

Report from the State Librarian Catherine Delneo to the Vermont Board of Libraries

April 23, 2024

Department Staffing Update

Mackenzie Boyle joined the Department on February 26, 2024, in the role of Contracts and Grants Administrator. Mackenzie comes to the Department from the Department of Environmental Conservation where she was a Program Technician II. Mackenzie brings experience managing grants to her work and is a great addition to the team!

Jessica Leal joined the Department of Libraries team on March 25, 2024, in the role of Executive Staff Assistant. Jess brings experience as an Executive Director of a non-profit to her work – including managing budgets and communicating with a wide range of constituents.

The Department is currently recruiting for the Grants Specialist position that will support the Capital Projects and are hopeful we'll fill this key limited-service position soon.

The Department has not been successful in recruiting a Library Buildings Project Manager V position to support the Capital Projects, so has reclassified the position. The position will be posted as a Limited-Service Library Contracts & Grants Administration Manager in the coming weeks.

Public Library Capital Projects Update

Between January 30, 2024, and March 23, 2024, 71 public libraries applied for grants from the Capital Projects Funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury. The Department of Libraries' extensive outreach efforts resulted in applications from each of Vermont's 14 counties.

Applications are currently being evaluated using a multi-phased process that includes:

- Eligibility and Completeness
- Quantitative Scoring
- Blind Qualitative Assessment of Programmatic Alignment
- Building Project and Timeline Scoring
- Risk Assessment

Despite some staffing setbacks, the Department is still on-track to award grants of \$400,000 - \$1.4 million in the late spring / early summer of 2024.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/grants-public-libraries>

Update on S.220

Senators Hardy and Gulick introduced S. 220 - An act relating to Vermont's public libraries in response to the report of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont, which was submitted to the House and Senate Committees on Education in

November 2023. During the first half of the session, the State Librarian was called on frequently to provide information to the Senate Committee on Education on the bill. In its current form, the bill includes language that would require all school libraries, public libraries, and the Department to adopt materials selection and reconsideration policies. The bill empowers the Department to develop model policies and guidelines for service levels in public libraries. The bill would also lower the age of confidentiality of public library patron records from 16 to 12 years of age. The bill includes language that would help clarify the roles of both incorporated and municipal public library trustees in managing public libraries.

The bill, which was passed by the Senate, is now under consideration in the House, and is currently being discussed in the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs. The State Librarian will testify about the bill next on April 24th and share the Department's support of the bill while suggesting minor areas for improvement to the language around municipal public libraries and alignment of the materials selection and retention policies across the three types of libraries (school, public, and the State Library). Leadership of the Vermont Library Association will also testify that day.

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.220>

Update on S.204

Senator Gulick introduced S.204 - An act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction. Among many other topics, the bill would add the State Librarian (or their designee) to the State's Advisory Council on Literacy. In its current form, the bill would also require the Department of Libraries to "submit a written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with a recommendation for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources with a focus on options that target low-income or underserved areas of the State. Options considered by the Advisory Council shall include State or local partnership with or financial support for book gifting programs, book distribution programs, and any other compelling avenue for supporting early childhood literacy in Vermont."

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.204>

2024 Summer Reading Grants Update

This year's Summer Reading Program theme is "Adventure begins at your library" – and Department staff are supporting public libraries around the state to prepare for their busiest time of year.

Library Consultant for Youth Services, Jonathan Clark, hosted an informational session in December for librarians around the state, presenting an overview of this year's theme and available resources. Jonathan will host five in-person Meet Ups of Youth Services librarians around the state as well as a virtual Meet Up. These events will provide participants will the opportunity to meet and network with colleagues, share programming ideas, and discuss challenges. Free books and promotional items to support summer reading will be raffled off. The Department provides all public

libraries in the state with access to publicity and promotional materials developed by the Collaborative Summer Reading Program.

One way the Department supports all public libraries in Vermont in hosting engaging summer reading programs for the public is by providing them with the opportunity to apply for non-competitive grants of \$300 to support of summer reading programs for youth. This year, the Department received 147 applications for this year's Summer Reading Grants, which is down slightly from last year, when 151 public libraries received the awards.

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/youth-services-children-and-teens/summer-reading-program>

New Library Trustee Training

On April 4, 2024, Joy Worland, Small and Rural Libraries and Continuing Education Consultant, and Kevin Unrath, Operations Consultant trained new library trustees in their roles. The online training was attended by 75 public library trustees. Following the training, 90% of attendees reported on the post-session evaluation that they "felt more confident" in performing their duties and that they "intended to use something they learned" at their library.

One attendee noted about the presentation, "It is clear that this was developed and presented by people with real experience with how libraries actually function, so instead of feeling like this was a bureaucratic lecture, it felt really useful and helpful." The session was recorded and made available for trustees who were unable to attend on the Department's Niche Academy platform.

FiberConnect Grants Update

All 40 public libraries eligible for grants associated with the decommissioning of the FiberConnect network have applied for those funds. Grant awards have been processed and awards have been issued to eligible public libraries. Library Technology Consultant Josh Muse is working to support public libraries as they transition off the network by the end of the current fiscal year: June 30, 2024. The FiberConnect network served as a successful bridge for many communities in Vermont, providing them with high-speed internet access until internet service providers were available to serve them locally.

Vermont Public Library Foundation (VPLF) Update

The board of the Vermont Public Library Foundation has decided to wind down the foundation in the coming year. The VPLF board has authorized its President, the State Librarian, to work with the foundation's council to develop a wind-down plan that includes moving the Winnie Belle Learned Fund to the Vermont Department of Libraries. The Winnie Belle Learned Fund was the VPLF's primary source of funding for many years, and the VPLF board concurred that the work of administering that grant can be

performed capably by the Department. The wind-down of the foundation will free up Department staff's time. Statute empowers the State Librarian to form a non-profit should the need ever arise in the future to receive a large grant award from a donor.

VtSHARES “Believe in the Difference” Spirit Award

The VtSHARES Coordinating Committee recognized the level of enthusiasm, compassion, and creativity that Lauren Kelley, Technical Services Consultant, continued to exhibit as the Department's Campaign Ambassador. Lauren was celebrated for finding creative ways to promote, engage, and encourage employee giving within the Department – which had a 94% participation rate in this year's VtSHARES campaign.