Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont
Final Report

In May 2021, the Vermont State Legislature passed [Act 66 (S.115)](#) an act relating to making miscellaneous changes in education laws, which was signed by the Governor on June 7, 2021. This act created the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont and charges the group with 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. The Working Group was formed with the goal of strengthening and supporting libraries of all sizes and improving library services for the public.

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Cover Image: Morristown Centennial Library's All Together Now banner (photo courtesy of the library)

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Charge of the Working Group

In May 2021, the Vermont State Legislature passed [Act 66 (S.115)](#), an act relating to making miscellaneous changes in education laws, which was signed by Governor Scott on June 7, 2021. This act created the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont and charges that body with 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.

From Sec. 1 WORKING GROUP ON THE STATUS OF LIBRARIES IN VERMONT; REPORT, the Act states the following:

a. Creation. There is created the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont to study and report on the statewide status of Vermont's libraries. The Working Group is formed with the intent of strengthening and supporting libraries of all sizes and improving library services for the public.

b. Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following members:

    1. the State Librarian;

    2. the President of the Vermont Library Association or designee;

    3. the Executive Director of the Vermont Humanities Council or designee;

    4. three representatives of public libraries, who shall be from libraries of difference sizes and from different regions of the State, appointed by the State Librarian;

    5. two representatives of public school libraries, who shall be from schools of different sizes and from different regions of the State, appointed by the Vermont School Library Association;

    6. two representatives of college and university libraries, appointed by the President of the College and Special Libraries Section of the Vermont Library Association; and

    7. one public library trustee, appointed by the President of the Friends and Trustees Section of the Vermont Library Association.

c. Powers and duties. The Working Group shall study:

    1. 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.

2.   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.

3.   the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services; and

4.   the current overall status of Vermont libraries, which may include information related to programming, collections, facilities, technology, and staffing.

   A.   Programming. The Working Group may study the types and frequency of library programs, attendance at library programs, and whether library programs are meeting community needs. The study of programming may include an assessment of public engagement and outreach surrounding library programming as well as the opportunities for nonlibrary programs and groups to access Vermont libraries.

   B.   Collections. The Working Group may study the size and diversity of library holdings and assess the strengths and gaps in materials available to Vermonters. The study of collections may include an assessment of how libraries may best share resources across differing libraries and communities, whether libraries offer community-specific resources, and whether libraries maintain special collections or historical artifacts.

   C.   Facilities. The Working Group may study whether library facilities and buildings could be improved with regard to energy efficiency, accessibility, flexibility, human health and safety, historic preservation, and intergenerational needs.

   D.   Technology. The Working Group may study whether Vermont libraries have sufficient access to basic technological resources, cyber-security resources, high-speed Internet, electronic catalogs, interlibrary loan and other interoperable systems, and appropriate hardware and software.

   E.   Staff. The Working Group may study staffing levels at Vermont libraries, whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet community needs, whether library staff compensation and benefits are sufficient, how libraries rely on volunteers, and what resources are available for workforce development and training of library staff.

d.   Public input. As part of the study and report, the Working Group shall solicit feedback from the public and library users around the State. The Working Group

may examine models for library management and organization in other states, including the formation of statewide service networks.

e. Data to be used. The data used in the analysis of library services and operations may be from 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Post pandemic data may also be used to assess the status of library services and operations.

f. Consultation with the Board of Libraries. The Working Group may solicit feedback from the Board of Libraries.

g. Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Libraries

h. Report. On or before November 1, 2023, the Working Group shall submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Education. The report shall contain:

1. specific and detailed findings and proposals concerning the issues set forth in the information listed above;

2. 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;

3. recommendations related to the funding needs of Vermont libraries, including capital, ongoing, and special funding; and

4. any other information or recommendations that the Working Group may deem necessary.

i. Meetings

1. The State Librarian shall be the Chair of the Working Group.

2. The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur within 45 days after the effective date of this act.

3. A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

4. The Working Group shall cease to exist on December 1, 2023.

j. Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Working Group shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department of Libraries.

k. Appropriation. The sum of $12,000.00 is appropriated to the Department of Libraries from the General Fund in fiscal year 2022 for per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for members of the working group.

Methodology

Established in 2021 by [Act 66 (S.115)](#), the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont was charged with studying the status of libraries in our state in order to strengthen and support libraries of all sizes, and to improve library services for the public. The Working Group was tasked with submitting a report of its findings and proposals to the House and Senate Committees on Education by November 1, 2023. Per Act 66 (S.115), the Working Group's report shall contain:

1. specific and detailed findings and proposals concerning the issues set forth in the information listed above;

2. 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;

3. recommendations related to the funding needs of Vermont libraries, including capital, ongoing, and special funding; and

4. any other information or recommendations that the Working Group may deem necessary.

The Working Group began its work on September 17, 2021, under the leadership of Assistant State Librarian for Information & Access Tom McMurdo, who at that time was serving as the Interim State Librarian. The agendas of the first three Working Group meetings comprised public comment on the topics of programming, collections, and facilities.

Catherine Delneo became Working Group Chair on February 13, 2022, when she assumed the role of State Librarian and Commissioner of the Department of Libraries. The Working Group established meetings on the 4th Friday of every other month starting Friday, September 17, 2021. Meetings were typically 5 hours in duration, with a break at midday for lunch. Each meeting of the Working Group focused on a topic specified in statute or on a specific Working Group administrative task. When necessary to address all areas of its scope, the Working Group added special meetings to its schedule.

From May 20, 2022, forward, Working Group meetings featured reports on the topic under consideration by Department of Libraries staff, a wide range of state and national experts in the field, and officials in state government. These reports were followed by

public comment, then meetings concluded with Working Group member discussion on the topic.

The Working Group convened seventeen meetings:

- Report of the Working Group - November 1, 2023

- Public Library Staffing and Salary Survey Report - September 22, 2023

- Recommendations and Working Group Report Writing - August 18, 2023

- Safety - July 28, 2023

- Library Structures and Organizations - May 26, 2023

- Intellectual Freedom - April 21, 2023 (Special Meeting)

- Social Services and Emergency Preparedness - March 24, 2023

- Inclusive Library Services - January 27, 2023

- Survey Development and Department Programming Overview - December 16, 2022

- Continuing Education - November 18, 2022

- Review of Learning and Future Plans - September 23, 2022

- Staffing - July 22, 2022

- Technology - May 20, 2022

- Facilities - March 25, 2022

- Collections - January 14, 2022

- Programming - November 12, 2021

- First Meeting - September 17, 2021

Being a public body, the Working Group adhered to open meeting law. Written comments were solicited prior to each topical meeting and were posted on the Working Group's webpages. In addition to making meeting agendas and meetings available to the public per open meeting law, the Working Group also posted full video recordings of its meetings on its webpage along with supporting documents and written comments to facilitate public participation in its work.

The Working Group received written comments from 129 individuals and organizations as well as two combined submissions from groups of school librarians and one combined submission from staff of an academic library. During its meetings, the Working Group heard oral comments from 81 individuals, reports from 12 experts, and Departmental reports on 13 topics. The Working Group commissioned a study on staffing and salaries of public libraries in Vermont to inform its recommendations. The Working Group's report was also informed by the Department's 2023 Public Library Broadband and Technology Survey Report. This extensive body of information is available to the public and the Legislature on the Working Group's webpages.

Department of Libraries staff provided written reports to the Working Group on each of the topics they presented during meetings. Individual Working Group members wrote draft summaries of the written and oral comments by Vermonters on each subject and summarized the recommendations of the Working Group for the Legislature and the Department.

These elements can all be found within this report, which Working Group members voted to approve at their meeting on October 13, 2023.

Executive Summary

Every Vermonter should have access to the benefits of a library, but the goal of equitable access to library service has yet to be met. The one constant throughline in community feedback, information shared by experts, and data on library services in Vermont shared with the Working Group is that access to library services in the state is inconsistent.

The Working Group heard that disparate levels of funding for public libraries around the state cause gross inequities in library services, including facilities, collections, and programs. The Working Group also heard that library staff and trustees around the state want to provide their communities with the best service, but that many libraries simply lack the resources to meet the needs of their communities.

In this context, shared, statewide services are key to ensuring that Vermonters have access to library materials and information. Statewide systems and programs, including Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and shared online databases, encourage resource sharing between libraries and are pivotal in increasing Vermonters' access to books and information. The Working Group shares its strong support of centralized, statewide collections and programs that provide a core set of materials for all Vermonters to access through their libraries. These resources help to equalize access across communities with different levels of library funding.

However, as the costs of printed books, electronic books, and online databases rise, it is becoming increasingly difficult for academic, public, and school libraries in Vermont to maintain adequate collections that meet the needs of the communities they serve. The costs of printed materials continue to grow while the budgets of many libraries remain level. As a result, many libraries in Vermont struggle to afford materials that meet the reading and learning needs of the public. Print resources remain essential elements of Vermont's libraries. Print materials ensure equitable access to information, as using them does not depend upon having access to the internet or computer, tablet, or phone. Printed books are also a key tool in literacy development. According to Maryanne Wolf, the director of the Center for Dyslexia, Diverse Learners, and Social Justice at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, "Reading development begins well before any teaching. For young children, physical books are best, audio is second best, and tablet is a clear third." (https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-printed-books-are-better-than-screens-for-learning-to-read-q-a/2023/03)

> *"Books are really one of the greatest tools for the mind and should never be lost until we are assured that the same processes that were advantaged there are not being diminished by the other mediums."—Maryanne Wolf*

That said, libraries are challenged to continue to provide print materials for the public while also meeting the growing demand for online resources, including eBooks and databases.

Online resources, meanwhile, can be ephemeral. Publishers used to sell libraries physical copies of books and journals, which libraries could lend and use as long as the library binding held together. Today's procurement model for libraries is one of licensing with a finite period of access to online materials. For that reason, the Working Group asks the Legislature to consider legislation to address the pricing structures that impact Vermonters' access to eBooks and eAudiobooks through their libraries and to bear in mind the rising costs of shared statewide database resources when allocating funds to support schools and libraries.

Vermont's libraries face increased worries that the very words on the page of the materials they collect for patrons and the programs they curate for their communities will be challenged or banned. While calls for book bans are thankfully few in Vermont to date, the Working Group heard from members of the community that a type of "soft censorship" is becoming common in libraries—particularly those in smaller communities. Worries about defending potential challenges to materials in the library collection increasingly impact the comfort library staff have in selecting well-written, relevant materials for their collections. High-profile challenges to library programming in the state have some library staff and trustees backing away from inclusive programming. While Vermont has, so far, faced fewer challenges to materials and programs than many other states, the feeling on the ground is that it is just a matter of time until these issues will impact Vermont libraries significantly. Libraries have long been a place where ideas and information can be shared freely, so this changing climate poses a threat to the very nature of libraries and the role they serve in the community.

Limits to the accessibility of books threaten not only Vermont's libraries, but its democracy. While library materials serve as a place where one can access facts and data, the library is also a shared repository of stories. And through these stories, we can learn about and from others and build empathy and understanding. "Marcus Aurelius insisted that to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge; we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us" [Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998)]. Books are not just pleasure reading or an assignment for school, but are a key to understanding others, and understanding other perspectives. Books help us find commonality with others who may seem dissimilar from ourselves—and also help us to understand our differences in a way that can help us build an inclusive, democratic society together.

"…a novel could be fashioned as a raft of hope, perception and entertainment that might help keep us afloat as we tried to negotiate the snags and whirlpools that mark our nation's vacillating course toward and away from the democratic ideal."
—Ralph Ellison

The current trend toward silencing literary voices and removing materials from libraries threatens to stifle the opportunity Vermonters have to build connections with and empathy for others through reading. It also threatens to expunge some voices from the conversation entirely. Excluded voices often belong to members of traditionally marginalized and underserved groups. The removal of books due to the ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, or political views of their authors results in some members of our community not being able to find representations of anyone like them reflected in the books at their library. The Working Group calls on the Legislature to consider legislation to protect the intellectual freedom and privacy of Vermonters, and to expand the privacy afforded to youth in using public libraries.

Another existential challenge faced by many of Vermont's public libraries is far more tangible: many public library buildings across the state are more than 100 years of age and in need of significant repairs and improvement. Public libraries have often not had sufficient funds to maintain and update their buildings. While some federal funds will be available to support some libraries in updating and maintaining their facilities, the overall need is likely to exceed the available funding.

Providing inclusive library spaces is a challenge that faces all types of libraries in Vermont, many of which were constructed or last renovated prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and do not meet modern minimum requirements for public facilities. The Working Group heard from library staff across the state that they have a desire to improve the accessibility of their facilities so that they can truly serve all Vermonters. The Working Group appreciates the efforts of the Department to secure federal grant funding for improvements to public library buildings, and calls on the Legislature, when funds are available, to consider whether ongoing funding for capital improvements in libraries—including ADA-related improvements—would be appropriate.

"The library really is a palace. It bestows nobility on people who otherwise couldn't afford a shred of it. People need to have nobility and dignity in their lives."—Eric Klinenberg

Vermont's libraries are its "palaces for the people," places where everyday people come to think, to dream, and to learn. People visit libraries together, or to see friends, but they also visit libraries so they can be alone but near others. They are a place to share ideas

and a place to connect with others in the local community and around the world. However, the Working Group heard from many community members that some behaviors in Vermont's public libraries impact people's experience when visiting public libraries. The Working Group also heard about the isolation and concerns for personal safety faced by public library staff, many of whom work alone in library buildings on evenings and weekends when nearby municipal buildings are closed—or who work in communities without local police to call on for help. The Working Group discussed the disparity in safety in different types of libraries and calls on the Legislature to amend Act 103 (S.265) to include staff of incorporated public libraries working in library buildings not owned by a municipality. The library staff who work in public library buildings owned by non-profit entities perform the same work and function as their counterparts in municipal libraries and should be afforded the same protections under law.

The Working Group also heard that the high social service needs in our state at this time sometimes impact public library services. Public libraries are one of the few indoor locations that welcome all community members to use their facilities at no cost. Public library staff in Vermont increasingly find themselves trying to fill gaps that have emerged as social service needs have grown. This is especially challenging as library staff are not trained to provide counseling and do not have clear paths of referral to meet impacted individuals' needs. The Working Group heard that library staff are increasingly concerned about the prevalence of behaviors linked with poor mental health and substance use in public libraries. While staff voiced empathy and concern for those who need supportive services, they also conveyed that behaviors associated with mental health challenges and substance use make it difficult for them to provide basic library services.

For many community members, libraries provide the only gateway to the digital age and serve as the only place where they can access the internet. The Working Group heard how important it is to provide high-speed internet access to Vermonters and heard that the connectivity currently available in libraries may not meet the needs of the community. It also heard that many library staff need support to improve their technology skills and their ability to train others to use technology—and to use technology safely as cybersecurity crimes are increasingly common. The Working Group encourages the State's Digital Equity team to help to address these concerns.

It is challenging for libraries to meet the needs of their communities with current staffing levels. The Working Group consistently heard from public libraries that they need more high-level staff to meet the information and programming needs of their communities and that they need budgets large enough to enable staff to be compensated with livable wages. The Working Group also heard that many public libraries struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Due to the complexity of this topic and the number of comments and concerns raised to the Working Group by the community about low wages and low staffing levels in Vermont's public libraries, the Working Group commissioned an independent study of staffing and salaries at Vermont's public libraries for inclusion within its report to the

Legislature. The Public Library Compensation and Salary Survey Analysis is included in the Working Group's report (Appendix), and the survey findings are sobering. The survey analysis found that the compensation of many who work in public libraries is below the 2022 Vermont Livable Wage and the 2022 Rural Basic Needs Wage. Additionally, the survey highlighted that most public library staff do not receive health insurance, dental benefits, or pensions through their employers.

The Working Group heard concerns that students in Vermont's schools have less access to librarians, and that librarians are working with far fewer support staff than they did in the past. The Working Group also heard that while the state's Educational Quality Standards prescribe specific ratios of librarians to students, community members also shared that there are no enforcement mechanisms in place to ensure those ratios are met. Members of the community also shared that combining school librarian and technical positions had a negative effect upon student access to library services. They reported a need for additional support and asked the Legislature to consider reinstating a school library consultant position within state government.

The community also shared with the Working Group that limited wages and the high cost of master's degrees in library science from institutions accredited by the American Library Association are linked with lower levels of training among Vermont's librarians and library directors. The Department of Libraries' continuing education and Certificate of Public Librarianship programs emerged as vitally important to ensuring high-quality public library services in Vermont. The Working Group calls on the Legislature to alter the language of statute to require that the Department offer continuing education. The Working Group also requests that the Department be authorized in statute to issue the Certificate of Public Librarianship.

That said, the Working Group also heard that staff at all types of libraries in Vermont use limited resources to provide Vermonters with a great deal of service. Libraries across the state provide rich collections and programming to the communities they serve and provide an access point to online information and resources. Libraries find low-cost ways to provide their communities with opportunities to gather and share information and ideas. Libraries partner with other organizations to develop programs and services unique to their communities—programs that are often more than the sum of their parts. They provide the physical and electronic collections their budgets allow and participate in resource-sharing to help the individuals they serve to access materials owned by others. Vermont's libraries bring community members together in celebration and provide spaces of comfort and connection. Libraries create empathetic citizens who are well-equipped to participate in our democracy. Library staff around the state electively participate in training to increase their knowledge and skills and strive to continue that learning to the benefit of their community. They carry an optimism for the future, and a hope to improve accessibility and inclusivity of their collections and the services they provide to their communities.

Recommendations to the Legislature Related to Updating Statutes and Funding Needs of Vermont Libraries

The Working Group was charged by the Legislature (Act 66) with providing a report that shall contain: "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" and "recommendations related to the funding needs of Vermont libraries, including capital, ongoing, and special funding."

The Working Group recommends that the Legislature consider the following updates to statute and—as resources are available—funding needs to support Vermont's libraries:

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 1*st* 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 Department 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.

Recommendations to the Department of Libraries Related to Updating the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

The Vermont Department of Libraries has Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries (the Standards) which went into effect on November 1, 1986. The Standards provide public libraries across Vermont with "criteria and direction for assessing and upgrading local library service" and "provide a base from which libraries in even the smallest Vermont communities can proceed to improve service." (https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/Scanned1986Standards.pdf)

The Standards are intended to serve as a baseline for all public libraries in the state, and many libraries have long ago surpassed the minimums enumerated within them. There are also many public libraries that still do not meet the Standards and that do not have the means to do so, despite having had thirty-seven years to take action.

While much time has passed since they were implemented, the Standards went through the state's Rulemaking process, were approved by the Vermont Legislative Administrative Rules Committee, and still have the force and effect of law.

The Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries emphasize four central themes:

- public service;

- public access;

- interlibrary loan cooperation; and

- community involvement.

The Standards make clear that public libraries exist to serve the needs of the community and should draw their support from and engage their community, spend resources responsibly and transparently, and cooperate with other libraries to broaden their services. The Standards emphasize the responsibility of the library director for the overall operation of the public library, and the role of the library board in representing the community, developing library policy, and evaluating the work of the library director and the library.

However, the document clearly states that "Meeting standards is purely voluntary. The Department of Libraries provides service to all public libraries, whether they meet the Standards or not."

There is no penalty to public libraries that do not meet the standards and there is no requirement that public libraries meet the standards to receive support from the Department.

The Standards have not been updated in thirty-seven years, during which time public library services have continued to evolve.

The Working Group was charged by the Legislature with sharing "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."

The Working Group recommends that the Department begin the process of updating the Standards by the end of December 2024 and recommends the Department include the following topics in the Updated Standards:

- All public libraries should have policies on Intellectual Freedom, Collection Development, Materials Reconsideration, and Programming and these policies should be updated at a regular interval (e.g., every 5 years). These policies should be developed and adopted within a non-discrimination framework that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, sex, disability, religion, and other protected characteristics, applicable to all library services and activities;

- All public libraries should provide free internet access and public computing; and

- All public libraries should provide free Wi-Fi to the public 24/7.

The Working Group further recommends that the Department consider the inclusion of the following topics in the Updated Standards:

- ongoing continuing education for library staff to maintain and update skills;

- recommended library building sizes based on the size of the community served;

- Recommended collection sizes based on size of the community served;

- recommended minimum programming levels relative to the size of community served;

- recommendation that library buildings include meeting and program spaces;

- recommendation to inspect library buildings and property annually;

- recommendation to develop facilities maintenance and improvement plans including emergency preparedness and climate resilience;

- recommendation to update the level of municipal tax support for public libraries; and

- strongly recommend ongoing trustee training.

Facilities

The topic of Facilities was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, March 25, 2022. The Working Group heard from 14 community members and did not hear from Department of Libraries staff. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 23 community members.

Librarians in Vermont have employed creative strategies to maximize the use of a myriad of varied building configurations and spaces across the state. Even so, the space associated with libraries of all kinds poses challenges that cannot be addressed by individual librarians, staff, or even building owners like towns or scholastic institutions alone.

