



Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont Report

January 26, 2024 | 1



Created by
Act 66
in
2021



Act 66, relating to making miscellaneous changes in education laws, created the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont, responsible for studying the statewide status of libraries and submitting a report on their studies to the House and Senate Committees on Education by November 1, 2023.

Working Group Membership

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Areas of study:

-  library services for specific segments of the Vermont population, including senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, youths and children, immigrant and migrant communities, and people living in poverty
-  the role that libraries play in emergency preparedness, cultural diversity and inclusion, public health and safety, community identity and resiliency, economic development, and access to public programs and services
-  the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services
-  current status of libraries, including programming, collections, facilities, technology, and staffing

Working Group report contents:

- ✓ Specific and detailed findings and proposals concerning the issues set forth
- ✓ Recommendations for updating the statutes, rules, standards, and the governance structures of Vermont libraries to ensure equitable access for Vermont residents, efficient use of resources, and quality in the provision of services
- ✓ Recommendations related to the funding needs of Vermont libraries, including capital, ongoing, and special funding; and
- ✓ Any other information or recommendations that the Working Group may deem necessary

Input



Meetings

17



Written
Comments

132



Spoken
Comments

81



Expert
Reports

25

New Data Commissioned by the Working Group

**PUBLIC LIBRARY
COMPENSATION AND
SALARY SURVEY
ANALYSIS**



**WORKING GROUP ON THE
STATUS OF LIBRARIES IN
VERMONT**

Prepared for the Working Group by :
Stephanie Chase and Judah Hamer,

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Overarching Themes

Ensure principles of intellectual freedom and privacy

- Consider legislation to improve access to online resources for Vermonters by addressing the licensing structure and cost of eBooks and eAudiobooks for libraries;
- Consider legislation aimed at protecting libraries, librarians, trustees, and patrons from challenges related to materials selection and retention (see sample legislation in appendix);
- Require all Vermont libraries to have a robust materials selection policy and reconsideration procedure that protects 1st Amendment rights and also complies with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Vermont’s public accommodation law, and Vermont’s Anti-Discrimination law;
- Consider legislation to expand the confidentiality of public library records to minors aged 12 and older; and
- Consider legislation that protects the privacy of Vermonters when accessing information online.

Foster more inclusive, accessible libraries

- **Expand library services for Vermonters living with disabilities including Deaf and hard of hearing individuals;**
- **Expand library services for Vermonters living with cognitive disabilities, learning differences, and mental health disabilities;**
- **Increase support to Department of Libraries' collection budget to facilitate expanded statewide resource sharing of non-English language materials;**
- **Increase access to information and government services by providing funding for centralized translation and interpretation services at public libraries;**
- **Increase annual support for libraries in Vermont's correctional facilities so that they operate more efficiently and provide incarcerated individuals with more access to library resources; and**
- **Consider the development of a statewide books by mail services to support people with mobility disabilities or transportation challenges.**

Support academic success

- Restore the School Library Consultant position to the Agency of Education or create a new position within the Department of Libraries that can lead and support the statewide implementation of AASL School Library Standards; and
- Provide funding to expand statewide research databases for the pre-K-12 grade audience.

Prioritize training for library staff

- Update statute to formalize the issuance of Certificates of Public Librarianship by the Department of Libraries; and
- Update statute to require that the Department of Libraries provide seminars, workshops, and other programs to increase the professional competence of library professionals in the state.

Build more robust shared collections at the state level

- **Increase funding to provide statewide access to eBooks and eAudiobooks;**
- **Increase funding to maintain and expand courier services to all public libraries; and**
- **Consider providing authority to enable public libraries to participate in universal borrowing.**

Improve public safety in libraries

- Consider existing public safety laws for educational facilities (including gun laws, drug laws, and criminal threatening laws) and whether it would be appropriate to extend those same protections to both municipal and incorporated public libraries in the state; and
- Consider the applicability of future public safety legislation in public buildings and/or schools to both municipal and incorporated public libraries.

Maintain and improve public library facilities

- Establish ongoing funding for capital improvements of public library buildings.

Bridge the digital divide

- Leverage federal and state resources for digital equity to support training on technology and cybersecurity for public librarians; and
- Support low-cost, high-speed internet access at public libraries.

Revise statute to improve clarity around the governance of public libraries

- Clarify state statute regarding funding of public libraries, specifically which entities are responsible funding local public libraries (as public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens, and every citizen should have access to a free public library);
- Clarify the role of the library board and the municipality in municipal public libraries including authority to hire and supervise the director; and
- Clarify language in § 141. Establishment and maintenance (22 V.S.A. § 141)

Revise statute related to Department of Libraries

- Remove from state statute: “shall be the primary access point for State information, and provide advice on State information technology policy;” and
- Require the Department to develop a collection development policy that reflects diversity of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status, and Vermont’s diverse people and history.

Questions & Comments

libraries.vermont.gov

