

**Testimony of Miranda Axworthy**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Wednesday**

Good Afternoon Mr. Chair and members of the Senate Education Committee.

My name is Miranda Axworthy. I am a resident of Rutland City and I am currently employed as a Reference and Instruction Librarian at Castleton University.

Under the announced plan to transform the libraries, my job will not be terminated. I am not losing my job. However, some very talented co-workers who have helped countless library guests have an incredible experience in our libraries are being terminated. If implemented, the plan will result in a loss for the students, the faculty, and the regions which the libraries serve.

With a declining applicant pool, the Vermont State Colleges should take steps to encourage applicants to enroll or stay enrolled. To suggest there will be fewer or no librarians and few or no books are not selling points that will attract those limited number of individuals looking to attend college.

Here is information that may surprise you in light of the information presented to you by the university administration. **Students still strongly desire print materials**. The Florida Virtual Campus's 2022 Student Textbook and Instructional Materials Survey analyzed data from nearly 14,000 students at a variety of colleges and universities in Florida. Although textbooks and other instructional materials are increasingly available in digital formats, over 82% of respondents still wanted the option to purchase a low-cost paper copy.

**Digital**

Print circulation has been declining at libraries across the country for a long time. So while many libraries are shifting more resources into digital collections and less on print, which is exactly what the staff proposed, **very few have decided to discontinue supporting print altogether**.

Professor Linda Olson recently told you she only found one public, residential college whose library was fully online.

Not all books and educational materials are available in a digital format. Castleton recently purchased 20 new books on trauma that our faculty requested. Only two were available as eBooks.

Libraries can't just purchase a Kindle version from Amazon. Even if that format exists, there may not be a digital version that libraries can license.

Additionally, eBooks for libraries typically are significantly more expensive and unstable than print books.

### **Interlibrary Loan Program**

Our faculty and students need resources for their research and their course work. No library can purchase everything that their users need—we do our best with limited budgets, but there's just too much out there.

We work with each other through interlibrary loan to provide access to much more than we have in-house, but that process is reciprocal. If we cannot lend physical materials, we cannot borrow them. This closes off so much more from our communities.

If we go all digital, borrowing and lending eBooks is not an option; we can typically share a chapter or so, depending on length, but you can't lend the whole book.

A recent court case between a group of publishers led by Hachette Book Group and the Internet Archive may very well have a cooling effect on the digital lending models that have been starting to gain some ground. That remains to be seen, but it certainly isn't settled.

The right of first sale with print is well established. Once you own a print book, you own it forever and you can lend it. We send our print collection all over the state to public and college libraries for Vermonters to use. We cannot make our digital collections accessible to people who aren't students, faculty, or staff of our institutions due to the publishers' licenses.

### **Data Used to Justify Decision Is Misleading**

The data used by the administration to justify their decision is misleading without context.

We can't directly compare electronic usage data with print usage data because they capture different kinds of use, which is why it's important to look at a variety of kinds of data in order to make responsible collections decisions.

The data for digital materials is, unsurprisingly, much more granular and captures a lot more browsing data than we can get with print. It's easy to pull a book off the shelf and skim through the table of contents or read the first few pages and then put it back where it was, and we would never know.

We ask people not to reshelve books themselves so that we can record in-house uses, but many people do it anyways. But if you open an eBook or digital article for similar use, to skim a bit or read the abstract, that use is counted immediately. So many of the figures being presented— 96% of our usage is digital vs. 4% print, etc.—are misleading at best.

The libraries changed our cataloging system in 2018, and some usage data was lost during that transition. That means we don't have a complete record of usage prior to that, and we can't give an accurate account of how much of our collection has never circulated, despite the figures the administration keeps using.

Not all of the collection circulates at any given time. The 80/20 rule is pretty well established within libraries: 20% of your collection is responsible for 80% of your circulation. But the part that circulates changes over time based on research trends, faculty research interests, programs offered, etc. That's why we collect broadly and use our professional expertise in addition to data when we make collections decisions.

Thank you.