Public Library Facilities
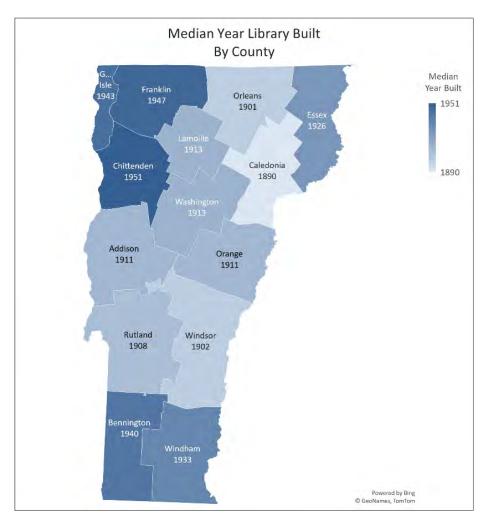
> *"Today, the library building faces significant challenges when to comes to safety, accessibility, and functionality.—Dana Hart, Director, Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury*

Many of the public libraries within the state are in historic buildings which have unique attributes that can be challenging to maintain. These historic buildings often need infrastructure improvements, and they require greater maintenance and upkeep than newer buildings. Infrastructure problems in historic library buildings include HVAC, ventilation, insulation, lighting, and plumbing.

The Department added questions to the 2022 Public Library Survey (PLS) to gather information about the age of Vermont's library buildings. Among the 152 public libraries that responded, the median year in which their building was constructed was 1912. Among the 119 of reporting public libraries shared that they had added to or renovated their building, the median year of those renovations was 2003. One hundred twenty-three of the libraries had "refreshed" their buildings, making improvements that did not involve major construction or renovations, with the median year for those "refreshes" being 2018. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics)

When viewed county-by-county, the PLS data shows that the median age of public library buildings varies by county. For example, the median age of libraries in Orleans County is 122 years, but the median age of libraries in Windham County is 90 years. That difference in library building age could mean that libraries in some counties have more capital improvements needs than others.

Median Year Library Built By County

Source: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics

The square footage of public library buildings as reported in the 2022 PLS also varies by county. The public libraries in Chittenden County, which serve many of the state's largest municipalities, have a median square footage of 6,508—far larger than the median square footage of public libraries in Washington County, which have a median square footage of just 1,700. According to the 2022 PLS, 18 of the responding 152 public libraries rated their building as poor in terms of meeting needs and 11 rated their building as in poor condition.

Rating	How does size meet needs	How does condition meet needs
Poor	12%	7%
Fair	23%	18%
Average	25%	30%
Good	25%	28%
Excellent	15%	17%

Source: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics

Attempting to provide adequate resources and services within these historic buildings is daunting, particularly since outdated infrastructure often requires significant structural improvements to resolve. Linda Saarnijoki, Library Trustee of the Wilder Memorial Library in Weston shared, "Our library in Weston is in an historic and well-situated building—over 200 years old, a library for over 100 years—but lacks space: no bathroom or running water, very little space for programming, no storage, no work area for staff, limited space for resources."

To further complicate the facilities challenges faced by Vermont's public libraries, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that many public library buildings in Vermont have inadequate air circulation. Almost all public libraries in the state had to close during the winter of 2021, and most likely will again, should the state endure another pandemic. Dana Hart, Director, Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury, shared that at the Isley Library in Middlebury, "[T]he heating system does not allow for any air exchange. The only way to get fresh air in the building is to open a window (not an ideal option during Vermont winters)." The Director of the Kimball Public Library in Randolph, Amy Grasmick, also shared that the Kimball Public Library does not have a mechanical ventilation system. The experience of trying to maintain safe library spaces when faced with an airborne transmissible virus highlighted the need to replace existing heating systems in libraries with systems that circulate air so that libraries can continue operations through similar public health circumstances.

"We cannot simultaneously provide sufficient ventilation to protect community well-being by keeping windows open and adequately heat the 4,000 square foot space."—Amy Grasmick, Director, Kimball Library, Randolph

Another facilities-related concern that became apparent to the Working Group is that many historic or older structures that house libraries do not meet today's minimum standards for accessibility. To welcome and serve all members of the community, library buildings must be able to be entered and moved through easily by people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Library Director Kendra Aber-Ferri of the Morristown Centennial Library shared "I think all Vermont library buildings need to offer

an accessible space because in many of our small towns, the library is the only space for people to go that is free and open to the public."

The concern that many of Vermont's public libraries are not accessible was echoed by several public librarians. Lisa Sammet, retired Director of the Jeudevine Memorial Library in Hardwick reported, "A wheelchair can't get into the building. Our lone bathroom is down a winding staircase in an unheated basement." The Jeudevine is currently undergoing a major renovation and expansion while increasing its overall space, which will address these concerns.

Barbara Ball, Director of the Windsor Library stated that while that library "does have a handicapped-accessible ramp leading to our main entrance, there is currently no way for someone who isn't fully ambulatory to access our children's room, meeting room, historical records room, or the bathroom."

Jennie Rozycki, Director of the John G. McCullough Free Library in North Bennington shared that "…persons with disabilities have indicated that they cannot take full advantage of the library due to its lack of accessibility features and feel marginalized because of this."

While the configuration of public library space may have been adequate in the past, the changing needs of the public these libraries serve require new types of spaces. Many of Vermont's libraries are located in towns with growing communities. Aurora River, Director of the Varnum Memorial Library in Jeffersonville shared, "…as our community's demographics evolve, we are in crucial need of space to house more materials that speak to a wider audience than general adult fiction and young children's picture books."

As communities grow, their small, outdated library facilities can sometimes no longer meet their needs. Some libraries have had numerous additions over time, which can result in confusing layouts and poor sightlines for staff. Hart shared that while the Ilsley Public Library does have an elevator, it does not have a handicap accessible entrance on Main Street, "forcing many community members to access the library through our side door…All [these] patrons see when they enter the library is a staircase and an elevator…For many patrons that must take the elevator to get to the main floor, there is the added stress of getting stuck: the library's elevator is over forty years old, and entrapments are a terrifyingly regular occurrence." Libraries that have had multiple additions often have spaces with limited sight lines or service on floors that staff cannot oversee easily, which can contribute to issues of safety for the public and staff in libraries.

When considering space needs, planning should consider the distinct needs of the community served and what areas are needed for different purposes including: spaces for children and teens, programming spaces, areas for group work, and adequate workspace for staff. While many older libraries were built without meeting rooms,

meeting rooms are seen as a basic feature of any new library construction. Among the libraries that responded to the 2022 PLS, 108 shared that they have a meeting room, and all those libraries reported that their meeting room is available for use by the community. These libraries reported that the median meeting room fits 30 people.

Over the past 25 years, public programming has taken on a larger role in libraries, and some libraries find that it is challenging to present programs in their existing spaces. Emily DiGiulio, Director of the Fairfax Community Library shared, "My library needs more room for programming so that we can offer programs in a separate space where presenters and participants can have a higher level of noise or physical activity." Many libraries are seeking to add meeting rooms or to expand existing meeting rooms to accommodate larger numbers of people at programs and community meetings. Some libraries are exploring the use of flexible library furnishings, including wheeled shelving, so that their small spaces can be reconfigured to accommodate programs and then be reset for library use.

Not only have changing demographics resulted in new community needs, but shifting work patterns, for both adults and children, have yielded new space needs that libraries are challenged to address. One example is that public libraries offer reliable Wi-Fi that many community members depend upon. Since the pandemic, more people are working hybrid schedules or working completely remotely and need good Wi-Fi, and so would like to work at their public library. However, there is often not enough room in Vermont's public libraries for these individuals to work.

To address the reality that their library is too small for everyone to use at once—or that it might lack air circulation—many of Vermont's libraries have boosted their Wi-Fi signals to reach outside, extending their footprint to porches and cars parked outside. The Department's 2023 Public Library Broadband and Technology Survey Report shows that of the 142 survey respondents, 139 provide Wi-Fi for the public, at least 138 provide access to Wi-Fi outside of the library building, and 97% report that Wi-Fi is available 24 hours a day.

> *"The Varnum offers the fastest Wi-Fi in the area, and we consistently have community members parked outside the building working in their cars because of lack of space within the building."—Aurora River, Director, Varnum Memorial Library*

Vermont's public libraries often have small staffing levels, which the Working Group heard makes it particularly difficult to find time to focus on the needs of facilities and infrastructure. This type of work requires a lot of project management time, including being able to identify grants and write up successful applications. As many of Vermont's public libraries also have small budgets, many of them have deferred necessary maintenance, which can even jeopardize the stability of the building.

In addition, buildings that are designated historic, especially those within an historic district, generally have increased complexity and costs associated with renovation or expansion. Communities can also become attached to library buildings that do not function well as modern public libraries. Randal Smathers, Director of the Rutland Free Library, shared "Historic preservation is both a massive cost drive if we were to renovate and a handy roadblock to folks trying to keep us from moving."

The Working Group heard from the community that there is often a lack of clarity of roles in public libraries around whether a foundation or a municipality is responsible for maintenance, improvements, and even ownership of the library building. As a result, there is often uncertainty about whose responsibility it is to perform basic maintenance and repairs of library buildings. According to 2022 PLS data, of the 152 responding libraries, 96 are owned by a municipality, 40 are owned by the library, seven are owned by another entity, seven are leased spaces, and two libraries were not sure who owned the library building. Of the 53 incorporated public libraries that responded to 2022 PLS, 11 report that their library buildings are owned by the municipality. This situation can benefit incorporated libraries but can sometimes result in confusion between the library board and the municipality about building costs and maintenance responsibilities.

When seeking to maintain or update libraries, another challenge is the rising costs associated with renovation in recent years. Several public libraries had begun planning for renovations prior to the pandemic but have had to reassess their projects considering the escalation in estimated costs. Some communities, like Hardwick, have had multiple ballot measures and long fundraising periods to attain their goal of improving their library. Sammet of the Jeudevine Library shared, "We had raised over the $1.7 M estimate. Then COVID struck and construction costs went up meteorically. Bids for our project came in at $2.42 million." Pre-pandemic estimates for the renovation of the Rutland Public Library ranged from $1.4 million for a partial renovation to up to $11.4 million for a full-building renewal. Smathers reported that this was a daunting amount of money for the library to secure before the pandemic, and that the costs would likely be even higher now. The same is true for the Ilsley Public Library renovation, which was projected to be $9.6 million before the pandemic but now has escalated in price. Hart shared that "Cost will be the single greatest barrier to achieving this goal. Given the scope of the work, the limited property footprint, and the nature of renovating a historic structure, this is going to be a major project. There are no quick fixes, and Band-Aids won't cut it."

Another challenge faced by those hoping to maintain or update a public library is the complexity of library renovations, which include many service points as well as public and staff areas. Many library directors have become de facto building project managers, which requires them to learn new skills. Grasmick shared that construction projects could also bring unwanted elements to the library workplace—including sexism. Grasmick voiced concerns that "In a female-dominated profession like libraries, working with a male dominated profession [construction] can result in an element of sexism while trying to manage these [facilities] projects."

School Libraries

School Librarians shared with the Working Group that many school libraries lack space necessary for instruction, basic programming, and resources. School libraries need both space for shelves that house collections and space for students of different ages and sizes to sit. Some school libraries in Vermont are housed in spaces that were never intended for that purpose. As a result, there is sometimes not even enough room to even fit the students being taught or gathering in the library.

> *"My library in Tinmouth is too small to have classes."*
> *—Joe Bertelloni, Tinmouth Elementary School*

Cheryl Doubleday, school librarian at the Bradford Elementary School shared that "The current library is crammed into a tiny room (smaller than most classrooms) and was obviously not intended for use as a library…. A single class of 15-20 kids has difficulty fitting in the library."

What space school libraries do have is often not flexible. School librarians recognize the need for spaces that can be dedicated for different purposes such as quiet study or group work, or spaces where students can make and learn.

Jill Abair, school librarian at U-32 High School in East Montpelier shared that "The best improvement to our library facility would be more space. Currently our space is poorly designed to meet the needs of our users…the need for flexible spaces to meet the changing needs of our learners is crucial to our success."

Like public libraries, school libraries also have problems related to accessibility. Abair shared that "My library does not have doors that are handicap accessible." School librarian Cheryl Doubleday of Bradford Elementary School shared that the school library is "… neither user friendly and NOT ADA compliant."

Because school libraries exist within and as a part of larger school facilities, school librarians are not able to independently identify sources for funding renovations or make decisions about the use of their library space.

Karen McCalla, Working Group member and school librarian at Mill River Middle and High School shared that "… many folks find that they don't have enough space, but they are also at the mercy of the school district for their space. They can't pursue grant funding without district support, and libraries/library space/funding are often lower on the priority list for many districts."

Academic Libraries

Academic libraries told the Working Group that they have identified building issues similar to those of their peers in public and school libraries. While some federal funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic did allow for the replacement of air handling equipment at the University of Vermont's Howe Library, the primary library on campus, ventilation in that building remains problematic. They reported that the most recent duct cleaning in the Howe Library was done twelve years ago. The recommendation is to clean every ten years, but it costs too much to do this regularly ($250,000 twelve years ago). The library, which receives its funding from the University, doesn't have the funds to keep up and continually contends with other high priority needs in other departments of the large campus. The result for the library is that maintenance is deferred.

Like other libraries, academic libraries are challenged by how space is configured within their buildings and the lack of flexibility. Academic users—students, faculty, researchers, and the public—have different needs today than they did twenty years ago and those needs are always evolving. There is a need to upgrade the technology in study rooms and conference rooms. Staff spacing is inadequate, as is space for consultations, group study, teaching, collections, equipment, preservation, and meeting spaces. The inflexibility of a buildings' footprints results in the inability for academic libraries to provide appropriate services and resources in an ever-changing research and instructional environment.

July 2023 Storm Impacts

The rainstorms of July 2023 took place after the Working Group's meeting dedicated to the topic of facilities but were impactful enough that mention of them is necessary in its report. During the storms, the state received significant rainfall for multiple days, which led to damage at 19 of Vermont's public libraries.

Because public libraries are typically located in municipal centers and because Vermont's municipal centers are often built close to rivers, public library buildings are at particular risk of flooding. In most cases, storm damage to public libraries was the result of flood waters and high water tables, which caused significant flooding that filled the basements of library buildings and ruined equipment essential to the buildings operations. In some cases, rainwater infiltrated buildings through roofs. Two libraries reported equipment damage due to electrical surges associated with the storms.

Many libraries impacted by the July 2023 storms reported that their basement flooding was consistent with their "normal" amount. Other public libraries were completely inundated by water that ruined systems located in their basements.

One significant lesson learned in the weeks after the July 2023 storms was that public libraries located in buildings owned by municipalities would receive a different type of public assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) than

public libraries located in buildings owned by incorporated nonprofit library entities. According to FEMA's Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide, Version 4 (FP 1-4-009-002), municipally owned public library buildings are eligible for grants from FEMA. Public library buildings owned by incorporations, however, are considered Private Nonprofit (PNP) Eligible Noncritical, Essential Social Services and, as such, must apply for low interest loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA) before they will even be considered for public assistance. It is important to note that according to statute, both types of libraries provide the same service to the public and the state treats each equally. (https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_pappg-v4-updated-links_policy_6-1-2020.pdf)

The two hardest-hit libraries in the state, the Kellog-Hubbard Library in Montpelier and the Johnson Public Library, serve as good examples of the different ways in which FEMA provides public assistance to municipally owned and non-profit-owned library buildings.

Johnson Public Library is a municipal public library located in a municipally owned building. It will receive public assistance in the form of grants through its municipality to restore its library building, which completely flooded on the basement level and had water in its main library space.

The Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier, by contrast, is an incorporated public library located in a library building owned by a non-profit entity. To be considered for public assistance, Kellogg-Hubbard must first apply for low interest SBA loans. After that, it remains unclear what outright grants of FEMA public assistance they will receive, if any, to offset their anticipated repair costs of $1.5M. As incorporated public libraries provide a public service and often have no revenue stream, taking out even low-interest SBA loans is a daunting prospect. Being in the PNP Eligible Noncritical, Essential Social Services category impacts the recovery efforts for incorporated libraries and hampers their ability to resume providing service to their communities.

Because public libraries provide community members with access to the internet, they are particularly necessary to their communities following emergencies including natural disasters. The efforts of staff at the Cabot Public Library following the July 2023 floods demonstrate the vital role that public libraries play in helping their communities recover. Despite significant flooding and damage to building systems in the basement of the municipal building in which they're housed, the Cabot Public Library supported community members in filing FEMA paperwork to document damage to their businesses, homes, and farms. Both municipal and incorporated public libraries around the state support their communities in this way, so their quick recovery after extreme weather events is vitally important to supporting the recovery of their entire community.

Conclusion

Aging and repurposed buildings with extensive maintenance and capital needs are the norm for public libraries in Vermont. School libraries are often inadequate for the students in those schools. Academic libraries have extensive maintenance needs that are outside their budgets. All three groups of libraries are using spaces that may not be well adapted for modern library uses. Safety remains a concern in older buildings with poor sightlines and isolated spaces, and the recent public health emergency shuttered libraries during the cooler months because of the lack of air circulation. There is great need for capital funds for libraries of all types in Vermont for basic improvements and deferred maintenance.

Technology

The topic of Technology was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, May 20, 2022. The Working Group heard from nine community members and heard a report from Department of Libraries staff on the topic of Technology. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 28 community members. Included in this chapter is data from the Vermont Department of Libraries' 2023 Broadband and Technology Survey.
(https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/VTLIB_2023_Public_Library_Broadband_Tech_Survey.pdf)

School Libraries and Technology

The Working Group heard from school librarians that they are interested in a single automation system for all school libraries but only if migration is easy, resource sharing is less cumbersome, and consortium buying helps to decrease costs and alleviate expenses. In this context, an automation system means an integrated library system that tracks circulation of books and other materials, contains the library's catalog, records card holders, and runs reports to track data.

Budget pressure is an issue for individual schools and districts. Equity is a common concern, reflected in device access, technology support staffing and access, broadband availability, budget inequities, training and professional development for staff and students, and uneven technology deployment between schools—even those in the same district.

Public Libraries and Technology

The technology environment in Vermont's public libraries reflects broader nationwide trends. However, the state's limited population, rural geography, and numerous small institutions do make the situation a bit more nuanced.

For many years, public computers were at the forefront of public libraries' technology offerings. However, over the last decade there has been a gradual decline in public computer sessions in public libraries, punctuated by a huge drop during the pandemic. This shift likely has two related explanations: the percentage of Vermont homes with internet access has continued to increase, and at that same time more users own portable devices like laptops and tablets which they can use to connect to the internet. Many of the former public computer users are now bringing their own laptops, tablets, or phones to library buildings, where they connect with high-speed internet provided by the library.

In 2019, national Public Library Survey data from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) showed that Vermont ranked first in the number of public computers

per capita, with 8.87 public library computers for every 5,000 people but ranked last in the number of public computers per library outlet (excluding bookmobiles) with 6.27 computers per public library. Because Vermont has more libraries per capita than any other state (and a preponderance of small libraries), there are relatively few computers per library, but despite that Vermont still has more computers per capita than any other state.

Table 35. Number of public-access Internet computers per 5,000 population and per stationary outlet, by state ranking: Fiscal year 2019					
Public-access Internet computers					
State	Ranking	Per 5,000 population[1]	State	Ranking	Per stationary outlet
Total[2]	†	4.73	Total[2]	†	18.03
Vermont	1	8.87	District of Columbia	1	38.46
Nebraska	2	8.79	Florida	2	32.14
Iowa	3	8.26	Delaware	3	31.67
Wyoming	4	7.76	Maryland	4	28.47
Kansas	5	7.58	Colorado	5	26.69
Maine	6	7.46	Kentucky	6	24.41
South Dakota	7	7.29	Arizona	7	24.37
Idaho	8	7.11	Texas	8	24.04
District of Columbia	9	7.08	Georgia	9	23.93
Illinois	10	7.06	Virginia	10	22.21
Alaska	11	7.01	South Carolina	11	21.45
Rhode Island	12	6.93	Illinois	12	21.25
Indiana	13	6.71	California	13	21.22
Louisiana	14	6.38	Tennessee	14	20.83
Connecticut	15	6.36	Rhode Island	15	20.55
Michigan	16	6.35	Utah	16	20.20
Colorado	17	6.26	Ohio	17	19.82
Ohio	18	6.20	Michigan	18	19.44
New Mexico	19	5.92	North Carolina	19	19.41
Montana	20	5.86	New Jersey	20	19.38
New Hampshire	21	5.77	Indiana	21	19.31
Kentucky	22	5.60	Washington	22	19.27
Wisconsin	23	5.49	Connecticut	23	18.55
Delaware	24	5.40	New York	24	18.17
North Dakota	25	5.33	Louisiana	25	17.45
Arkansas	26	5.25	Nevada	26	17.24
Massachusetts	27	5.14	Alabama	27	16.35
Minnesota	28	5.02	Minnesota	28	15.95
New York	29	5.01	Massachusetts	29	15.27
Alabama	30	5.00	New Mexico	29	15.27
Oklahoma	31	4.95	Oklahoma	31	14.82

New Jersey	32	4.90	Idaho	32	14.38
Virginia	33	4.81	Wisconsin	33	13.95
South Carolina	34	4.66	Oregon	34	13.88
Mississippi	35	4.62	Missouri	35	13.15
Washington	36	4.53	Pennsylvania	36	12.83
Maryland	37	4.50	Arkansas	37	12.74
Tennessee	38	4.48	Mississippi	38	11.83
Georgia	39	4.43	Wyoming	39	11.80
Missouri	40	4.39	Alaska	40	11.44
Oregon	41	4.26	Hawaii	41	11.43
Florida	42	4.13	Nebraska	42	10.96
Texas	43	3.98	Kansas	43	10.45
Utah	43	3.98	Montana	44	9.90
Arizona	45	3.78	Iowa	45	9.04
West Virginia	46	3.73	North Dakota	46	8.96
North Carolina	47	3.66	West Virginia	47	8.14
Pennsylvania	48	3.21	South Dakota	48	8.00
California	49	3.00	Maine	49	7.81
Nevada	50	2.40	New Hampshire	50	6.87
Hawaii	51	2.05	Vermont	51	6.27

† Not applicable.
[1]Per 5,000 population is based on the total unduplicated population of legal service areas. The determination of the unduplicated figure is the responsibility of the state library agency and should be based on the most recent state population figures for jurisdictions in the state.

