographs of the state dating back to 1937. These photographs are frequently used by Vermonters, government agencies, and businesses to answer a variety of questions about topics such as property lines, historical locations of roads, development patterns, and logging activities. (More recent aerial photographs are available at the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.) Maps in the collection depict information such as the agricultural outputs of a country, the relative size of oil-production companies, types of soil and bedrock, depths of a lake, the presence of forests and open spaces, population density, toxic waste sites, the results of elections, or the locations of Friends Meeting Houses in the 19th century.

Questions: How can we make this material better known? And how can we connect Vermont citizens with the expertise required to navigate this material?

Special Collections

The Jack and Shirley Silver Special Collections Library provides access to research materials relating to the study of Vermont, the history of UVM, and the history of the book as a form of humanistic expression. Special Collections preserves these materials for current and future researchers. Our collections support students, faculty, scholars, local historians, consultants, and journalists.

Vermont Research Collection

- Books, periodicals and pamphlets that support research on Vermont’s past, present and future. Collection strengths include town history, the built environment, natural resources, agriculture, state and municipal publications, business and industry, education, religion, and literature.
- The manuscript collection includes personal papers, account books, diaries, scrapbooks and church, school, town, military, court and organizational records from the 1770s to the present. The collection is especially strong in politics, literature, architecture, social history, religion, education, theater and music, business and labor, transportation, and land surveys.
- Thousands of photographs, postcards, stereographs, and prints document Vermont’s people, places and events.
- Most of the Vermont map collection focuses on Vermont, but the collection also covers the northeastern United States, New England, and Lake Champlain. The maps date from the late 17th century to the present. Fire insurance maps document the built environment of many Vermont villages and cities. Maps are also available in Vermont land surveyors' records and the records of the Central Vermont Railroad in the manuscript collection.
- Special Collections maintains extensive files containing news clippings, brochures, and ephemera on a wide range of subjects and issues.
- The Vermont Research Collection includes thousands of pieces of printed ephemera providing insights into the everyday life of Vermonters, including broadsides, posters, proclamations, announcements, invitations, dance cards, menus, advertisements, trade cards, calling cards, campaign literature, business letterhead, timetables, programs, and other printed matter.
- Our [digital Vermont collection](#) includes maps, photographs, personal letters, Congressional correspondence and speeches, broadsides, music, film, newspapers, and UVM publications.

The Rare Book Collection covers materials ranging from medieval manuscripts to modern artists’ books. The collection includes the Libraries’ books printed before 1800, books that exist only in very small numbers or that have significant monetary value, collections of particular presses and publishers we have designated as collectible, and collections that serve particular teaching or research needs.

Questions: How can we make these collections better known? How can we work with others to ensure a diverse and inclusive archival record representing all of Vermont? How can we work with others to increase the amount of unique Vermont collections freely available online?

ScholarWorks: a service of the University of Vermont Libraries

UVM ScholarWorks collects, preserves, and shares the scholarly and creative works of UVM faculty, staff, students, and their collaborators. It serves as the institutional repository of the University and provides open access to digital resources created by the UVM community. The repository hosts 6,245 documents in 50 collections, including several notable and widely used reports on food insecurity in Vermont during Covid-19 produced by UVM faculty with the assistance of many Vermont partners.

CONCLUSION

We don’t know how best to serve the needs your group is still identifying. But we’re eager to talk with you to learn how we might help. We’d be delighted to convene a group of colleagues representing the expertise referenced in this memo to meet and brainstorm.

Appendix

A few examples, from just two collections, of needs UVM has supported

- A legal aid attorney sought help understanding the legislative history of the Housing and Urban Development Act Amendments of 1969 and finding congressional testimony and debate. He was specifically interested in federal subsidy requirements for low-rent public housing.
- A researcher at an archaeological firm had been hired to update the 1997 National Register nomination to document several changes to the powerhouse and dam of the Essex #19 Hydroelectric Station Historic District. She sought historical images of the station.
- A Vermont publisher who produces hiking guidebooks sought help in locating historical topographic maps of various mountains in Vermont.
- A Vermont resident asked for historical aerial photographs of southern Vermont to determine if a particular road had been relocated at some point in time.
- A state of Vermont official contacted us for historical aerial photographs of a location in Vermont, to determine when logging had taken place there.
- A Vermont resident wrote to us asking for a scan of a Canadian topographic map showing a remote settlement in Yukon.
- A geographer from the U.S. Army Geospatial Center in Virginia contacted us for a scan of an aerial photo of the Waterbury, VT, dam and spillway.
- Researchers used published materials and archival collections to study the Irasburgh Affair of 1968, the Green Mountain Parkway, leftist social movements in the 1970s and 1980s in Vermont, and the West Rutland Marble Strike of 1935-1936.
- Museums and other cultural heritage institutions in Vermont used Vermont research collections to support the James Wilson globe project (Vermont Historical Society), a Robert Frost exhibit (Bennington Museum), a Mill to Mall exhibit (Winooski Mill Museum), an exhibit on finding community in Burlington-area immigrant neighborhoods (Historic New England), and a project to celebrate the centennial of Winooski (Dan Higgins/Winooski Historical Society).
- Media outlets used Vermont research collections to support and illustrate articles on Burlington's Memorial Auditorium (Seven Days), Ken Burton (Addison Independent), and Burlington history (VT Digger).