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_29_thru_43.xlsx

Vermont ranks in the middle of the pack (28th) for the number of computer uses per capita, but because there are so many total computers statewide, the uses per computer number is low (last).

Many of Vermont's libraries lack the resources to carefully track computer usage. The Department's Broadband and Technology Survey shows that 75% of the 139 public libraries that responded do not use reservation or management software on their public computers. Without that type of software, libraries are unable to easily generate annual reports of computer usage and are likely to provide estimates of computer usage, not carefully gathered data.

Table 36. Number of public-access Internet computer user sessions per capita and per computer and number of wireless sessions per capita, by state ranking: Fiscal year 2019

Public-access Internet computer user sessions						Wireless sessions		
State	Ranking	Per capita[1]	State	Ranking	Per computer	State	Ranking	Per capita[1]
Total[2]	†	0.71	Total[2]	†	747.90	Total[2]	†	1.67
District of Columbia	1	1.34	Nevada	1	1,724.27	Massachusetts	1	6.08

State	Rank	Value	State	Rank	Value	State	Rank	Value
South Dakota	2	1.22	Hawaii	2	1,360.69	Maryland	2	4.97
Ohio	3	1.10	Georgia	3	1,148.46	Texas	3	3.99
Wyoming	4	1.08	California	4	1,018.99	Arizona	4	3.25
Connecticut	5	1.04	District of Columbia	5	944.38	Washington	5	3.10
Georgia	6	1.02	Maryland	6	920.30	North Dakota	6	3.09
Nebraska	6	1.02	Washington	7	906.05	Indiana	7	2.98
New Mexico	6	1.02	Oregon	8	884.21	New Mexico	8	2.64
Louisiana	9	0.97	Missouri	9	883.16	Illinois	9	2.57
Kansas	10	0.95	Ohio	10	882.92	Oregon	10	2.47
Idaho	11	0.93	Oklahoma	11	876.30	Kansas	11	2.23
Colorado	12	0.91	New Jersey	12	867.36	Nebraska	12	2.21
Oklahoma	13	0.87	New Mexico	13	863.48	Wisconsin	13	2.13
Alaska	14	0.86	South Dakota	14	839.66	Ohio	14	2.12
New Jersey	15	0.85	Connecticut	15	815.64	Alabama	15	1.89
Montana	16	0.84	New York	16	809.63	Oklahoma	16	1.74
Maryland	17	0.83	Utah	17	793.78	Colorado	17	1.72
Nevada	17	0.83	Arizona	18	781.20	Iowa	18	1.66
Illinois	19	0.82	Florida	19	772.05	Idaho	19	1.63
Kentucky	19	0.82	Louisiana	20	760.29	Michigan	20	1.48
Washington	19	0.82	Massachusetts	21	741.45	Arkansas	21	1.46
Iowa	22	0.81	Colorado	22	729.76	Minnesota	22	1.41
New York	22	0.81	Kentucky	23	728.62	Virginia	22	1.41
Indiana	24	0.78	South Carolina	24	719.31	Vermont	24	1.33
Missouri	24	0.78	Alabama	25	717.95	Utah	25	1.27
Massachusetts	26	0.76	Montana	26	715.68	New Jersey	26	1.21
Oregon	27	0.75	Virginia	27	712.51	California	27	1.17
Vermont	28	0.74	Tennessee	28	704.23	South Dakota	28	1.16
Alabama	29	0.72	Wyoming	29	692.75	Alaska	29	1.13
Rhode Island	29	0.72	Minnesota	30	684.27	Montana	29	1.13
Michigan	31	0.71	Pennsylvania	31	653.70	Maine	31	1.11
Minnesota	32	0.69	Idaho	32	652.24	Connecticut	32	1.10
Virginia	32	0.69	North Carolina	33	644.27	Delaware	33	1.08
South Carolina	34	0.67	Kansas	34	625.66	Kentucky	34	1.07
Florida	35	0.64	Mississippi	35	620.89	Louisiana	35	0.97
Tennessee	36	0.63	Alaska	36	609.92	New York	36	0.96
Utah	36	0.63	Illinois	37	583.38	Mississippi	37	0.86
California	38	0.61	Nebraska	38	582.08	Rhode Island	38	0.80
Wisconsin	39	0.60	Indiana	39	581.83	Pennsylvania	39	0.79
Arizona	40	0.59	Michigan	40	557.25	South Carolina	40	0.78
North Dakota	41	0.58	Texas	41	544.29	Missouri	41	0.77
Maine	42	0.57	Wisconsin	42	543.18	Tennessee	41	0.77
Mississippi	42	0.57	North Dakota	43	541.52	Wyoming	41	0.77
Hawaii	44	0.56	West Virginia	44	528.11	New Hampshire	44	0.75
Arkansas	45	0.53	Rhode Island	45	522.19	District of Columbia	45	0.74
Delaware	45	0.53	Arkansas	46	501.17	Florida	46	0.70
New Hampshire	47	0.50	Iowa	47	488.17	North Carolina	47	0.66

North Carolina	48	0.47	Delaware	48	487.55	Nevada	48	0.57
Texas	49	0.43	New Hampshire	49	433.62	Georgia	49	0.52
Pennsylvania	50	0.42	Vermont	50	415.03	Hawaii	50	0.38
West Virginia	51	0.39	Maine	51	382.59	West Virginia	51	0.11

† Not applicable.

[1]Per capita is based on the total unduplicated population of legal service areas. The determination of the unduplicated figure is the responsibility of the state library agency and should be based on the most recent state population figures for jurisdictions in the state.

[2]Total includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia but excludes outlying areas, libraries that closed or temporarily closed in FY 2019, and libraries that do not meet the FSCS Public Library Definition.

NOTE: The District of Columbia, although not a state, is included in the state rankings. Special care should be used in comparing its data to state data. Caution should be used in making comparisons with the state of Hawaii, as Hawaii reports only one public library for the entire state. Additional information on nonsampling error, response rates, and definitions may be found in Data File Documentation Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal year 2019.
SOURCE: IMLS, Public Libraries Survey, FY 2019. Data elements GPTERMS, PITUSR, WIFISESS, POPU_UND from the Public Library System Data File (PLS_AE_PUD19i) were used to produce this table.

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_29_thru_43.xlsx

Median # of Computer Sessions
PLS Data 2012-2022

Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics
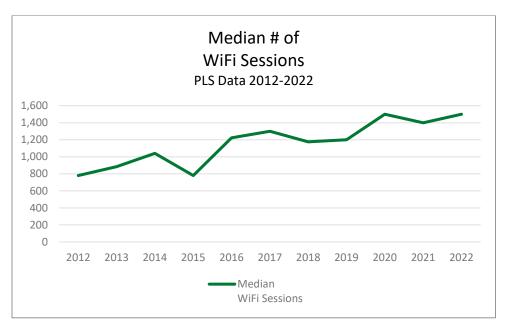
Vermonters increasingly have access to the internet in their homes and internet access has shifted from a luxury to a necessity as it is needed to submit job applications, attend classes, complete schoolwork, fill out governmental forms, and communicate with healthcare providers. However, many Vermonters continue to have limited internet access. In numerous small and rural Vermont towns, public libraries continue to be one of the few places people have access to high-speed internet connections.

While usage of public computers in libraries has decreased over the past ten years, in-library Wi-Fi usage has dramatically increased in the same timeframe. The great majority (90%) of public libraries in the state offer public Wi-Fi access. The libraries that do not provide the public with Wi-Fi access tend to be the smallest—and in some cases these libraries do not have internet access at all.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries across the state made a big push to provide Wi-Fi to support their communities when library buildings were closed to the public. By the summer of 2022, the great majority of libraries offered some level of Wi-Fi access outside their buildings and beyond the hours the libraries were open to the public. In response to the pandemic, many libraries added equipment to make the Wi-Fi signal in their parking lots and outdoor areas as strong as possible. These enhancements to the availability of Wi-Fi outside of public library buildings have improved overall access to information for the public. According to the Department's 2023 Broadband & Technology Survey, nearly all the responding public libraries provide Wi-Fi for the public and provide access to Wi-Fi outside of the library building 24 hours a day. The Working Group recommends Wi-Fi availability 24 hours a day *outside* of library buildings be required of all public libraries in future updates to the Standards.

As of 2019, Vermont ranks 24th in the number of wireless sessions per capita. However, Wi-Fi statistics are highly dependent on networking equipment, and the actual usage is likely an undercount as many of Vermont's libraries lack methods of tracking Wi-Fi usage accurately.

Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics

Library Catalogs / Integrated Library System (ILS)

Most libraries use an online catalog to make their collections searchable to the public and to manage the circulation of library materials. These library catalogs are also known as Integrated Library Systems (ILS). When library catalogs first became automated, libraries had to house large and expensive computer equipment or servers on-site. Now most libraries in Vermont use online ILS platforms that do not require on-site servers.

Of the 182 public libraries that have reported on their catalogs to the Department, 45% use the Koha ILS. Most libraries using Koha do so within one of the major consortia in the state: VOKAL and Catamount.
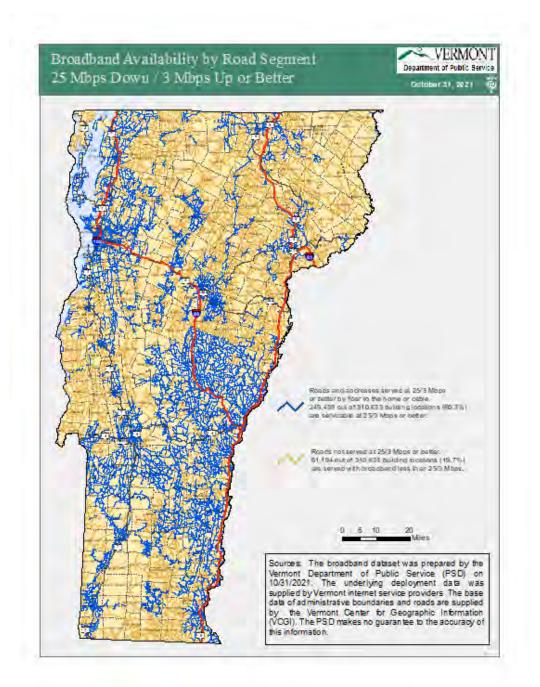
A significant number of public libraries also use LibraryWorld, Verso, and Follett. 10% of the reporting libraries use other products. Roughly 10% of Vermont's public libraries are not yet automated. Those libraries record circulation, users, and other data on simple spreadsheets or on paper.

ILS	# of Libraries
Koha – VOKAL	60
Koha – Catamount	22
Library World	28
Verso	19
Follett	10
Other	21
Unautomated	22

Internet Connectivity

While statewide data on broadband availability shows that Vermont is only a bit below the national average, the reality on the ground in public libraries is location dependent.
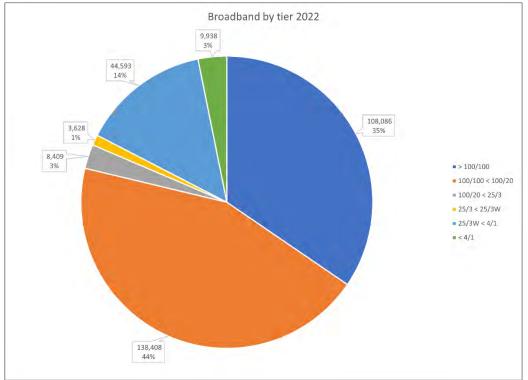
Source:
https://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/dps/files/documents/Connectivity/BroadbandAvailability25_3_2021_110121.pdf

Despite seemingly high percentages of access, large swaths of the state continue to have low internet speeds and a limited number of internet service providers (ISPs). Though libraries often have some of the highest speed and best quality internet in a

town, many libraries in Vermont continue to have a limited number of internet service providers to choose from and few pricing options available.

Broadband by tier 2022

Source: https://publicservice.vermont.gov/telecommunications-and-connectivity/broadband-high-speed-internet-availability-vermont

The Department's 2023 Broadband & Technology Survey showed:

> "Just as the speed of internet access at public libraries in Vermont varies widely, the costs public libraries pay their internet service providers also varies widely.
>
> However, the data reported to the Department shows that public libraries that pay more for internet service do not necessarily have quicker internet speeds. The data also shows that public libraries in communities with larger populations do not necessarily have faster internet access at their public libraries."

The FCC included bandwidth targets for schools (and school libraries) and for public libraries in its **2016 E-Rate Modernization Order**. According to the FCC, "With respect to libraries, the Order adopts as a bandwidth target the American Library Association's recommendation that all libraries that serve fewer than 50,000 people have broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps and all libraries that serve 50,000 people or more have broadband speeds of at least 1 Gbps." (https://www.fcc.gov/general/summary-e-rate-modernization-order) Vermont has no communities with a population of greater than
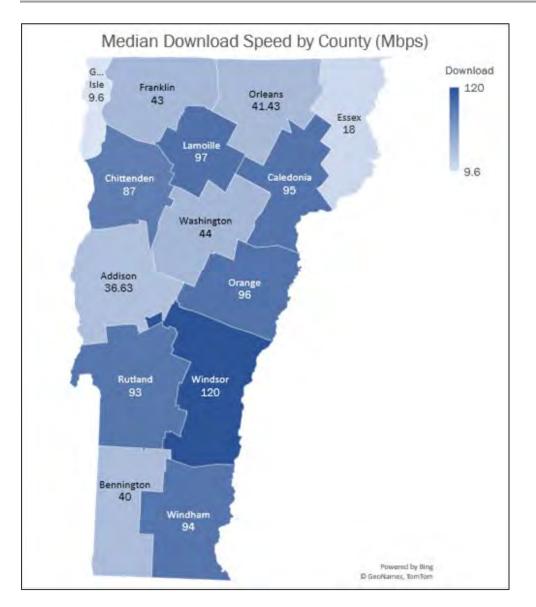
50,000 people, and none of Vermont's public libraries reported having 1G or faster internet service.

For libraries serving fewer than 50,000 people, the FCC has established a goal of 100Mbps. The 2023 Broadband and Technology report shows that "only 46 of the Vermont public libraries that conducted the speed test, or 34%, had internet speeds greater than the FCC's established goal of 100 Mbps for smaller libraries."

Vermont's public libraries lag behind their peers nationally in this area. According to an in-depth national survey conducted by the American Library Association in 2020, across the nation "roughly 17% of public library locations still lacked the 25 Mbps/3 Mbps download and upload speeds recommended for consumer households." (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/telecom/Digital_Equit y_012623.pdf)

According to the report, "The internet speeds reported by 66% of Vermont's public libraries raise significant concerns about the access Vermonters have to the internet for the purposes of work, education, and telehealth services—and particularly about the internet access of Vermonters in small, rural communities."
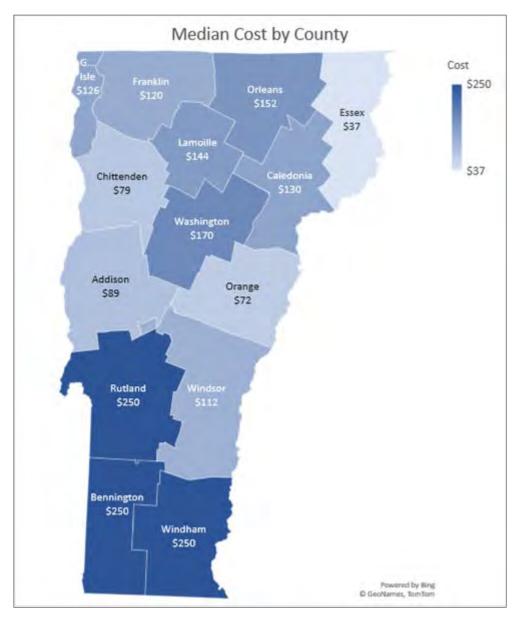
Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/VTLIB_2023_Public_Library_Broadband_Tech_Survey.pdf

Costs to public libraries for internet access also vary dramatically across the state. Some libraries receive free, low bandwidth internet that is generally inadequate for serving the public. Nearly all libraries pay for internet service for this reason. According to the Department's report, "Median cost by county ranges from $37 per month in Essex County to $250 per month in Bennington, Rutland, and Windham Counties."

Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/VTLIB_2023_Public_Library_Broadband_Tech_Survey.pdf

Public Computing

Nearly all the respondents (96%) provide in-library computers for the public. Of the responding libraries, 67% provide the public with library-owned laptops for use in the building and 27% reported that they loan library-owned laptops to patrons for home use. Just 5% reported that they loan library-owned cellular hotspots to patrons for home use.

Nearly all respondents provide public printing and 77% reported that they offer color printing. At 56% of responding libraries patrons can print from their own device using Wi-Fi printing. Library patrons can perform scanning at 83% of responding libraries and faxing at 40% of them.

Technical Support

The Working Group heard from many public library staff that they are challenged to provide public computing and staff use of computers due to limited knowledge of the systems that support these services. The library community shared the challenges of maintaining and updating computer equipment and networks and shared that while they appreciate the support that Department staff offer, they require technical support at their institutions that exceeds the scope and capacity of the Department's consultant.

The responding libraries report different strategies of obtaining technology support for their networks and library-owned devices. Fifty-five libraries (38%) reported that they pay a company or individual for technical support services. Twenty-seven libraries (18%) reported that unpaid volunteers provide them with technical support, while seven (5%) work with an employee of their town. Thirty-two of the responding libraries (22%) reported using a combination of types of technical support. Twenty-four of the responding libraries (18%) reported that they have no external technical support.

With regards to basic maintenance of computers, one key to ensuring that public computers function smoothly is to install software that prevents viruses from taking hold. In responses from public libraries to the 2023 Broadband & Technology Survey, only 48% reported using software that refreshes or resets the public computer between users. And only 48% reported having antivirus software installed on computers at their public library.

The Working Group heard from community members that they needed real-time and in-person technical support, and that they wanted better and lower-cost options for obtaining technical support. The Working Group heard that library staff require more training on technical matters so they could resolve issues that arise with their computers and networks independently. It also heard that they would appreciate increased and continual training on technology topics including train-the-trainer classes so they could provide more support and instruction to library patrons. The Working Group heard from many members of the community that it is challenging to keep current with rapidly evolving technology.

Members of the community also shared that cybersecurity is an emerging concern for libraries of all types.

Conclusion

The massive cultural shift of the last couple of decades towards technology and the internet has profoundly transformed libraries. Libraries have shifted from offering a single or a few desktop computers in a defined area to being the place where the community not only accesses the internet, but also learns everything from the basics of computing to the latest technological trends. This is true for school, academic, and public libraries.

Uneven distribution of funding, staff and user expertise, and access to high-speed internet in the library and community are fundamental problems facing libraries today. Paying more for internet service does not mean that a given library has adequate connectivity. As libraries try to accommodate users outside the building and with an expanding user base that needs higher bandwidth for online meetings and other applications, many Vermont libraries find that they simply cannot meet the needs of their communities because high speed internet is simply not available where they are.

Collections

The topic of Collections was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, January 14, 2022. The Working Group heard from nine community members. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 17 community members.

Traditionally, the primary role of libraries has been to provide people with access to information through books and other library materials. The set of materials that are owned by a library is known as its "collection." Today, library collections contain both physical and online materials. Books can still be loaned or used in person in their physical forms, but many books can now be used in online form— either as eBooks or eAudiobooks. While journals and newspapers were once collected, bound, and stored on library shelves, many of these information resources are now available online through online databases.

Longitudinal information about collection size, costs, and usage in public libraries is readily available, as public libraries institutions have long reported this data through the Public Library Survey (PLS), a national survey conducted by the Department of Libraries and reported to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This complex data has been used to develop an overview of the status of collections in Vermont's public libraries.

Data about school and academic library collections is not reported or stored centrally, so was not available to the Working Group for its report. That said, the Working Group did hear from academic and school librarians about collections so could report on information shared by members of those communities.

Collections in Vermont Public Libraries

> *"Our circulating collection supports another value Middlebury residents hold dear: sustainability. Resource sharing allows many people to use a single copy of a book or item when they need it without everyone having to purchase, store, and ultimately dispose of multiple copies. As climate change becomes a greater imperative people are realizing that utilizing their local library collection allows them to purchase fewer things, thus reducing their shipping footprint, consumption, and ultimate waste."*
> *—Dana Hart, Director, Isley Public Library, Middlebury*

The 2022 fiscal year Vermont PLS data reflects that the median figures for physical collection holdings at Vermont's public libraries are as follows:

Format	Adult	Teen	Children
Print	7,887	637	5,234
Video	829	0	271
Audio	327	1	93
Non-Traditional	35	0	0

Data from the 2022 PLS Report shows that libraries that serve fewer Vermonters have smaller collection sizes and lower collections expenses. However, this data also shows that per capita, library budget expenses are inversely proportional to the size of the population served. While the overall collection budget of a larger library may be bigger, smaller libraries spend more money relative to their service area population. **Simply put, smaller libraries spend more per person on their library's collections than larger libraries.**

Population	Collection Size	Collections Expenses	Per Capita Collections Expense
Under 1,000	7,413	$3,607	$4.54
1,000-2,500	10,401	$5,422	$3.67
2,500-5,000	18,744	$13,369	$3.97
Over 5,000	35,805	$27,275	$3.04

Looking more granularly at data from the 2022 PLS Report related to just print collections shows that libraries with larger populations have higher total physical collections costs. However, the data also shows that as the service population decreases, the size of the physical collection decreases, and the number of times physical materials are checked out to the public decreases, the cost per physical checkout *increases*. On average, public libraries in Vermont that serve fewer than 1,000 people pay three times the cost per checkout of physical items that libraries serving populations of greater than 5,000 pay.

> *"It is hard to enhance small collections when you don't have enough space or money."—Lisa Sammet, former Library Director, Jeudevine Memorial Library, Hardwick*

Population	Physical Collection Size	Physical Circulation	Physical Collection Costs	Cost per Physical Checkout
Under 1,000	7,413	1,728	$2,862	$1.66
1,000-2,500	10,401	4,300	$4,617	$1.07
2,500-5,000	18,744	12,426	$10,883	$0.88
Over 5,000	35,805	37,451	$19,912	$0.53

Data from the 2022 PLS Report shows that for online resources, or eBooks and eAudiobooks, libraries with larger populations have higher online collections costs and higher online circulation costs. However, the data also shows that as the service population decreases, and the number of times online materials are checked out to the public decreases, the cost per checkout of online items *increases*. On average, public libraries in Vermont that serve fewer than 1,000 people pay more than twice the amount per checkout of online items that libraries serving populations of greater than 5,000 pay.

Population	Number of eBook / eAudiobook Checkouts	eBook & eAudiobook Collection Costs	Cost per eBook / eAudiobook Checkout
Under 1,000	443	$662	$1.49
1,000-2,500	940	$523	$0.56
2,500-5,000	3,068	$2,199	$0.72
Over 5,000	8,177	$5,454	$0.67

The Department does not have data about the median age of each library's collection or the percentage of the collection currently in circulation, both of which are helpful metrics for gauging relevance, the usage, and overall health of a library collection.

According to the national PLS data, among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Vermont ranks:

- 4th for physical holdings, at 4.11 items per capita;

- 5th for physical video materials, at 0.39 items per capita;

- 10th for physical audio materials, with 0.2 items per capita;

- 25th for circulation of children's materials with 2.36 checkouts per capita;

- 29th for total circulation, with 7.25 checkouts per capita;

- 31st for collections expenditures, with $4.25 spent per capita; and

- 40th for online circulation, with 0.75 checkouts per capita.

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_29_thru_43.xlsx

School Library Collections

The Working Group heard from school librarians that it is challenging to meet curricular needs given the school libraries' dwindling funding. Karen McCalla, Working Group member and School Librarian at Mill River Union Middle/High School in North Clarendon shared, "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." Small materials budgets in school libraries make it challenging for school librarians to meet the needs of the students they support. Alyson Mahony, Library Media Specialist at Doty and Rumney Schools in Worcester and Middlesex shared, "The Doty collection is small and missing many items. Although the population is small, these patrons deserve a larger collection and access to the collection year-round."

School librarians also report that students are increasingly using online resources rather than selecting print materials for research projects. McCalla shared, "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."

School librarians still want to provide print materials for the students they serve and see value in having non-fiction titles in their collections. Cynthia Hughes, School Librarian at Marlboro School shared, "I also feel that we need to update our nonfiction. I realize that this is a tricky situation with so much information online now, but at my previous job the kids loved our nonfiction books."

Print materials in school libraries can be especially important in rural communities—particularly in communities where students have less access to the internet in their homes. Mahony shared, "Doty has been awarded several grants so that it has a great collection of award-winning mathematical books and books that promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. As a small, rural school this collection is extremely important to readers who do not have access to books at home and are far from public libraries and bookstores. Several home school students access the collection, as well as custodial staff and paraprofessionals."

Some school librarians, like Mahony, have turned to grant funding to fund their collections when their school budgets are not sufficient. They note that this practice, while it can be effective, usually takes time away from instruction.

To help with local resource sharing between school libraries, some school districts share materials between school libraries on a regular basis and leverage interlibrary loan (ILL), which the Department supports through its Collaborative Libraries Of VERmont (CLOVER) system. Rebecca Sofferman, School Librarian at Colchester Middle School wrote that, "We share resources between the schools in our district regularly, and we have a courier that goes between buildings on a daily basis. My school also participates in CLOVER (including when we need books from our public library), although this doesn't get heavy use. Any CLOVER books must be delivered through the U.S. Mail. When we need books from our public library, we used to have a courier that delivered and picked up books, but that went away during COVID, so now our district librarians have to pick up and deliver books ourselves. I am a lot less likely to offer this to students than I was previously since I don't live near the library, but I will certainly make it happen if students need something."

Academic Library Collections

Bryn Geffert, Dean of Libraries at the University of Vermont (UVM) shared that their libraries 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." According to Geffert, UVM is the only academic library in the state staffed by "subject specialist serving nearly all disciplines."

Vermonters may not be aware that "*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." In addition to the materials in UVM's Howe Library, Vermonters may also access the Dana Medical Library at UVM's Larner College of Medicine. Geffert explained that "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." The staff of the Dana Library are available to serve Vermonters directly but can also assist library staff to support them in answering questions they receive in local libraries.

In addition to the medical library, UVM has other specialized collections. It serves as a federal repository with approximately 900,000 physical items. Geffert explained that "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.'"

UVM also has a map room with more than 200,000 sheet maps and atlases. According to Geffert, this 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."

At UVM's libraries, Vermonters can also access the Jack and Shirley Silver Special Collections, the Vermont Research Collection, the Rare Book Collection, and ScholarWorks (a collection of the scholarly and creative works of UVM faculty, staff, and students). While many of these specialized collections do not circulate, they can be accessed by the public.

Geffert articulated challenges faced by the UVM libraries as rising online subscription database fees have forced staff to make difficult decisions related to information access—some of which have the potential to impact access to information needed by clinicians in Vermont's health care settings.

Eileen Gatti, former Director of Information Access at Eliot D. Pratt Library of Goddard College shared some of the challenges academic libraries face in digitizing and conserving special collections. She shared that "The library is also in charge of archiving digital senior and masters' theses, which is time-consuming. The student theses are part of the much larger college archives, which are in danger of deterioration because we do not have the staff time, the space, or the financial resources to reorganize, rehouse, and otherwise make accessible our very crowded room full of print materials and other media. Hiring an archivist or even a part-time archive assistant would be extremely helpful, but the college is under constant financial strain and this is never seen as a priority."

During the past year, another of Vermont's schools of higher education, the Vermont State Colleges, were the focus of much media attention when it announced that it was moving to an "all-digital" library collection when they consolidated to form the Vermont State University in July 2023. (https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/02/16/backlash-university-says-its-library-will-be-all-digital) The announcement was not well-received by students, faculty, and the public and led to protests and national news coverage.

While many students in higher education settings do utilize online resources heavily, some prefer or even require print materials to conduct research and learn.

An Associated Press story published on February 21, 2023; highlighted equity concerns shared by some of the institution's students. One student, Gavin Bourdeau, shared concerns related to the digital divide. He shared that he has "no access to the internet where he lives and uses the books in the library to study. While the administration said the digital format will make books more accessible, Bourdeau said it will actually make them less accessible for people like him."

Devon Harding, another student, raised concerns related to inclusivity for those with disabilities. Harding is reported to have said, "My disabilities cannot be accommodated digitally. Eye strain, difficulty tracking lines, blue light effects on ocular health, struggles to focus. These are not problems a screen can help with," she told the crowd. "Furthermore, I can't afford all my textbooks without the library."

Bourdeau pointed out that online libraries do not necessarily contain all of the information and materials found in print libraries. He is quoted as having said, "There are books on these shelves that will never be digitized. These books will be lost and their knowledge will be lost with them." (https://apnews.com/article/vermont-state-government-education-5af3554ac1079d508e399ea43444cc9e)

The response of the student body, faculty, and the public demonstrates that even in today's digital age, access to print materials still matters at Vermont's institutions of higher education.

Vermont Department of Libraries Collections

The Department's Vermont State Library follows the duties and functions as outlined in Title 22 § 605-606 of the Vermont State Statutes. The State Library's collection was greatly reduced prior to its move to Barre in 2018. The State Library currently has a physical collection of 18,000 books; 5,000 government documents; and 85 serial subscriptions that focus on Vermont history, Vermont law, Vermont authors, Native Americans, library science, professional development, and youth materials. The Department also circulates sets that include multiple copies of the same book, or "book discussion sets" which are used by book clubs at public and school libraries throughout the state. Book discussion sets are the most heavily utilized resources in the State Library collection. A smaller percentage of circulation is made up of youth titles, Vermont titles, and library science materials.

Books in the Vermont State Library may also be used in-house at the Department of Libraries by appointment. Many items in the Vermont State Library's collection can also be checked out by State of Vermont Employees and members of the Legislature with their Vermont State Library cards.

These numbers include checkouts from the State Library collection via Interlibrary Loan (ILL) or borrowed directly.

The Department of Libraries' physical collections also include materials in the ABLE (Audio Braille Large-print Electronic) Library. The ABLE Library's collection consists of 10,000 large print books, 280 Braille books, and 350 accessible youth items. Vermonters who qualify for ABLE services also have access to the 111,000 talking books on demand through the National Library Service's BARD program. The ABLE library circulates large print deposit collections upon request to public libraries in

Vermont to supplement local large print book collections available for browsing by the public.

ABLE Library Circulation						
	FY18	**FY19**	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**
Digital Talking Books	42,469	42,320	46,728	79,622	92,989	80,641
BARD eAudiobooks	12,872	12,699	13,537	13,649	14,834	16,151
BARD eBraille	673	575	782	491	781	873
Large print direct to ABLE patrons	7,299	7,564	6,400	6,227	6,937	6,257
Large print to public libraries	2,031	2,543	2,330	1,869	2,268	2,548
Large print via ILL	229	200	144	164	162	188
Total Circulation ABLE	**65,573**	**65,901**	**69,921**	**102,022**	**117,971**	**107,418**

The ABLE Library serves as the state of Vermont's National Library Service (NLS) network library. The NLS "is a free braille and talking book library service for people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical, perceptual, or reading disability that prevents them from using regular print materials. Through a national network of cooperating libraries, NLS circulates books and magazines in braille or audio formats, that are instantly downloadable to a personal device or delivered by mail free of charge." (https://www.loc.gov/nls/) The NLS partners with libraries in all fifty states and U.S. territories to deliver services.

The availability of talking books and braille books through the ABLE Library saves expenses for eligible Vermonters, who do not have to purchase costly audio or braille versions of books. The rich array of titles available through ABLE means that ABLE patrons have interesting and personalized reading materials at their easy disposal.

Eligible Vermonters also have access to large print books through the ABLE Library as well as through large print deposit collections at public libraries around the state. The ABLE Library makes these deposit collections available to public libraries on a rotating basis. ABLE also has an accessible youth collection, which contains combined print books/audiobooks and high contrast picture books.

Because it provides reading materials for the blind, the ABLE Library ships items at no cost through the USPS. Free movement of materials for the blind and print disabled

through the postal system lessens barriers between often marginalized groups and reading materials. ABLE Library staff provide readers' advisory services to their patrons so that they receive materials that match their reading preferences.

Consortium Pricing

Physical and online library materials are expensive, and Vermont's libraries are always looking for ways to keep costs low. One way the Department supports those efforts is by participating in the Massachusetts Higher Education Consortium (MHEC). Through MHEC, Vermont's libraries receive a discount on purchases from major national vendors of library materials. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/mhec-purchasing)

Legal Resources

The State Library has not added significant print legal resources since 2015 and currently meets its statutory obligation to provide State employees with access to legal resources by maintaining a contract with Thomson Reuters Westlaw. State departments pay for each user seat that has access to the Westlaw database for employees who require this resource.

The Department of Libraries meets its statutory obligation to provide Vermonters with access to legal resources and legal reference services through an annual grant of $90,000 to the Vermont Law and Graduate School, which administers the Community Legal Information Center (CLIC). Through this service, a professional law librarian provides Vermonters with access to the physical collections of the Vermont Law and Graduate School's Cornell library in Randolph, and with access to legal databases and assistance utilizing these materials by legal reference librarian. Vermonters also have access to legal self-help books from these collections via ILL.

Institutional Collections

The Department of Libraries is responsible for providing library materials to those in Vermont's correctional and psychiatric facilities. The Department's fiscal year 2024 budget includes $36,000 for collections at the state's six regional correctional facilities. The Department has begun conversations with the Department of Corrections to explore the possibility of providing access to selected collections of eBooks and eAudiobooks to those in the state's correctional facilities in the future. These materials could potentially be accessed using tablets already in use at the correctional facilities.

The Department's fiscal year 2024 budget also includes $3,000 for physical collections at the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) and the River Valley Therapeutic Residence (formerly the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence). The Department also provides periodicals to patients at the VPCH, totaling $1,074.55. Patients at the VPCH also have tablets which can access the databases the

Department provides and the eBooks and eAudiobooks it provides through the Palace Project app. Finally, patients can access materials through ILL.

The Department provides periodicals for the residents of the Vermont Veterans' Home, totaling $539.59. The Vermont Veterans' Home has indicated to Department staff that they are not currently interested in receiving books from the Department, as they lack space to accommodate a library collection.

The Department of Libraries allocated $84,000 of Vermont's IMLS ARPA funds toward the purchase of physical materials for libraries within the State correctional and psychiatric facilities. These institutions include the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital, the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence (which has since moved to the River Valley Therapeutic Residence), and six correctional facilities overseen by the Vermont Department of Corrections: Northeast Correctional Complex, Northern State Correctional Facility, Northwest State Correctional Facility, Southern State Correctional Facility, and Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility.

Resource Sharing

Many of Vermont's public library buildings are small with limited shelf-space for collections, and many of Vermont's public libraries have modest collections budgets. In this environment, resource sharing is very important as it helps keep library services affordable.

Vermont statute charges the Department of Libraries (the Department) with promoting resource sharing between Vermont's libraries. The Department does this in multiple ways:

- supporting Interlibrary Loan services (ILL);

- providing online databases for all Vermonters;

- providing a collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks for all Vermonters;

- providing access to legal materials and reference services for all Vermonters; and

- providing a circulation collection of print books to all Vermonters.

In addition to the Department of Libraries, resource-sharing consortia have evolved in Vermont including the Catamount Library Network, the Green Mountain Library Consortium, and VOKAL. Vermont's library consortia help Vermont's public libraries pool their resources in aid of improved access to library collections through library catalogs and/or by pooling resources to collectively purchase shared library materials.
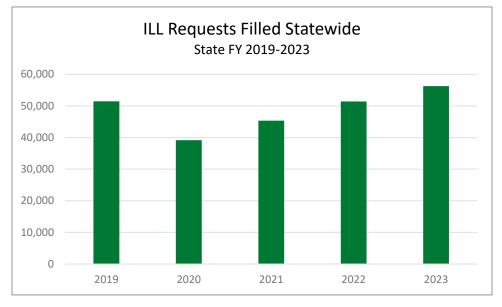
Resource Sharing: CLOVER and Interlibrary Loan

The Department administers the statewide Collaborative Libraries of VERmont (CLOVER) platform, which is a key element in the state's Interlibrary Loan (ILL) program. The Department used to maintain a centralized "union catalog" and an email-based ILL system to facilitate resource sharing. It has since moved to the CLOVER platform which enables resource sharing by allowing live searches of the online catalogs of libraries across Vermont. CLOVER enables users to immediately learn whether a book is available at another library. All libraries in Vermont are provided free access so that they can place ILL requests for materials owned by other libraries in the state to meet the needs of their local library users. Statewide resource sharing through CLOVER helps keep local collection procurement costs low while ensuring libraries can provide access to books that the people in their community want to read.

In FY 2023, 232 of Vermont's libraries actively used CLOVER, including:

- 154 public libraries;

- 71 school libraries;

- six academic libraries; and

- one special library.

In FY 2023, Vermont's libraries shared 56,261 through the state's ILL network, including books, DVDs, audiobooks, articles, CDs, and musical scores.

Source: Vermont Department of Libraries

At one time, the Department of Libraries filled many ILL requests directly. Materials from its six regional libraries were sent quickly by U.S. mail to libraries nearby. With the closure of the Department of Libraries' regional libraries and the downsizing of the State Library's physical collections and staff, the Department no longer had the resources to perform this service. With the closing of the regional libraries and the significant reduction of books from the State Library's collection, costs associated with ILL staffing and shipping fell more heavily onto public libraries across the state.

Where previously librarians looked first to borrow books held at the regional libraries through ILL, with that option no longer available they looked to other public libraries. Immediately, the number of requests and the costs of shipping those books fell onto already understaffed and underfunded public libraries.

ILL presents a central and critical service within the Vermont library landscape. However, Vermont's ILL structure is not without challenges. The lending library assumes the cost of purchasing and storing books, and then must provide those books to other libraries upon request. When a library is a "net lender," meaning it lends more books *to* other libraries than it borrows *from* other libraries, the cost inequity of staff time and shipping expenses can feel excessive. While the Department provides non-competitive grants to offset some ILL costs for public libraires, it does not have the resources to provide grants to offset the full costs of ILL for participating libraries, including staff time and shipping costs.

The Working Group heard from members of the library community that changes implemented years ago at the state level continue to impact the access their patrons had to library materials. Randal Smathers, Library Director at the Rutland Public Library voiced his concern that cost cuts at the state level had led to cost increases at the state's handful of large public libraries. With the closure of the Department's regional libraries, the largest public libraries stepped into the role of maintaining access to deep collections. However, these large libraries were not provided with the financial support needed to serve as book repositories for smaller libraries in their region while still providing direct service to their own local communities. Smathers explained that patrons of small libraries frequently place ILL requests for items owned by the much larger Rutland Public Library. Rutland Public Library staff must then gather the requested items their library owns and send them to other Vermont communities, which takes time every day. If a member of the Rutland Public Library comes to their library looking for a book, they may find that it has been checked out to fill an ILL request elsewhere in the state. In short, ILL can sometimes have a negative impact on the access to the community for whom the book was originally purchased. For small libraries that receive many books to meet their patrons' needs from other public libraries, ILL is a great benefit and cost savings. For net lenders, even those who believe in the general principle of sharing resources, ILL can feel like a burden.

> *"When the state decided to cut support for the central library function (interlibrary loan), it was intended to save money, but in fact it's a false economy, and just increased the spending and spread it through all of the individual libraries,"—Randal Smathers, Director, Rutland Public Library*

That said, resource sharing enables Vermont's libraries to use their limited collections budgets wisely. Librarians can purchase materials for their collections that they know will be well-used in their communities while still having access to materials that would be less popular locally through ILL. Librarians with deep subject expertise can cultivate collections on topics such as travel or cooking and share those with people throughout the state via ILL.

The Working Group heard from MaryPat Larrabee, Library Director at the St. Albans Free Library, that through coordinated collection development of nonfiction materials, libraries could develop more specialized collections in one or more topics to be shared through ILL. This approach could provide Vermonters with a wider variety of books via the ILL system but would be a large project to undertake.

> *"I have curated a large collection of travel guides, watercolor painting instruction, and all of the works of Wendell Berry. With these available via ILL, other libraries can spend their nonfiction funds on other areas creating specialized collections."—Jeannette Bair, Retired Director, Rochester Public Library*

Resource Sharing: Courier Program

After searching for a book in CLOVER, a library patron can request that book through Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and have it sent to their library for pickup. Traditionally, the movement of library books around the state—and the world—was done through the postal service. This required that libraries either pay shipping costs for each item requested through ILL or pass those costs on to the patron. At $3.00 to $5.00 per item shipped via media mail, these costs are prohibitive for both high volume lenders and small libraries with limited budgets. Due to the high mailing costs, many public libraries in Vermont were reluctant to promote ILL or placed strict limits on borrowing to control expenses.

For many years, the Department of Libraries provided Resource Sharing Grants to libraries to reduce ILL costs for libraries. The Resource Sharing Grants, as little as $50 annually for some libraries, covered just a fraction of the costs as many libraries' annual ILL mailing costs ran in the thousands of dollars.

In 2016 the Department sought to address the challenge that high shipping costs pose for public libraries by funding a pilot ILL courier program. The pilot was conducted by the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC), which implemented a courier system that tested the viability of moving physical library materials directly between libraries. To support this pilot, the Department of Libraries issued grants to 60 of the 88 public libraries participating in the courier pilot program in January 2016. These grants of roughly $270 per public library totaled $16,245. The grants reduced the cost to each library of paying for a courier to stop at their library each week to pick up and deliver materials requested via ILL. The Department granted public libraries in the Catamount Consortium the full cost of their first courier stop to offset fears that the state's only user-initiated ILL network would see a substantial increase in lending.

The pilot period took place between January and June of 2016. Participating libraries set up one, two, or three stops per week and were responsible for half the cost of the first weekly stop and the full cost of the second and third stops. Most libraries elected to have one weekly stop, but some larger libraries and those with higher loan numbers elected to implement more than one stop each week.

Through this program, a courier visits libraries to pick up items that are being sent to fulfill ILL requests made by patrons of other libraries. At each stop, the courier picks up items entering the system and drops off items being returned to the lending library. The items the courier picks up go to a central warehouse where they are sorted for delivery to the requesting library. The courier then delivers items to the requesting library on its next weekly stop at that location, where the items are checked out to the patron who requested them. Finally, the courier repeats the process in reverse after the patron has read and returned the item, and the item goes back to its original owning library.

The courier pilot was a great success. In the first six months of 2016, 30,584 items were moved around the state to meet the reading needs of Vermonters. According to the report following the first year of the program, among the 75 participating libraries that reported historical ILL financial data in 2016 "58% more materials are getting into the hands of Vermonters who need them. Libraries saved over $67,000 in transport costs. Reported satisfaction with the program is almost universally positive." (https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/VTLIB_ILL_Courier_1_year_pilot_report.pdf)

The pilot report reflects that despite increasing the volume of materials moved between libraries by over 50%, participating libraries reported both significant shipping cost savings and more than 700 hours of saved staff time. Staff time was reduced because packing books for shipment and bringing them to the nearest post office takes a great deal more time than placing a book with a preprinted slip into a zipper bag for pick-up. Staff of participating libraries did not have to leave the building while the post office was open to ship packages—an important time-savings for libraries with just one or two staff members.

Importantly, items moved through the courier program often fulfill patron requests more quickly than those that are sent via USPS's book rate, which is a low priority mailing option. Items generally move between two libraries within the courier system within one week. The arrangement with GMLC continued through 2016 and 2017. During those years, GMLC contracted directly with the courier company. The Department of Libraries supported the program with grants to public libraries, purchasing specialized bags, and warehousing fees. The Department paid $88,782 for grants and warehousing costs during the time the Department partnered with GMLC for the courier Service (January 2016-February 2018).

The Department issued a request for proposals for courier services to support the program in early 2017. Since March 1, 2018, the Department has had full responsibility for administering the courier program.

With the value of the program established, more libraries joined the network. The volume of materials moving through the courier increased steadily until the pandemic in 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries around the state and country closed their doors. Early fears that COVID-19 virus might be transmissible via library books impacted circulation of physical materials across the country. In 2020, the volume of materials moved through the courier dropped by nearly 20,000 items.

After more was learned about the transmission of the COVID-19 virus through scientific research, the public and library staff became far more comfortable checking out physical items from libraries and ILL service rebounded. In 2021, the number of items transported via the courier system began to grow and in 2023 the number of items moving through the courier surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

The number of libraries participating in the courier system has grown 53.4% (from 88 to 135) since the Department began running the program in 2018 and the number of items transported via the courier system annually has increased by 368% in that same period (from 30,584 to 143,116).

Fiscal Year	# of Courier System Libraries	# of Items Transported via the Courier	Cost Per Courier Stop	Total Cost of Courier Grants Issued by the Department
2016	88	30,584	$15.00	$16,245
2017	88	75,028	$15.00	$27,297
2018	100	83,347	$15.00	$48,360
2019	111	100,069	$20.00	$26,325
2020	120	81,386	$21.48	$36,270
2021	125	115,726	$21.48	$46,800
2022	134	122,843	$22.97	$74,074*
2023	135	143,116	$24.14	$60,563
2024	138	In progress	$26.30	$70,013
	Total items:	752,099	Total grants:	$335,969

2022 numbers include additional ARPA funds provided to libraries for a second weekly courier stop.
Source: Vermont Department of Libraries

In fiscal year 2024, 138 libraries are participating in the courier system, including: 126 public libraries, 6 school libraries, 4 academic libraries, 1 community library, and 1 special library.

The number of libraries participating in the courier program has grown 53.4% since the Department began running the program in 2018 and the number of items transported via the courier system has increased by 90.8% in that same period.

As the number of libraries participating in the courier program has increased, the cost to the Department to support the system has also increased. The Department continues to offer non-competitive courier grants to offset costs to all public libraries that express interest in joining the program on an annual basis.

The Department also pays warehousing fees to the courier company. This cost pays for items to be moved to a centralized location and sorted. In 2016, the warehousing fee was $500 per month. The courier program has grown to include more libraries and more books are moving between libraries each year, which has led in an increase in storage fees. In 2019, storage fees were $800 per month, and these fees will increase to $1,200 per month in April 2024. From the inception of the program in 2016 through June 2023 the Department has paid $59,400 in warehousing fees.

The Department was able to leverage American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds it was granted from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support Vermont's libraries in COVID-19 response and recovery. Using those one-time funds, the

Department paid $1.48 for public libraries' first courier stop, which stabilized the cost of one stop at $20 from 2020 to 2023. In total, the Department allocated $29,784 of the ARPA funding it received from IMLS toward stabilizing courier program costs for participating public libraries.

The Department also supports the courier program by purchasing the standardized bins and bags used to pack and transport materials. These items are moved between locations and wear out over time, so must be replenished. The cost to the Department for these purchases since 2016 has been $40,403.

The Department also participates in this program as a lending institution. Through June 2018, the State Library and the Midstate Library each had three courier stops per week. Since moving from the Pavilion Building in Montpelier to the Vermont History Center building in Barre in June 2018, the Department has reduced to three stops per week at one location. The total cost for the State Library to participate as a lending institution since 2016 has been $28,777.32.

In total, the Department of Libraries has spent $493,762 in support of the courier program between the pilot program 2016 and June 2023.

The Department currently contracts with Priority Express on the courier program. Priority Express works with individual libraries to determine the pick-up locations and timing of courier stops. The pricing structure for April 2023 through March 2024 is:

- first weekly stop (includes one bin with a weight limit of 50 pounds): $24.14 (Department pays $1.48, reducing cost to $22.66);

- additional weekly stops (for all items up to the weight limit of fifty pounds): $24.14; and

- additional bins in one stop: $1.88 for each additional fifty pounds (no matter how many bins).

The annual cost to a library for one courier stop per week has risen slowly since 2016 period, mostly due to increased fuel prices, and the cost for the most recent contract year was $1,142.62. That cost will rise to $1,367.60 in spring 2024.

The Department estimates that in fiscal year 2023 the 135 libraries in the courier system saved a total of $345,171.61 in shipping costs—an average savings of $2,556.11 for each participating library. (These Departmental figures are based on an estimated charge of $3.32 package of not more than one pound as of July 2022 through the USPS using their Library Rate. Materials weighing more than a pound would cost even more through USPS's Library Rate.) The Department's 2023 savings estimate does not include the amount of staff time saved by using courier bags, nor the amount saved on packaging products for shipping—both of which the 2016 pilot proved were a significant savings in staff time and money for participating libraries.

So far, the courier grant program has been funded entirely with IMLS Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States funds, which are allocated to the state of Vermont and administered by the Department. In fiscal year 2023, the cost of one courier stop was $1,142.7 and the Department granted $571.35 to 106 libraries, a total of $60,563.10. In fiscal year 2024, the contracted rate per courier stop will rise to $1,367.60 and the Department will grant $650 to 110 libraries, a total of $71,500.

The Department anticipated that the cost of the courier program in future years will rise as the program grows and as gas and transportation costs rise. Depending on the contracted rates of service and the number of libraries that wish to participate in future years, the Department may need to make changes to its courier grant program based on the funds it has available. It may be necessary for the Department to reduce the percentage of the courier grant awards each participating library receives or change the eligibility requirements for these grants.

The Working Group heard from some members of the school library community that they are interested in joining the courier program but lack the resources to do so without grant funding.

Frances Binder, School Librarian at the Ruth B. Winton Memorial Library at Colchester High School shared, "We are active in CLOVER (Vermont's ILL system) both as borrowers and lenders. We find that the ILL system works quite well for us (barring pandemic-related delays these past couple of years). Our one big wish with the ILL system would be that schools could participate in the courier service. Currently we are only able to lend and borrow through the postal service which means that some libraries won't lend to us (if they only lend through the courier service). It also means that in order to borrow books from our local [public] library, I or my library assistant must make trips on our own time to pick books up and return them. While we do this willingly (anything to get books in our students' hands) this does represent a real cost in terms of personnel time and resources."

Resource Sharing: Inter-state ILL

The Department facilitates borrowing of physical materials by Vermonters from libraries outside the state. To support this work the Department has dedicated one full-time staff person as well as backup support from two other employees. This number of staff is needed as the requests must be initiated, as well as updated throughout the ILL cycle (request, ship, return, check in). This work is vital to Vermont libraries as it opens up access to resources for all Vermonters without requiring librarians to learn a second ILL system. Over the past five years, the number of items Vermont's libraries has loaned to out-of-state libraries has dropped while the number of items Vermonters have borrowed from out-of-state libraries has increased.

Fiscal Year	Loaned to Out-of-State Libraries	Borrowed from Out-of-State Libraries
2019	304	4,789
2020	171	3,686
2021	114	3,896
2022	132	4,621
2023	138	5,078

Source: Vermont Department of Libraries

While the priority when processing requests to borrow from out-of-state libraries is to request from free lenders, there are some instances where lending libraries charge a fee to borrow items. In cases where no free lender options are available, the borrowing library in Vermont is asked if they agree to pay the borrowing fee. If the library agrees to pay, the Department pays the lending library and bills the borrowing library. Of the 5,078 items borrowed from out-of-state lenders in fiscal year 2023, only 23 items were borrowed from lenders who charge a fee. These fees ranged from $5-30.

Resource Sharing: COVID Impacts

While the sharing of materials through the statewide ILL system never officially stopped due to the COVID-19 health emergency, there was a six-week closure of the courier system due to the courier service ceasing operations for this period. During this closure of the courier system, libraries statewide paused their interlibrary loan service. Most libraries in Vermont restarted courier services by October 2020.

Library circulation decreased in Vermont during the pandemic, just as it decreased across the entire nation. This happened because the public was afraid of possible fomite transmission in response to some press reports early in the pandemic that the COVID-19 virus might be transmissible on surfaces of furniture, boxes, and library books.

Nationally, the library community responded with an abundance of caution and even studied the possibility of fomite transmission via library materials through the *REALM Project* (https://www.oclc.org/realm/home.html). Many libraries quarantined books upon their return for as many as four days before checking them in. This led to a decrease in the number of times a particular book could circulate to the public in a calendar year which significantly impacted the public's access to popular titles. Additionally, the closure of library buildings during the pandemic eliminated the public's ability to browse the shelves and select items serendipitously. While libraries developed workarounds such as increasing telephone and email readers' advisory services, the pandemic had a significant impact on overall physical circulation of library materials. During the pandemic, community members turned more heavily to eBooks and eAudiobooks, which carried no risk of transmitting the virus.

Libraries in Vermont are rebounding from the impacts of COVID-19, however, since the pandemic there has continued to be an increased demand for eBooks and eAudiobooks in libraries and some libraries have not seen a full return to their in-person use, including browsing and borrowing physical collections.

Resource Sharing: Online Databases

In addition to maintaining the physical collections of the State Library, the Department currently meets its statutory obligation (22 V.S.A. § 606) by providing all Vermonters with access to online databases that cover a wide breadth of topics for children, teens, and adults. (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/22/013)

The Department of Libraries selects databases to meet the education, vocational, and recreational needs of the public. These databases include news articles, journal articles, and eBooks.

The Department provides traditional databases such as the Vermont Online Library Gale Cengage products, which provide online access to journals and research material. As public interest in online learning has grown, the Department has also begun providing Vermonters with access to online learning platforms to meet their educational and career development needs. The Department regularly evaluates the content of each database, the usage of each database by Vermonters, and the evolving landscape of available products. The Department engages vendors through the state's regular procurement process and selects databases based that will provide Vermonters with the best resources while staying within the Department's allocated budget.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the following online resources are provided to the public by the Department:

The Vermont Online Library

The Vermont Online Library is a collection of fifty databases from Gale Cengage that is available free for all Vermonters. Resources are available for all age ranges from elementary, to college students, through adult professionals. These databases all have a host of accessibility tools built in, making them truly accessible to every Vermonter. Usage of the Vermont Online Library dropped precipitously during the pandemic in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 and has begun rebounding.

Fiscal Year	Sessions	Avg. Session Length (min)	Full Text Retrievals	Searches
2019	433,090	10.05	267,720	886,275
2020	277,653	9.76	181,716	541,055
2021	271,491	8.98	174,157	444,662
2022	353,415	11.39	203,911	503,477
2023	364,856	10.63	200,794	590,509

Source: Vermont Department of Libraries

Vermont Legal Forms

The Department added Gale LegalForms to the Vermont Online Library in late 2023. Gale Legal Forms offers a wide range of legal documents and templates for use in personal and business legal dealings. These documents and forms are tailored to and are consistent with Vermont law. Patrons can access documents for used car sales, bankruptcy, divorce, apartment rental agreements, wills, and more.

Gale Presents: Peterson's Test and Career Prep

This database offers practice exams, in-depth career assessments, college entrance tests, resumé and cover letter building tools, and more. Users can get ready for the CDL, GED, SAT, or LSAT, explore potential careers, or prepare for an upcoming interview.

LearningExpress

Resources for careers, job hunting, resumés and cover letters, high school homework support, and citizenship test resources.

Usage of LearningExpress continues to decline and the cost of providing it for the public has risen over time. In fiscal year 2023, the cost was $82.44 per session and $106 per resource accessed. Due to the high cost per use and low utilization, the Department plans to discontinue this resource.

Universal Class

Universal Class provides Vermonters with a collection of over 500 continuing education courses covering a range of professional skills and hobbies. The cost per session in fiscal year 2023 was $0.23 per lesson, and $0.23 per submission. While the resource is affordable, it has not been heavily used so the Department plans to discontinue this resource.

Udemy

Udemy provides Vermonters with a collection of over 14,000 video courses from Gale Cengage. The training topics include a range of professional skills and hobbies. The Department began providing Vermonters with this resource in 2023 because this instructional platform has great depth and breadth. The Department is hopeful that it will be better utilized than other learning platforms it has provided previously.

Resource Sharing: Database Platform Costs

Product	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
VOL	$253,500	$286,000	$286,000	$286,000
LearningExpress*	$49,050	discontinuing		
Universal Class**	$25,000	discontinuing		
Palace Project	$20,575	$18,268	$18,681	$19,115
Palace Project content	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000
Total	**$368,125**	**$324,268**	**$324,681**	**$325,115**
Year Over Year	5.83%	(11.91%)	0.001%	0.001%

*LearningExpress contract expires at the end of May 2024.
**Universal Class contract expires at the end of August 2024.

The Department is working to flatline costs for databases and online collections over the next three fiscal years.

In fiscal year 2022, costs for online resources provided by the Department were $347,841. The cost to the Department for databases has increased by 5.83% in 2023 to $368,125. Due to proactive reductions in costs by the Department, fiscal year 2024 costs will decline by 11.91%. Marginal increases in existing contracts in fiscal years 2025 and 2026 will lead to negligible cost increases.

However, across the country, academic and public libraries are reporting rapidly escalating database costs. The Department anticipates that database costs will continue to increase, which will likely pose a challenge given its budgetary limitations when the Department's current database contracts expire in coming years.

Resource Sharing: eBooks and eAudiobooks

The Department of Libraries has heard from the Vermont library community that libraries have difficulties meeting the growing demand for eBooks and eAudiobooks while still purchasing new physical books for their collections. The Department's print book acquisition is limited by space and budgetary constraints.

Over fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Department had an opportunity to use $236,770 of Vermont's one-time federal IMLS ARPA to expand its eBook and eAudiobook collection. Restrictions on the IMLS ARPA funds limited the Department's selection of materials to those eBooks and eAudiobooks with perpetual licenses, so the Department focused on providing a collection of core titles with unlimited checkouts to the public. Knowing these core titles, such as the ones found on school reading lists, are in the Department's online book collection enables local libraries to spend their limited online book budgets on popular titles.

The eBooks and eAudiobooks in the Department's collection are available to Vermonters through the Vermont Palace Project, which the Department launched in January 2022. The Vermont Palace Project is an easy-to-use, content-neutral, online platform through which eBooks and eAudiobooks from many publishers and vendors can be accessed by the public at no cost.

The Department's goals for the Palace Project are to:

- provide a core collection of classic titles to all Vermonters through the Department of Libraries eBook and eAudiobook collections;

- provide a platform for local libraries to host their local eBook and Audiobook collections;

- make finding and accessing local and state eBook and eAudiobook collections easier for Vermonters;

- increase the speed with which Vermonters can access books they wish to read; and

- provide all of this at no cost to the public or local libraries.

The Palace Project platform launched in June 2022, when it began being built out, library-by-library. As of August 2023, over 110 public libraries have joined the platform. An additional 19 public libraries are scheduled for the next wave of onboarding in fiscal year 2024. Circulation has been increasing since the launch of the project and the addition of libraries and their patrons. In FY23, there were 10,282 checkouts.

Through the Palace App, the Department provides Vermonters with a core collection of more than 7,500 eBooks and eAudiobooks hand-selected for our community. In addition

to the core collection, the Palace App also provides access to over 15,700 items outside of copyright protection through the Digital Public Library of America by Lyrasis to all users. These 22,500+ titles can be provided to Vermonters in tandem with other digital content that is locally selected and procured by their public library. Individual libraries can purchase digital items specifically for their patrons from multiple vendors and then incorporate those items into the Palace App platform.

As of May 2023, the Department of Libraries eBook and eAudiobook holdings in the Palace App include 3,162 eBooks and 3,305 eAudiobooks. In addition to the 6,467 items available in English, the Department's eBook and eAudiobook collection includes 1,061 non-English titles to support libraries serving migrant worker communities, existing refugees, and new Americans in the state.

Due to the high cost of licenses for eBooks eAudiobooks, the Department is working to identify funds to continue expanding the number of eBooks and eAudiobooks in its collection. The Department was fortunate to have access to one-time ARPA funding from IMLS to build its core collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks, but has a limited collections budget to facilitate continued purchases in this area. That said, there is significant growth in the readership of eBooks and eAudiobooks in the state and nationwide, and the library community has shared that it would appreciate support for increases in the size of shared eBook and eAudiobook collections.

Impact of COVID-19 on Collection and Collection Usage in Vermont's Public Libraries

Collection usage was impacted significantly in Vermont by the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all Vermont libraries closed for periods of weeks to months. There were many periods of time during which libraries allowed visitors for appointment-only browsing or browsing for limited or irregular hours. Some libraries adapted to providing curb-side service during this time to keep up some circulation, but in-person browsing still varied. During periods of time when libraries were unable to allow the public to enter their buildings, the public was not able to browse the collection in-person. There were also different practices surrounding quarantining materials at libraries due to concerns about fomite transmission of the virus, resulting in the removal of materials from circulation for up to a week's time after their return. Additionally, shipping delays for new material from book jobbers stopped or delayed collection growth and offerings during this time.

Vermonters who did not have access to the internet or devices in their home had less ability to go online to search for and place holds on library materials—so this group of the population was more significantly impacted by the closure of library buildings to the public. This group of Vermonters also had significantly less access to information through the open internet or paid databases.

> *"If COVID-19 drove any point home for Vermont public libraries, it's the huge challenge of meeting our communities' appetite for e-content. While my library building was closed in 2020 and into 2021, I, like many of my fellow librarians, shifted nearly all of my collection purchasing to ebooks and downloadable audio. These formats are available 24/7 for community members who have both an internet connection and a device on which to read / listen— which are obviously barriers for plenty of people. During the nearly two years since the pandemic arrived in Vermont, the digital content landscape has evolved in ways that create additional barriers, and the conditions weren't favorable to begin with."*
> *—Amy Grasmick, Director, Kimball Library, Randolph*

To address inequities in information access due to COVID-19, IMLS distributed $2.135 million dollars of ARPA grant funding to the Department of Libraries. Of that funding, the Department of Libraries leveraged $478,000 to support statewide services and resource sharing. The Department distributed $1,193,215.61 directly as non-competitive grants in two rounds—166 ($928,410.84) Public Libraries applied for round one and 139 ($264,804.77) for round two. These funds were used by municipal and incorporated public libraries around the state to purchase equipment and resources that would help them to better address ongoing space needs related to COVID-19 and to bolster their collections and resources. Because COVID-19 disproportionately impacted communities with higher equity needs, the Department encouraged libraries to spend funds in the second wave of non-competitive grants to expand their Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Collections.

In recognition of the increased need for digital resources during the pandemic, the Department also awarded funds to other organizations that help meet Vermonters' information needs including:

- $218,050 in grant funding to the Green Mountain Library Consortium for eContent; and

- $7,500 to the Catamount Library Consortium for the Aspen Discovery Layer.

Key Issues and Trends Related to Collections

The format of information—print or digital—is a topic of increasing discussion in library circles. Most libraries in Vermont provide both print and digital materials for their patrons. One advantage of eBooks is that the size and contrast of the font can easily be changed by the reader based on their individual needs, so they are more accessible than print resources.

The Vermont public has shown increasing interest in accessing books in digital format. A number of content distributors have gained prominence in the eBook and eAudiobook arena, and a consistent challenge has arisen around supporting the public in using multiple platforms to access the resources of various publishers and vendors.

The typical eBook and eAudiobook procurement model poses a challenge to the Department and to libraries statewide and nationwide. When a library purchases a physical copy of a book, that library owns that physical copy in perpetuity. There are no limits on the number of times a library may circulate a physical book in its collection, and there are no limits on the number of years a library may circulate a physical book in its collection. In contrast, publishers typically do not sell a copy of an eBook or eAudiobook to a library—they typically sell the rights to circulate that book a limited number of times to the community or for a limited number of years. Such models vary widely, with the typical model being that when a library "buys an eBook", it actually does not purchase that book but instead buys a *license* to lend that eBook to its patrons for a limited time.

As reported in a September 2022 Stateline article, when libraries purchase eBooks and eAudiobooks, "Today, it is common for e-book licenses from major publishers to expire after two years or 26 borrows, and to cost between $60 and $80 per license." (https://stateline.org/2022/09/06/librarians-and-lawmakers-push-for-greater-access-to-e-books/)

With limited funding, libraries are also challenged to fund both physical and digital collections. While some Vermonters are eager to check out books digitally, others lack the internet connectivity or personal devices to use digital resources. Other Vermonters simply prefer reading traditional books.

> *"People continue to prefer physical books, and the fact that digital natives continue to check out physical library books in high numbers indicates that this is unlikely to change in the future. Circulation of physical materials by teenagers, for example, who have had access to digital e-books their entire lives, has gone up every year for the past four years at Ilsley Public Library."*
> *—Dana Hart, Director, Isley Public Library, Middlebury*

According to the Pew Research Center, since 2019, percentage of eBook readers has increased from 25% to 30% across the country. EBooks have been shown to be more popular amongst the 18-29 age range (42% report reading eBooks). Adults with an annual income of less than $30,000 who have listened to an audiobook has increased to 22% (from 14%). A third of readers used both print and digital books in the past year. Subscriptions for digital content have become more popular, offering magazines, streaming video, music, and language learning programs. The 2022 Pew study reports that 33% of US adults have read both print and eBooks in the last twelve months, with

9% reporting reading digital books only. Overall usage of eBooks and audiobooks in the nation have increased in the last year, while print books continue to be the more popular format (https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/06/three-in-ten-americans-now-read-e-books/).

Licensing digital content for libraries provides additional complications to maintaining and providing digital collections. The "Big 5" Publishers: Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Penguin Random House, and Simon & Schuster set licensing models that are not sustainable for most library budgets. A two-year license for an adult title for a library can cost $50 - $120, while the single consumer can purchase a title in perpetuity for $12 - $15. (https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A709977026/GPS?u=vol_m761c&sid=bookmark-GPS&xid=81343bcd).

Libraries are faced with spending money on repurchasing content that was previously accessible in the collection.

> *"It's a complicated and volatile market, with changing prices, varying licensing models, and limited options to share even within the state."—Mary Danko, Director, Fletcher Free Library, Burlington*

Vermont's public libraries select and maintain their collections locally. Each public library board is responsible for developing its own collection development policy, which it typically does through discussion and guidance from staff. Because each Vermont public library has local control over its policies, there is variety among collection development policies in the state. Library boards are also responsible for determining their collection maintenance and materials challenge processes. Materials challenges have increased over the last two years throughout the nation and in Vermont, and this is an area that has the potential to impact the availability of print and digital resources to meet the information, vocational, and recreational needs of Vermonters.

Maintaining physical books is of particular importance in Vermont, where many community members do not have access to the internet or a way to read an eBook or listen to an eAudiobook. As Amy Grasmick, Director of the Kimball Public Library in Randolph shared with the Working Group, "There are a lot of reasons to be concerned about the transition of books from physical to digital formats. The largest professional organization in the country, the American Library Association, has been advocating for more equitable access to e-content for more than a decade, with no discernible effect. Prices continue to rise, competition is disappearing, and libraries continue to struggle to provide a diverse collection for their community members."

The ever-rising costs of online databases is another significant concern for Vermont's libraries—and particularly the Department of Libraries and Vermont's academic libraries. Bryn Geffert, Dean of Libraries at the University of Vermont shared with the Working Group that "Recently, due to budgetary constraints, the Dana Library at the University of Vermont Medical Center has had to cancel subscriptions to numerous online 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."

In recent years, many academic libraries and large public libraries nationwide have moved away from retaining bound copies of printed journals and over to online databases. Libraries have cited the lack of usage of the bound periodicals and the need to free up more space in the library for people and programs. Initially, online databases seemed to be a better way to use limited collections budgets while maintaining access to little-used journals. Scholars and researchers could access these materials as needed without necessitating that a library keep little used bound journals on the shelves of the library. Over time, however, the cost of subscriptions to online databases has escalated significantly and universities and public libraries are finding their budgets have not expanded at the same rate.

Libraries are now facing a "serials crisis" as they can no longer afford access to journal articles behind restrictive paywalls. The Association of Research Libraries is quoted as explaining that, "Scholarly communication relies in part on the ability of research libraries to purchase published works. The marketplace for scholarly publishing has developed in ways that challenge libraries' ability to acquire the works needed by their users. Commercialization of publishing in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors has led to egregious price increases and unacceptable terms and conditions of use for some key research resources needed by the scholarly community." (https://sites.tufts.edu/scholarlycommunication/open-access/the-serials-crisis-explained/)

Budget cuts have led to a lack of access to online materials that researchers need to do their work—and the practice of having online-only access to information needs a closer look. An overarching theme that the Working Group heard from the community is that online collections are on the rise, but print books are not going out of style any time soon. For the foreseeable future, libraries in Vermont are faced with the challenge of maintaining *both* print and online collections.

Collection Development

Selecting materials for libraries takes experience, skill, and an openness to hear and meet the needs of community members. A library has materials on all topics, and it can be challenging to select materials on topics that one has learned little about.

The Working Group heard from some library directors that they felt inexpert at selecting materials for children and teens and that they felt ill-equipped to train new youth services librarians to do this work. Some shared that they missed the hands-on access to children's materials in "materials review" meetings hosted by the Department in the past and also missed receiving curated list of recommended new youth materials. Some shared that they did not have the time, staffing, or expertise to make selections of the best new books available in each of the areas. Margaret Woodruff, Director of the Charlotte Library shared, "I looked forward to the semi-annual materials review sessions with enthusiasm and expectation. This helped to boost the quality of collections at individual libraries, and across the library community."

In her written testimony, Woodruff shared that she had read a quote from former NFL player Emmanuel Acho that described visiting a library as "like going to the airport with a passport but without a ticket." Woodruff continued "Our job is to make sure that everyone has the ticket as well as the passport. Making resources available for those who do not (yet) use the library is one key step. Collection development needs to be proactive and provide resources for all. This includes resources for community members who may not feel welcome, due to language or technology barriers. It also includes potential members of our communities such as refugees and new Americans."

Conclusion

Over the last three decades, collections at all types of libraries have undergone a radical transformation. The advent of online databases and eBooks and eAudiobooks has shifted the focus of what materials lie within the walls of the library to what combination of resources are available through a library, either in person or remotely. Many library users' primary contact with their library's collection is online. That said, the availability and use of print collections remains paramount within the library.

This change means that where there was one collection to maintain there are now three: print materials, eBooks and eAudiobooks, and online databases. The cost of maintaining collections has skyrocketed, with databases and e/eAudiobooks carrying price tags that dwarf their print counterparts.

Vermont's libraries have proven to be remarkably flexible during this period, successfully maintaining collections often with flat or declining budgets. Resource sharing through CLOVER ILL and the courier Service supported by the Department of Libraries has decreased barriers between library collections and the people of Vermont. The creativity and pluck of the library community is no more evident anywhere than in approaches to collections.

That said, rising costs of databases, online eBooks and eAudiobooks, and courier service point to a difficult future without significant increases in funding. The current state of affairs—with all of its successes and shortcomings—will be eroded by hard choices that lead to reduced availability of books and information to Vermonters.

Programming

The Working Group received written comments on programming from 11 members of the community and heard directly from eight individuals on this topic at its November 12, 2021, meeting. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 22 community members. On December 22, 2022, the Working Group heard a report on statewide programming statistics from the Department.

Public Library Programming in Vermont

"Thoughts of libraries tend to bring to mind images of books and reading, but the trends tell another story: Circulation in public libraries is decreasing while public programs are growing in prominence,…"—Terrilyn Chun
(*https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2020/01/02/get-with-programming-librarians/*)
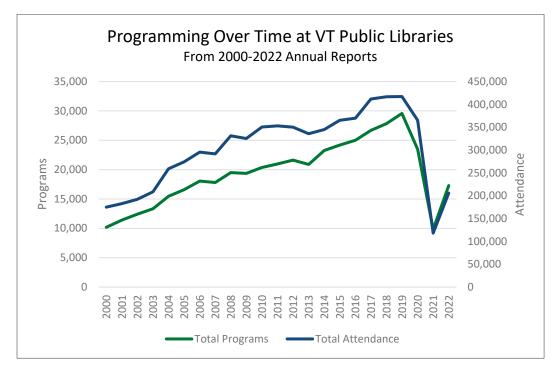
Vermont's libraries are no longer silent public spaces where people can quietly enjoy choosing from a large repository of collectively owned books and reading in public. Increasingly, they are centers of engaged community learning that provide opportunities for learning and sharing experiences that are geared toward the interests and needs of the communities they serve. The number of programs hosted in Vermont's libraries continues to grow. Today library staff are called on to provide not just reading material and reference support, but also opportunities for community enrichment and lifelong learning.

Audience Age	Number of Programs	Number of Attendees
Birth – 5 years	5,748	54,406
6 – 11 years	2,894	42,528
12-18 years	938	7,050
Ages 19 and up	5,047	48,075
All ages	1,758	35,416
Total	17,299	205,677

Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/PLS_Stats_2022.xlsx

According to Public Library Survey (PLS) data, the number of programs in Vermont peaked in 2019, when public libraries offered nearly 30,000 programs to nearly 420,000 participants.

Programming Over Time at VT Public Libraries
From 2000-2022 Annual Reports

The number of programs presented by Vermont's public libraries decreased dramatically in 2020 in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to PLS data, in 2021 public programming and attendance fell even further. Programming and attendance are steadily growing now but have not rebounded to pre-pandemic numbers. Between 2019 and 2022, the number of public library programs decreased by 41% (from 29,568 to 17,299) and program attendance dropped by 51% (from 417,192 to 205,677).

According to PLS data, in 2022 the 145 reporting public libraries presented 17,299 programs which had a combined attendance of 205,677. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/PLS_Stats_2022.xlsx)

The 2022 PLS report shows that public libraries hosted programs with more than 200,000 attendees on-site at libraries, off-site, and virtually. Most of these programs took place on-site at public library buildings.

Location	Number of Programs	Number of Attendees
On-site	12,650	135,675
Off-site	1,873	33,979
Virtual	1,862	17,105
Location not listed	914	18,918
Total	17,299	205,677

Source:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/PLS_Stats_2022.xlsx

According to the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a "program" or "program session" is "any planned event which introduces the group attending to library services or which provides information to participants. Program sessions may cover use of the library, library services, or library tours. Program sessions may also provide cultural, recreational, or educational information. Examples of these types of program sessions include, but are not limited to, film showings, lectures, story hours, literacy programs, citizenship classes, and book discussions." (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/2021_pls_data_file_documentation.pdf)

In addition to being fun and engaging, programming for the youngest children should support their early learning needs. Library staff who receive training in the principles of early childhood literacy can use their own learning to provide enriching educational experiences for the children who attend library programs. According to Linda Donigan, Youth Services Librarian at the Bennington Free Library, "Librarians work continuously to improve the cognitive content of our programming, as we elevate the traditional story hour into meaningful learning experiences for children." Donigan credits the training she received through the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) with informing her work and the work of her colleagues. Donigan shared, "…we know that in order to be successful learners and communicators, young children need multiple experiences with books, frequent and interesting conversations with adults, and diverse and repeated early learning experiences. Thanks to VELI, our public library has been central in providing these learning opportunities throughout our community, even during the pandemic." The Department provides a $20,000 annual grant to Vermont Humanities to support its VELI program, which provides early literacy training to a cohort of library staff each year.

> *"Many people see how engaging and welcoming our library is to all age groups and we are a true community partner for much more than books."—Sharon Ellingwood White, former Director of Alice M. Ward Memorial Library, Canaan*

In the past, library storytime may have been seen as entertainment or as an opportunity for toddlers to socialize. Today, librarians, parents, and caregivers recognize the important role that storytime plays in preparing children for school and getting them ready to set off on a path of lifelong learning. Those who serve youth in libraries need ongoing professional development to ensure that they create programs for children that support their developmental needs.

If staffing permits, libraries should develop multiple weekly programs for young children of varying ages (babies, toddlers, and preschoolers). In addition to hosting storytime programs in the library, library staff can bring programs for children to daycares, preschools, and parks. Mary Danko, Director of the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, shared that "When our youngest folks participate in library programming that instills a

love of reading, builds a database of broad vocabulary, and facilitates a powerful connection to reading, they also gain dozens of kindergarten readiness skills that set them up for success for their entire education."

Storytime is not just a social and learning opportunity for children, but also provides a learning opportunity for adults who support children. Danko shared that "…families learn how to better engage with their young children by learning early literacy techniques through modeling by librarians." Library programs for the youngest children give parents and caregivers the opportunity to observe the way in which trained youth-service library staff read to and engage children in picture books and can gain confidence in their ability to read to their children at home similarly. Amy Olsen, Director of the Lanpher Memorial Library, shared that their staff are "intentional about planning our programs to help children gain the skills they need before they learn to read, and also to inform the adults so that they too can use early literacy skills in their daily lives with children."

In addition to storytime programming for the youngest community members, libraries should develop programs for school-aged children. Library staff should consider the specific interests and developmental level of the intended audience when designing programs for their communities. Library programs are free to the public and provide access to ideas and places that many Vermont school children would otherwise not have the resources to visit or experience directly.

Importantly, school, and public libraries are safe spaces where all children are welcomed and treated equally. According to Bree Drapa, Director of the Westford Public Library, library programming "offers equity and a sense of belonging to groups of varying ages and economic backgrounds." When library programming reflects the diversity of our world, community members from many backgrounds feel welcome to use libraries to learn and explore.

Tween and teen library patrons have specific programming needs and interests. Teen Advisory Boards are one way that some libraries empower teens to contribute to the development of library services for their community. Libraries in Vermont report that manga, maker programs, and opportunities for STEM/STEAM learning are all popular with older youth. Libraries also note that many schools require that teens volunteer in their community, so providing teens with meaningful opportunities to serve at the library is a great way to meet their developmental needs while also meeting a curricular requirement. Public libraries provide tweens and teens with the opportunity for grade-free, self-directed learning and can provide youth a safe space to explore their world and identity independently.

Just as libraries should strive to meet the specific needs of children, they should also strive to provide programming that meets the needs and interests of adults in the community. In addition to more traditional library programs for adults, such as book clubs and speaker events, some libraries in Vermont have found that citizenship classes, language learning, technology training, computer basics, and workforce development courses have proven popular and draw a strong audience. The needs of

specific segments of the adult population should also be considered, including the needs of Vermont's growing population of adults of the age of 65 and above. The public library can fill this important need for seniors in Vermont communities. Many communities lack a senior center, so instead, seniors gather and connect with one another at libraries to maintain social interactions, keep their skills and minds sharp, and engage in community activities. The Lanpher Memorial Library in Hyde Park has found that for seniors, programs about living wills, fall prevention, music, memory, fire safety, and bird identification have proven popular as have history walks and memory-sharing sessions. The Sherburne Memorial Library in Killington noted that bone builders exercise programs, Monday movie matinees, trivia challenges, game days, and art programs for seniors have been successful. These libraries developed programming to meet the needs of seniors in their communities by listening to suggestions and thinking creatively, reinforcing the fact that libraries are no longer just about books.

> *"Public library programming combines socialization, education, and empowerment"—Karson Kiesinger, Bennington Free Library*

Today, librarians in Vermont are thinking more inclusively when developing programs. Danko shared that "Over the past year and a half, public libraries have been more assertive in ensuring that programming includes themes of equity and racial justice." Library programs should be planned with an eye to inclusion, equity, and diversity so that all community members feel welcome to take part in them.

Scheduling and location are key elements to consider when planning programs—and it is important to listen to community feedback when developing program schedules. Programs should be scheduled at times they can be attended by the community the program serves. A program that seems like a flop when held at midday on a Tuesday might draw a crowd when held on the weekend because more members of the target audience are available to attend at that time. For example, the Lanpher Library hosts Night Owl Story Time on Monday evenings at 6:00, and "started 16 years ago as a 6-week program where children were invited to come to the library in their pajamas and participate in a 'bed-time story time.' When the 6 weeks were over, the father of one of the kids said: 'Really? This is the last one?' Since he worked during the day, he liked that he was able to join in storytime with his kids in the evening. We've met almost every Monday night since."

Programs should take place at locations that are easy for the public to access. For example, when trying to connect with underserved communities who have not traditionally used their public library, library staff should consider bringing a program to a location that particular community already frequents and where they'll be most comfortable.

While many library staff have special skills and hidden talents, all library staff can benefit from training to support enhanced library programs. Trainings offered by the Department of Libraries, the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) at VT Humanities, and the Children's Literacy Initiative (CLiF) are all valuable resources for library staff.

In addition to sharing in-house programs presented by library staff, libraries can also partner with other organizations in the community to develop and share meaningful, impactful, high-quality, and high-interest programs. Museum ABCs is an example of a successful partnership between the Bennington Museum and the Bennington Free Library. Through this program, Linda Donigan of the Bennington Free Library shared that "Children and families have explored art, objects and historical concepts in the galleries of the Museum, engaged in storytelling and fundamental literacy exercises, and created artwork based on monthly themes." Another successful partnership exists at the Lanpher Memorial Library, which partners with the Hyde Park Opera House to present "sneak peek" performances to the community. Partnerships are beneficial to both public libraries and the organizations they work with, boosting the reach and impact of both.

Vermont libraries can also leverage shared resources provided by the Department of Libraries to support their programming efforts. The Department provides all public libraries in the state the ability to screen movies for the public through a public performance license it secures for each public library. The Department also provides grants to Vermont Humanities to support it in bolstering programming offerings at public libraries including a $15,000 grant to support First Wednesdays (now named the Snapshot series) and a $15,000 grant to their Author Residency Program.

Many of Vermont's libraries find that providing access to authors and experts is a key to successful programming. An outdoor educator from Lamoille County Conservation District presents Monthly Junior Naturalist programs at the Lanpher Memorial Library.

The statewide VT Reads program sponsored by Vermont Humanities is very popular with libraries statewide, who appreciate the many supports that this program provides for host organizations including discussion guides, free discussions hosted by a trained facilitator, and copies of the book. (https://www.vermonthumanities.org/programs/book-a-program/vermont-reads/vermont-reads-2023/)

National Programming Data Comparison

Based on data reported by all states in the PLS, in 2020 Vermont ranked:

- first in the nation for the number of programs offered for adults and children, with 42.2 programs offered per 1,000 people;

- first in the nation in attendance for adult and children's programs;

- first in the nation number for number of young adult programs; and

- eighteenth in the nation in attendance for young adult programming, with 20.66 attendees per 1,000 population. (The national average is 16.74 attendees per 1,000 people.)

	Vermont	National Average
Number of programs offered for adults and children per 1,000 people	42.2	11.26
Number of attendees at adult and children's programs per 1,000 people	660.03	247.24
Number of young adult programs per 1,000 people	2.66	1.17
Number of attendees at young adult programs per 1,000 people	20.66	16.74

Source: https://www.imls.gov/pls-benchmarking-tables

The size of Vermont's population and the number of libraries per capita may contribute to how well Vermont does in number of programs offered and number of attendees. However, several states with larger populations and many local branch libraries also perform well in these areas.

Spotlight on Summer Programming

Every year, the Department of Libraries coordinates statewide summer reading programming and follows up with an annual program survey. In 2022, 135 libraries responded to the Department's summer programming survey. Of the responding public libraries, 131 offered a summer reading program. This focus on summer reading—typically offered in most public libraries around the country—is intended to help students maintain academic progress while on summer break and to foster literacy skills and a passion for lifelong learning.
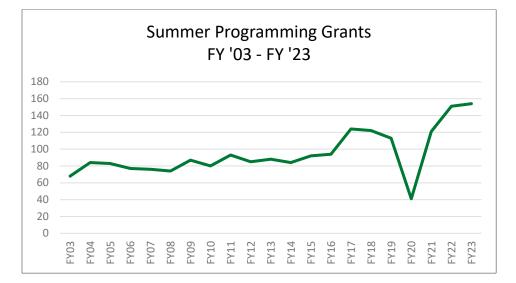
Vermont's public libraries offered summer programs for patrons of all ages, as well as intergenerational programming. The types of programs varied from grab-and-go activities to on-site, off-site, and hybrid programs.

"We tripled our summer reading participation this year. In addition, our book circulation for children and youth dramatically increased this past summer as compared to pre-pandemic numbers."—Angela Ogle, Cutler Memorial Library, Plainfield

The Department receives an annual disbursement from the Smith Fund to support services and programs for youth in Vermont libraries. In recent years the Department

has made non-competitive youth summer programming grants available to every public library in Vermont. In 2023, the Department gave 154 libraries non-competitive grants of $300 to support summer programming for youth. This is the largest number of summer reading grants administered by the Department since this grant program began. Public libraries were able to use these grant funds to hire performers and purchase books and supplies to support summer programming geared toward youth.

The Working Group heard from the community on the benefits of centralized programming opportunities, including participation in the Collaborative Summer Reading Program (CSLP) offered through the Department of Libraries. Participation in CSLP saves libraries time, energy, and money, as the consortium develops an annual theme and provides programming ideas, printed materials, logos, and display elements for ready use by libraries. In recent years, summer reading programs have expanded to include learning of all types— not just literacy— to help students keep their skills and passion for learning fresh all summer long.

> *"Once only about summer reading, public library summer challenge programs have expanded to include meaningful STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) activities that work to address academic summer slides in all learning areas."—Mary Danko, Fletcher Free Library, Burlington*

Libraries also reported that they benefit from traveling exhibitions, which "bring community members into the library space for wonderful connections and thought-provoking conversations" according to Fletcher Free Library Director Mary Danko. Danko reports that the Fletcher Free has hosted three traveling exhibitions in recent years including Hostile Terrain, provided by the Undocumented Migration Project (https://www.undocumentedmigrationproject.org/installation); Exploring Human Origins:

What does it mean to be Human? provided by the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History (https://humanorigins.si.edu/exhibit/exploring-human-origins-what-does-it-mean-be-human); and The 1619 Project, provided by the Hampton Museum (https://hampton.gov/3588/The-1619-Exhibit).

> *"Summer Reading highlights the good work that rural libraries do in their communities— the offering of free and accessible activities, community partnerships and happy, engaged kids is what it is all about."—Bree Drapa, Westford Public Library*

COVID and Public Library Programming

During the COVID-19 health emergency, libraries were forced to shift away from a largely on-site programming model. Initially Vermont's libraries moved to online programs and then shifted to some outdoor and hybrid programs. Currently, most libraries have shifted back to in-person programs although some still offer hybrid options for some programs.

Digital programming had some positive qualities, including that it allowed patrons to connect in real time, providing a sense of community for those who cannot meet in-person. Digital programs served to increase accessibility for patrons that have a difficult time making it to library building or faced challenges entering library buildings to attend programs. Offering digital programs during the pandemic provided communities with a sense of continuity and stability despite the challenges they were facing. Digital programming greatly extended the reach of library programs. Vermont librarians found that some of their programs even attracted audience members from other states.

Digital programming also had negative aspects. As the pandemic wore on, library patrons shared that they began to experience "Zoom fatigue". Librarians found that digital programming for children was generally less successful than programming for adults in this format.

When the weather permitted, Vermont's librarians moved library programs outdoors. Libraries used fire pits and tents to create cozy outdoor spaces to conduct programs for the public in an open-air setting. Some libraries have decided to continue to use these additional outdoor spaces to supplement their indoor spaces. That said, staffing levels must be considered by libraries that host outdoor programs as doing so often requires additional support while the librarian is outdoors presenting the program.

Libraries also created "outdoor passive programs" including Storywalks® that people could find in their community and engage with independently from library staff. These efforts were popular with communities as they promoted outdoor excursions and had placemaking benefits for their towns. However, outdoor passive programs have proven

to be time intensive and require ongoing maintenance. While some well-established activities such as Storywalks® will likely continue, libraries are entering into this type of programming less frequently now.

Libraries also developed take-and-make passive programs or kits that community members could pick-up and bring home. These received positive community feedback and enabled libraries to reach new community members. Libraries were able to connect with patrons that preferred to complete activities on their own and would typically shy away from a group craft program in a library setting. However, take-and-make passive programs proved to be more costly than in-library programs and somewhat challenging for libraries to sustain over time.

Overall, passive programs were found to be beneficial in welcoming library users who prefer learning independently over participating in library programming. The group aspect of library programming, which can be off-putting or a barrier to some community members, is eliminated by programming that is encountered outside of the library or picked up from a library. Passive programming enables program participation at a time that works for the individual.

Moving forward, many libraries are offering a mix of active and passive programming. Providing both types of programming welcomes a wider range of community members to take part in library programing as people can opt to participate based on their personal preferences and social style.

Core Competencies that Affect the Quality of Public Library Programming

The National Impact of Public Programs Assessment (an American Library Association study funded by IMLS) identified 9 core library programming competencies that affect the quality of programming: knowledge of the community, interpersonal skills, creativity, content knowledge, evaluation, financial skills, outreach and marketing, event planning, and organizational skills. (https://nilppa.org/phase-1-white-paper/what-competencies-and-training-are-required/)

Library staff need to have knowledge of their communities, including their needs and interests. With this knowledge, staff can determine how library programs might be delivered to best meet those needs and interests. Knowledge of one's community can also help library staff identify groups that have not historically been served by programming so that they can develop programming to meet the needs of these important community members.

Running successful programs requires library staff to have the interpersonal skills to communicate effectively and appropriately with all audiences served by the library.

Another skill necessary to develop and implement successful programming is creativity. Creativity in dreaming up new program ideas is as important as the ability to find solutions to meet community programming needs when serving all audiences.

Content knowledge is a core library programming competency that affects many small public libraries in Vermont having one staff member or part-time staff. A single person is unable to be a subject matter expert in everything their library strives to offer their community. For example, it is challenging to be an expert in digital literacy, early literacy, topics of interest to teens, and diversity. Libraries with multiple staff members are more likely to have a greater range of content knowledge in-house. Larger public libraries are also often able to supplement the subject area expertise of staff with programming provided by paid presenters and performers. Many of the small and rural libraries in Vermont cannot afford to hire subject matter experts, including dedicated youth services librarians.

Additionally, organizational skills like event planning, outreach and marketing, and financial management are all necessary to plan and execute successful programs. While many libraries in Vermont do great work in these areas, having all these skills and juggling all these tasks can be challenging for those with limited staff.

Finally, it is important not just to host programs, but also to evaluate the community response to those programs. To do this effectively, library staff need to have the skills to develop surveys and use qualitative statistical tools to measure program success, which they can then use to shape future programming.

Programming in School Libraries

Programming in school libraries has a slightly different meaning from programming in public libraries. In school libraries, programming differs from instruction and is additive. Unlike in public libraries, where an audience for a program must be built through outreach, publicity, and word of mouth, school libraries provide programs for a known audience: students and staff. School libraries offer professional development programming for school staff. They also offer enrichment programming for students. Student engagement in programs offered by the school library is ungraded and provides opportunities for school librarians to have a different relationship with students in that context than classroom teachers have. This is beneficial to fostering a relationship of trust and support between school librarians and the students they support.

"A school library is the only academic site within a school where all identities intersect. Therefore, it is a powerful site to explore justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. School libraries are containers for courageous conversations, where all stakeholders are welcome to lean into dialogues that might not be possible elsewhere."—Meg B. Allison, Teacher-Librarian at U-32 Middle and High School, East Montpelier

In recent years, school libraries have become sites for social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and these are frequently the focus of school library programs. According to Sarah Keener, School Librarian at Hazen Union School in Hardwick, "School library programming (and the outside programming we connect our patrons to) plays a vital role in building and maintaining cohesive, healthy and equitable communities."

School libraries often have limited budgets for programming, and it takes place on a smaller scale than at many public libraries. Additionally, school librarians reported that programming in school libraries has been negatively impacted by decisions to combine technology integration with school media specialist work into one position as they now have less time and resources to put toward programming efforts.

"School and public libraries have always been the center of reliable information, public discourse and community which is essential to our democratic values."—Alyson Mahony, Librarian at Doty and Rumney Elementary Schools, Worcester and Middlesex

Best Practices to Support Library Programming

The Working Group heard that public libraries can offer rich and engaging programs when they have:

- **Adequate staffing levels to support planning, implementing, and evaluating programs**
  Libraries need staff with subject expertise to support robust, high-quality in-house public programming. Many public libraries in Vermont rely on volunteers to fill this need which can impact the quality and educational value of programs.

  Library staff need time to plan programs, time to plan and execute marketing, and time to get the program space ready. Making the time for these activities can be very challenging for library staff who must find time to plan and

present programs while still attending to the daily tasks of providing traditional public library service and staffing the reference and circulation desks.

The Working Group heard that library staff would appreciate the opportunity to dedicate more time to preparing and evaluating programs for the public.

"Thoughtful, engaging programs require substantial funding and staff time"—Dana Hart, Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury

- **A dedicated programming budget**
  The Working Group heard that public libraries in Vermont do not always have adequate resources to provide the level of programming wanted and needed by the communities they serve. The level of funding for library programs varies wildly across Vermont. Programming budgets mentioned during oral comments ranged from $0-$15,000.

  Dedicated funding to support programming helps library staff plan and execute successful programming year-round. While some library programs can be done by library staff, many programs require at least a minimal cost to run effectively, and libraries' budgets should reflect those costs.

- **An accessible space in the library or community to hold programs (including flexible programming spaces, meeting rooms, and outdoor areas)**
  Many public libraries in Vermont report that they do not have dedicated programming spaces, so they hold programs in their primary library space. Public libraries that do have dedicated program rooms often report that these spaces are no longer adequate because of new capacity and ventilation concerns that arose during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

  Newly built libraries often opt for flexible spaces rather than dedicated program rooms that may sit unused for many hours each week. Modern library design incorporates moveable seating, tables, shelving, and even walls that can be configured to accommodate programming within the library space.

  During the height of the COVID-19 public health emergency, many libraries held programs outdoors to ensure adequate air circulation and room for social distancing. This shift to outdoor programming required that libraries purchase tents or canopies, and outdoor furniture. Many outdoor programs required access to electricity.

- **Sufficient Time to Reach Out to New Library Users**
  To increase the reach of a library, library staff must conduct outreach by

leaving the confines of their libraries and meeting people in the community. Outreach provides library staff with an opportunity to connect to people who may not regularly use the library, but who may need its services. The Working Group heard that by conducting outreach, libraries were able to reach New Americans, Veterans, and other traditionally underserved community members who then became library users. The information learned during outreach visits can help librarians identify services and collections that are necessary to better serve the entire community.

"Since we were able to present our summer reading line-up of activities in our local school system, a number of children who had never visited came to the library with caregivers and signed up for library cards. A number of these families have remained active in the fall, volunteering, attending programs, and checking out materials."—Beth Royer, Retired Director, Carpenter-Carse Library, Hinesburg

- **Technology to support online and hybrid programs**
  During the COVID-19 public health emergency, libraries shifted away from an in-person only model of programming. Many of Vermont's libraries continue to host virtual or hybrid programs and doing so requires technology to support that activity.

- **Standardized metrics on programming**
  While public libraries in Vermont routinely report the number of programs they hosted in a year and the number of attendees at those programs, these data points do not measure the quality or the impacts of the programming that a library offers. Nationally, there is a trend in libraries toward developing tools to better understand the impacts that library programs have on the community.

  The library community continues to work toward evaluation of programming and is trying to move from simply reporting the number of programs and number of attendees toward reporting the impacts of programming. That said, this is particularly challenging in a public library context. While public libraries typically count how many people attend their programs, due to privacy laws, they specifically do not track which specific individuals attend their programs. For that reason, it would be very difficult to capture longitudinal data about how attendance at a library program impacted an individual over time. Some libraries get around this by asking library users to consent or opt in to provide this data, however maintaining this data can pose a burden on libraries given state library privacy statute.

- **School Library Programming Needs**
The Working Group heard from the community that school libraries need adequate staffing with certified school librarians and tech integration positions. The community expressed a desire for additional support for programming in school libraries.

Conclusion

Library programs consist of events that actively engage library users of all ages for the purpose of lifelong learning and personal enrichment—examples include storytimes for young children, manga or STEM programming for teens, and book clubs for adults. Vermont libraries can pride themselves on ranking high in the number of per-capita programs they offer.

However, to be able to continue to provide high quality, inclusive programming that meets the needs of a library's community, librarians require ongoing training. VELI, STEM/STEAM resources, CLiF, and Department of Libraries trainings are all important resources for helping library staff develop meaningful and engaging programs.

To support in-person programming for different audiences and topics, libraries need a flexible space. Many libraries in Vermont lack a dedicated program space. Library programs simply take place out in the open within the library. Some libraries have explored outdoor programming to accommodate larger groups, but with the outdoor season in Vermont being relatively short, library programming continues to be limited by inadequate space.

Vermont is well above average in the US for programs offered to the people of Vermont, but continue to do so with inadequate budgets, expanding training needs, and inadequate spaces for programming. To consistently outperform peers at the national level with limited resources is a testament to the ingenuity of the Vermont library community.

Inclusive and Accessible Services

The topic of Inclusive Library Services was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, January 27th, 2023. The Working Group heard from 10 community members and heard a report from Department of Libraries staff on the topic of Inclusive Library Services. The Working Group also heard from this expert on this topic: Xusana Davis, State of Vermont Executive Director of Racial Equity, Office of Racial Equity. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 12 community members.

The Working Group was charged with studying "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" and "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."

Many of these aspects of library services fall under the umbrella of either accessible services or inclusive services. The Working Group determined that it is necessary to draw a distinction between *inclusive* library services and *accessible* library services.

The term **accessible services** means library services that can be used easily by people who have physical or cognitive disabilities. According to the American Library Association, "Accessibility, however, is more than just physical access to library services. In conventional terms, accessibility generally refers to functionally equivalent access to the materials and services. In essence, this means that individuals with disabilities should be able to use and access all the same services and materials in the library as their non-disabled peers, either through alternate means or with assistance. Sometimes, accessibility can be achieved by using assistive technology devices, which are pieces of equipment that can make an otherwise inaccessible product or service accessible. Ultimately, to promote broad access for all patrons, librarians should consider the accessibility of their materials and services during the procurement and implementation process and develop a plan to maximize accessibility for all patrons." (https://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/contactwo/oitp/emailtutorials/accessibilitya/02.htm)

The term **inclusive services** means library services geared toward meeting the needs of people who are members of groups that have been traditionally underserved and/or historically marginalized. According to the ALA, "'Inclusion' means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success.'" (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/EDI)

In Vermont, this term includes but is not limited to those who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people living in poverty, people experiencing homelessness, people over 65 years of age, people with

physical or mental health differences, people with learning disabilities, and people born in other countries. Incarcerated individuals, people who live in the state's psychiatric facilities, New Americans, and individuals with limited English proficiency are traditionally underserved, so also fall within the umbrella of inclusive services in our state.

Throughout this report, careful consideration has been made to parse out different testimony and recommendations that specifically address these two components of inclusive services: accessibility for people with disabilities and inclusivity for people from traditionally underserved populations.

"Inclusive library services are holistic, spanning library policies, space, and services. Inclusive services reflect equity and accessibility for all members of the community by intentionally developing and delivering services to individuals or groups for whom accessing and using the library is difficult, limited, or minimized."—Wisconsin Library Inclusive Services Assessment Guide. (https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED599993.pdf)

126,258 adults in Vermont have a disability*
This is equal to **24%** or **1 in 4** adults in Vermont

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data, 2021.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in Vermont, there are 126,258 adults living with a disability—or 24% of Vermont's population. Vermont's average is lower than the national average of 27%.

The CDC breaks the state's data down further into "functional disability types" as follows:

Functional Disability Type	Percentage of Vermont Adults	Percentage of Adults in the US
Mobility disability: serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.	9%	12.1%
Cognitive disability: serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.	12%	12.8%
Disability that affects the ability to live independently: serious difficulty doing errands alone.	6%	7.2%
Hearing disability: deafness or serious difficulty hearing.	5%	6.1%
Visual disability: blind or have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.	3%	4.8%
Disability that affects self-care: difficulty dressing or bathing.	3%	3.6%
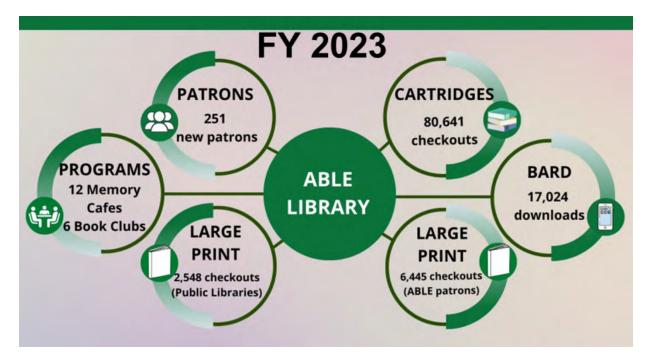
In 2021, the Vermont Agency of Education reported that 13,793 students ages 5 – 21 had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). That represents approximately 17% of the 80,692 students enrolled in Vermont's public schools that year. These students had a disability that had an adverse effect on their ability to learn and were eligible for special education. Vermont's percentage of students with IEPs was higher than the national percentage of 15%.

Access to Library Collections

The Department administers the ABLE Library, which is Vermont's Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. The acronym ABLE stands for audio, braille, large print, and electronic books. The ABLE Library is part of a national library framework that serves people who are blind or have other print disabilities in collaboration with the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), which is a division of the Library of Congress. ABLE serves any Vermonter who has a visual impairment, a physical impairment, or a reading disability that prevents them from reading standard print. Library collections include audiobooks, braille, large print, and electronic audiobooks. ABLE also offers high contrast picture books and Wonderbooks for younger patrons.

In FY23, ABLE Library patrons checked out 80,641 books and magazines on digital cartridges. They downloaded over 17,000 books and magazines through the NLS BARD app. The acronym BARD stands for braille and audio reading download. ABLE patrons checked out 6,445 large print books, and public libraries circulated over 2,500 large print books through ABLE's deposit collections. In FY23, the ABLE Library hosted or co-hosted 18 programs, and registered more than 250 new patrons for library service.

Around the country, some state and public libraries provide centralized library services to people living with disabilities, however the Department has not traditionally provided library services for Vermonters living with physical disabilities other than blindness and print disabilities. The Department's focus, like that of many state library agencies in the country, has been on service to blind and print disabled community members. There are many people with disabilities who do not qualify for ABLE Library services but who would benefit from other specialized library collections. For example, collections for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, people with some cognitive disabilities, and people with mental health disabilities could be made available through the Department of Libraries to support Vermonters statewide. Books by mail services could be expanded throughout the state to better support people with mobility disabilities who are unable to visit their local library.

Tom Frank, the current chair of the ABLE Advisory Committee and the Vermont Board of Libraries, as well as being a legally blind Vermonter, shared that he reads more now than when he had 20/20 vision because of the ABLE Library. While he acknowledged that most Vermont libraries can meet all of their patrons' needs, "we all need to step up and ensure training is provided to library staff to recognize when a patron may be

having difficulties accessing books and other programs available to their communities. Let's make it possible that all are 'able' to read."

Access to Library Buildings

The Working Group heard from community members that many of Vermont's public libraries are not accessible to all Vermonters. Upgrades to historic and aging facilities have been made throughout recent years, but continued improvements are required to make them 100% accessible.

> *"Many of our buildings have been redesigned over the years to support better access— ramps have been added, sidewalks have been graded, bathrooms have been expanded. But I think a huge number of libraries are still lacking automatic openers for doors. In our historic buildings, this presents a big challenge. It would be nice to have some state-level resources to support this kind of access."—Abby Adams, Library Director of the Pratt Library, Shoreham*

The rural nature of Vermont presents transportation challenges that pose a barrier to library access for many. Abby Adams, Library Director at the Pratt Library, predicted that we are "going to be continuing to have conversations about lack of access due to transportation until we fix public transportation in our rural areas." Esbey Hamilton, of the Vermont Migrant Education Program, noted that one of the key barriers for migrant farmworkers and their families to access libraries is "because they don't have driver's licenses or cars and live on farms which are outside of walking or biking distance" of a library.

The Need for Accessible Library Services in Vermont

In addition to those with print disabilities, there are many other groups of people who have been traditionally underserved by libraries in Vermont and across the nation. These groups include Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, Veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people living in poverty, people experiencing homelessness, people over 65 years of age, people with physical or mental health differences, people with learning disabilities, and people born in other countries.

	Percentage of Vermonters	Percentage of US Residents
Living in poverty	10.3%	11.6%
Over 65 years of age	20.6%	16.8%
Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC)	8.2%	18.9%
Veterans	5.3%	5.2%
LGBTQ+	4.4%	4.5%
Born outside of the US	4.4%	13.6%

The percentage of Vermonters living in poverty, the percentage of LGBTQ+ identifying Vermonters, and the percentage of Vermonters who are Veterans are all close to the national average.

The percentage of Vermonters over 65 years of age exceeds the national percentage by more than 4%.

The number of Vermonters who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color or who were born outside of the United States is far lower than the national percentage, which likely leads to an even greater risk of isolation and having their unique needs for library service overlooked.

Libraries for All

The Working Group heard from Xusana Davis, the State's Executive Director for Racial Equity. Davis shared that one of the biggest challenges government entities have in reaching historically marginalized communities is trust. She encouraged the Working Group and libraries to think about how to engage our communities, considering many historical breaches of trust between members of these communities and governmental or quasi-governmental agencies, including libraries. Davis shared that stereotypes and tropes about who accesses libraries and library resources can be a barrier to use of libraries by members of these communities, as are money and time. Davis also shared that a sense of place and belonging, while it makes privileged community members feel welcome, can be an obstacle to those who are on the outside of the "in group".

The term "New Americans" refers to "immigrants, refugees, or temporary or long-term visitors" (American Library Association). It's estimated that there are over 8,000 refugees in Vermont. Vermont residents born outside of the United States, or New Americans, often face great difficulty in accessing information in Vermont, where libraries almost entirely provide materials and information in English. Many New Americans do not even seek access to library services because they face linguistic isolation. Because many New Americans did not have access to public libraries in their country of origin, they do not realize that they can visit public libraries in their new home to obtain information and participate in library programs. For that reason, the

Department created a document that explains to New Americans what a public library is and translated this document into 16 of the most spoken non-English languages in Vermont.

Speaking from direct experience as immigrant to the United States who settled in Vermont, Fletcher Free Library Commissioner Mona Tolba testified that The Fletcher Free Library in Burlington has been a tremendous and vital support for her and her daughter. Tolba shared that "What the library offers is the main backbone of support for refugees and immigrants, internet access, and assistance with technology are few of many other programs these populations need when they first arrive in Vermont. The library hosts different language learning classes including English, Arabic, French, and Spanish, a monthly cooking book club, and many youth programs that are important in building and setting them up for a positive and productive life."

Nate Eddy, the Director of the Winooski Public Library, echoed the vital role that libraries serve in a diverse community. He shared with the Working Group that in Winooski, "with nearly 15% of residents born outside of the United States and over 20 different languages spoken within our schools—the library serves a unique role as both connector and service provider for our new American, immigrant, and refugee populations." In response to the needs of the Winooski community, the Winooski Public Library offers inclusive programming, including:

- weekly English language learning classes and technology assistance in partnership with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants;

- restorative Justice Circles in partnership with Spectrum Youth and Services;

- Arabic language learning classes and monthly bilingual storytime;

- free veggie and produce distribution to address food insecurity in partnership with the Intervale Center;

- weekly storytime visits to Thrive Afterschool and Summer Programs;

- access to a diverse collection of print materials and online resources, translated vital documents such as library card applications (Arabic, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili);

- after-hours space availability for community members to host meetings; and

- a dedicated staff committed to promoting open and equal library access for all.

All of these services are provided despite the Winooski Public Library's significant space constraints, limited shelving and storage, and understaffing that according to Eddy "limit the full potential and position of the library within the Winooski community."

Ruth Shattuck Bernstein, Librarian of the Salisbury Free Public Library, shared that library's mission of providing equitable access to resources, and that they had partnered with Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE) to provide free produce to anyone in their community. Moreover, Shattuck Bernstein testified, "I see libraries as great satellite locations for service agencies to provide resources to rural communities. HOPE indicated they have been looking for ways to reach more people in our community and the partnership benefited everyone and potentially serves as a model of what a central role libraries can and should play."

The Working Group heard from Esbey Hamilton of Vermont Migrant Education, who shared that their program serves 300 children and youth a year who are involved in seasonal or temporary agricultural work in Vermont in addition to 700 individuals connected with the Migrant Health Team. Many of the migrant workers and their families working in Vermont come from Mexico and Central America, speak Spanish as their native language, and have very limited English language skills.

Davis shared that libraries must couple racial equity work with age and generational equity work, and to empower community leaders from within. Davis encouraged library staff to develop services based on the needs the community expresses and to engage communities in such a way that community members feel invested in their library and empowered to share suggestions and get involved.

> *"Not having the right word can have really serious implications in people's lives. Getting it right really matters."—Xusana Davis, State of Vermont Executive Director of Racial Equity*

Hamilton provided compelling reasons for how public libraries can support Vermont's migrant population. Hamiliton testified that "our staff works to teach youth and families about the services offered at their local libraries. When it makes sense, we meet program participants at the library—we read books, we use the internet to study for the GED, we attend storytimes with new parents and their kiddos. We find that without taking people and showing them, sometimes several times, Mexican and Central American farmworkers aren't likely to visit the library or access library services on their own."

Davis observed that traditional libraries are places where people have come. But in our overly distracted world, librarians have to do more proactive outreach to remind people of what libraries can offer. Outreach must keep up with modern demands because libraries are important connection points within communities. Davis posited that libraries need to meet people where they are, but also where they want to be. During the question period, Working Group member Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup commented that "wall-less libraries are the way of the future" and that it is important to share the reality that libraries are "just not buildings with books."

Hamilton outlined barriers to accessing library services that aren't inclusive to the migrant population, but are especially concerning due to a migrant's fears around their immigrant status and limited English:

- schedules: People can't get to the library because they work 12 hours a day, six days a week;

- lack of technology skills and quality home internet: People can't access (or even learn about) the wide range of online library services;

- high mobility: Each library is different, and even if people get into visiting their local library, when they move, they have to get a whole new library card and learn a whole new building, staff, and schedule of events; and

- library requirements of having proof of address to sign up for a library card can be very challenging for migrant workers as it is quite common for farmworkers to not have ID and to not receive mail at home.

Vermonters with limited English proficiency face challenges when trying to access books and information in Vermont's libraries. Few Vermont library staff are multilingual so most public service interactions take place in English, which can also be a barrier to library access for migrant workers, many of whom have limited English proficiency. According to the Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency (LEP), in Vermont 8,541 people speak English "less than very well" in (about 1% of the state's total population). This compares with 8% of people in the U.S. who speak English "less than very well." Among those with limited English proficiency in Vermont, 18% speak French, 16% speak Spanish, 11% speak an Indic language, 8% speak Chinese, and 7% of this group speak Vietnamese. The other 40% of people with limited English proficiency speak another less-common language.

The Working Group heard from Hamilton and others that community members currently have very limited access to materials in languages other than English through Vermont's public libraries. Expanding the availability of library materials to meet the linguistic needs of the entire community is a potential area for growth for Vermont's libraries. That said, Vermont library staff have reported challenges in locating and selecting materials in languages not spoken by library staff. Sourcing these materials is often difficult as is funding additional collections.

The Working Group heard from the community that libraries need more resources to help patrons with language access needs, including translation services, interpretation services, collections in other languages, and library programs to support people with limited English proficiency.

Davis shared that People of Color are more likely to access the Internet via mobile devices and recommended that libraries take that into account when considering what formats of materials they make available for the public.

Davis also encouraged libraries to be brave about the content they provide to communities because people see libraries as institutional authorities. Davis emphasized that libraries have to be confident that the materials they are providing people in libraries are a net-positive. "Caving to the demands of angry, lying bigots is not the way to get out of this. Instead, we have to be committed to truth, committed to openness, and committed to dialogue."

A number of public library directors and patrons spoke to the importance of our public libraries of providing safe space, Wi-Fi access, and support for one of the most vulnerable populations: Vermonters experiencing homelessness.

> *"What I am here today to advocate for goes beyond service. People experiencing homelessness (and poverty) cannot only be served by a community, they must be part of a community. They need to feel welcomed and missed, they need to be represented as a part of the whole, and this cannot come with the caveat that their welcome is temporary or unfairly conditional."—Loren Polk, Library Director, Stowe Public Library*

The Working Group heard oral testimony from Martin Hahn, Executive Director of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, in addition to the submitted report, Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count of Those Experiencing Homelessness, 2022. Significantly, the Point in Time Count in January 2022 found a 7.3% increase in persons experiencing homelessness in Vermont compared to the prior year. This comes on the heels of a significant increase from 2020 (pre-pandemic) to 2021. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) Vermonters disproportionately experienced homelessness in 2022 compared to the general population in both Chittenden County and statewide. This point-in-time count was done while Vermont's hotel program, put into place during the COVID-19 public health emergency, was still operational. The Working Group heard concerns from library directors about the possible impacts the end of that program might bring for public libraries as many community members would likely have increased day-to-day needs for support if they lost stable housing.

Many Vermonters who live in poverty or who are experiencing homelessness only have access to the internet during their public library's open hours. Without after-hours access to the internet outside of libraries, these community members are unable to participate fully in today's largely online economy and educational system. For Vermonters who don't have access to internet in homes who live in rural communities where public libraries are open just one or two days each week and library Wi-Fi isn't accessible after hours, there is an even greater inequity in access to the internet.

Dana Hart, Director of the Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury and the Sarah Partridge Community Center in East Middlebury, shared that library policies around internet

access are, at their core, equity considerations. Hart shared that there were differences between the ways the two libraries in her community provided free Wi-Fi to the public. This inequity was fueled by misperceptions of Board members who thought that providing internet access 24/7 outside of the library would entice would-be loiterers, vandals, and teenagers. Hart wrote, "I talk about the digital divide in Vermont, and the necessity of internet access to submit homework assignments or job applications. I point out that many community members simply can't get to the library during regular business hours because they are working, and that there are far worse places for teenagers to be after dark than accessing the internet on the steps of their public library. While these conversations have been successful, the persistence of the issue over the years is cause for concern."

Hart asked, "I wonder how many other public libraries in small communities around Vermont have dealt with similar concerns when it comes to offering Wi-Fi service outside of library hours. The truth is that access to reliable, high-speed internet is absolutely essential to Vermonters, and many of them can only access it through their public library. In order to provide inclusive access to the internet, it is critical that public libraries offer the service outside of library hours."

Library patron Janet Potter from White River Junction emphasized that, "Libraries are sometimes the only or last safe place for the most vulnerable in our communities and should be treated as a critical resource for all (and funded accordingly)." Potter went on to say that libraries provide "critical and safe meeting spaces" and testified that her elderly, disabled, low-income parents consider their local public library "a lifeline."

Lisa Ehrlich from Veteran Affairs shared that Veterans "who use the library love using public libraries; they like chatting with staff, being directed to large print books, etc. The human contact component is important to them."

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup provided testimony in his role as Executive Director of Vermont Humanities, noting that "historically, libraries have been a welcoming place for the LGBTQ+ community. There's a long history of LGBTQ+ people seeing and using libraries as safe places." Ilstrup urged the Working Group to be mindful that many members of the LGBTQ+ community in Vermont are not white, and that purposeful outreach to BIPOC and migrant populations is needed to reach individuals who belong to multiple traditionally underserved groups.

Inclusive Services for Incarcerated and Institutionalized Vermonters

One underserved group not mentioned above, but who have been historically underserved are incarcerated individuals. Over 1,300 individuals are incarcerated in the State's six regional in-state correctional facilities. The Department of Libraries has a statutory obligation to provide library materials to the people in those institutions. Last year, the Department purchased over 4,000 paperback books and distributed them to

the six in-state correctional facilities. The Department currently budgets $36,000 each year for providing library collections to the six in-state correctional facilities.

Vermonters living with mental health conditions, including those who reside in state-run mental health facilities are part of another underserved community. The Department has a statutory responsibility to provide library services to people in state-run mental health facilities. Last year, the Department purchased just under 600 books for Vermont's two mental health facilities: the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital and the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence. A new residential facility, River Valley Therapeutic Residence, replacing the Middlesex location, opened in Essex in May of 2023 and per the site's Program Director, books the Department had purchased would be moved to the new site. The Department currently allocates $3,000 annually to collections for this group of Vermonters. Patients in the two state psychiatric facilities also have access to eBook and eAudiobooks from the Department, which they access using tablets.

It should be noted that many libraries across the state are striving to be more inclusive in the collections, programming, and services they provide to the public. While many gains have been made, much work remains to be done. As agreed by the Working Group in its January 2023 meeting, this is a journey we are on forever.

Conclusion

Vermont's librarians expressed a desire to increase and improve access to library services for Vermonters and are seeking resources to help them in their work. Providing library services that feel available and welcoming to all Vermonters will require libraries to overcome a history of neglect, maltreatment, and marginalization that is systemic within public libraries and academic settings. The Working Group heard from library staff that increased training on areas of racial equity, systemic injustice, and library services to traditionally neglected communities is needed to support them in this work.

The Working Group also heard from the community that many library buildings in the state are not accessible to all community members and that there are limited resources available to make necessary upgrades.

Intellectual Freedom

The topic of Intellectual Freedom was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, April 21, 2023. The Working Group heard from 10 community members and heard a report from Department of Libraries staff on the topic of Statewide Collections. The Working Group also heard from these experts on this topic: John Chrastka, Executive Director and Founder, EveryLibrary; Dana Kaplan, Executive Director, Outright Vermont; Trina Magi, Co-editor of The Intellectual Freedom Manual; and Joyce McIntosh, Assistant Director, Freedom to Read Foundation. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by seven community members. John Chrastka of EveryLibrary shared draft intellectual freedom legislation with the Working Group at its meeting on Friday, September 22, 2023.

> *"Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction."—Barbara Jones, Former director, American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom*

Unfortunately, public and school libraries are now experiencing unprecedented attacks on intellectual freedom across the United States, with individual and collective book challenges at an all-time high. These challenges typically, but not always, target books by or about LGBTQ+ or black or brown people. While these attacks are occurring more frequently in the southern and western states, Vermont has not been immune to this national trend of activists and elected officials attempting to seize control of public and school library collections, and limit or eliminate access to needed community resources.

Anecdotally, libraries across Vermont report increasing numbers of both formal and informal book challenges, many seemingly originating in national campaigns or from national news media reports. Librarians cite the need for resources and support to educate staff, trustees, and community members; create and maintain strong intellectual freedom and anti-censorship policies; and protect community members' constitutionally guaranteed freedom to read and learn.

Public and school libraries have long been vital resources in the American democratic experiment, serving as public forums for neutral access to information from many perspectives and many communities. Public Libraries are, by definition, available to all community residents regardless of their status. Vermont libraries are subject to Vermont civil rights and anti-discrimination statutes including laws regarding non-discrimination in public accommodations:

> **Vermont Statutes about Civil Rights and Anti-Discrimination 9 VSA § 4502. "An owner or operator of a place of public accommodation or an agent or employee of such owner or operator shall not, because of the race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person, refuse, withhold from, or deny to that person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of the place of public accommodation." (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/09/139/04502)**

Joyce McIntosh of the Freedom to Read Foundation pointed the Working Group toward federal constitutional law during her presentation to the Working Group, noting that Public and School Libraries are subject to the Constitutional protections of the First Amendment. Mackintosh noted that:

> "Only the public library is a designated or limited public forum, created by the government for the sole purpose of providing access to information. According to existing court opinion, the First Amendment protects individuals' right to 1) physically access the library; and 2) read and receive information and use the resources made generally available to the public in the library (this includes meeting rooms and display cases, when the library has decided to make those spaces available to the public). The library has the right to establish reasonable rules governing library use. A library's power to regulate patron behavior is not limited to cases of "actual disruption," but may be tied to safety, use of resources, and other reasonable concerns directed to fulfilling the library's mission. Best practice is for a public library to have content-neutral rules that apply objective standards to behavior, safety, or administrative issues that are enforced in a non-discriminatory manner. This includes our collection development policy (why we buy what we buy) and our materials reconsideration policy (protecting your right to say you what you think about an item)."

Trina Magi, Library Professor at the University of Vermont, referred the Working Group to the long-established principals in the American Library Association's (ALA) Bill of Rights, first adopted in 1939. Professor Magi notes that the core principles of the ALA Bill of Rights are to:

- provide resources of interest to all people in the library's community;

- provide access to all points of view;

- challenge censorship;

- provide equitable access; and

- protect user privacy.

Magi went on to note that the ALA Code of Ethics (https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics) urges librarians and libraries to affirm the rights and dignity of every person while ensuring free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

Community Feedback on Intellectual Freedom

Several individuals addressed the Working Group as representatives of marginalized community organizations or as members of communities impacted by library book challenges. These included Mia Schultz of the Rutland County NAACP, serving Vermonters of Color, and Dana Kaplan of Outright Vermont, serving LGBTQ+ youth. Working Group members Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup of Vermont Humanities and T. Elijah Hawkes of the Upper Valley Educators Institute spoke to the group from their perspective as advocates.

Most public and school library book challenges today are initiated by people or groups who want to limit or eliminate access to materials by or about People of Color or LGBTQ+ people. Dana Kaplan of Outright Vermont noted:

> "It's important that we are crystal clear: According to Minority Stress Theory, the increased risk of mental health distress faced by LGBTQ+ folks is due to the increased environmental stress of navigating a world with prejudice toward your very identity. The increased rates of depression, substance use, and suicidal ideation are not inherent OR inevitable to LGBTQ+ identities. Rather, it's the outsized amount of stigma, rejection, and exposure to structural and interpersonal discrimination that have devastating impacts on the overall physical and mental health of marginalized people, including the LGBTQ+ community."

Kaplan notes that book challenges are just one piece of a coordinated attack on marginalized communities, especially transgender youth, including efforts to limit access to gender affirming health care, deny students the right to learn about themselves at school, and hide LGBTQ+ cultural events from public view, including criminalizing the popular "Drag Queen Story Hour" activities that take place at libraries across the country including at many libraries in Vermont.

Kaplan, Shultz, and others noted that efforts are escalating to undermine intellectual freedom in libraries. The ALA data from March 2023 reveals 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022. (https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/03/record-book-bans-2022) This is the highest number of attempted book bans the ALA has recorded in more than 20 years—and nearly double the 729 challenges reported in 2021. The majority of 2022 censorship attempts (58%) targeted information that is accessible to youth: books and materials in school libraries, classroom libraries or school curricula.

Kaplan noted that, although we often hear about particular titles under threat, "This is not about specific books—this is about freedom of thought and expression. These are

attempts to not just censor the content of a single book, but to erase an entire idea from the public sphere."

Justifications for Censorship and Book Challenges

The most frequent reasons cited by proponents of censorship in public and school libraries include the following:

1.   materials are age-inappropriate;

2.   materials are "obscene"; or

3.   materials promote "divisive concepts" like Critical Race Theory.

T. Elijah Hawkes of the Upper Valley Educators Institute addressed these claims in written comments to the Working Group:

> "Vermont has proficiency-based graduation requirements, which align expectations for grades K-12 [and] require learning from and about a diverse array of people and perspectives. School and district leaders, as well as librarians and teachers, should know that these expectations are in place."

Hawkes went on to share that Vermont's proficiency-based graduation requirements in social studies, grade five, expects students to 'Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues'" and that the state's proficiency-based graduation requirements in English Language arts require students to "Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task."

Hawkes urged

> "In addition to reminding schools of what the state already expects schools to be doing, we can prepare educators, school boards, and librarians with strategies for hearing complaints or concerns from members of the community about what we teach and what is in our book collections."

Joyce Mcntosh, of the Freedom to Read Foundation, addressed the second challenge, "obscenity" (most often used to target work by or about the LGBTQ+ community, but also other works with content relating to sexuality) by pointing to established Supreme Court precedent, called the Miller Test:

[In order for material to be considered obscene,] the material must **meet all three parts** of the legal test established by the Supreme Court in the Miller v. California decision to

be found obscene by a court of law.
(https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/413/15)

- Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and

- Whether the average person, applying "contemporary community standards" would find the work as a whole appeals to the "prurient interest,"; and

- Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

The Miller Test standard is intentionally high and very few works in public or school libraries would meet that standard for removal. Most book challenges claiming obscenity cherry pick specific passages when making their claim but don't address the work as a whole.

Finally, opposition to "divisive concepts" is a claim that is often used to challenge books on African American culture or history, Native or Indigenous stories, or women's history. UVM Professor of Anthropology Luis Vivanco noted in his testimony that:

"Increasingly I find myself called to help defend librarians against modern-day challenges to their cultural diversity related programming and collections. These challenges overwhelmingly target works about and by BIPOC community members and others from traditionally marginalized groups. These challenges are based on pernicious and contradictory ideologies that invoke rhetorical claims of defending "intellectual freedom" as they radically reduce the range of those who are deemed eligible—authors, creators, readers, and other interested parties—to actually exercise that freedom. In higher education we see these attacks increasingly couched within broader efforts to delegitimate and eliminate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice initiatives and offices. In numerous states, we are seeing Orwellian proposals emerge under the banner of "Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity" that require campuswide surveys to ensure "competing ideas and perspectives" are represented in classrooms."

Efforts to eliminate resources about black and brown communities from public and school libraries, and from higher education institutions, are contrary to the ALA Bill of Rights principle that library collections should reflect multiple viewpoints and be broadly accessible to everyone in the community.

Privacy, Library Usage, and the Online Environment

The Working Group discussed the significant change that has taken place in the information seeking space during the internet age. While having privacy statutes in place to protect intellectual freedom within the physical library building was once

sufficient to ensure that citizens could enjoy unfettered access to information, it no longer suffices today.

The Working Group discussed the rise of data gathering by corporations and the monetization of data and information about individuals. The Working Group members shared concerns that as Vermonters use the internet for many of their information needs and use digital copies of books and journals from their libraries, the current environment poses a potential threat to intellectual freedom. The Working Group discussed the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) (https://oag.ca.gov/privacy/ccpa) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/consumers/internet-telecoms/data-protection-online-privacy/index_en.htm) as possible models for the Legislature to consider.

Recommendations of the Working Group on Intellectual Freedom

Vermont's Legislative Working Group on the Status of Libraries recommends that the legislature take the following steps to support public and school libraries across the state as they grapple with the rise in attacks on collections and intellectual freedom for library users:

- Pass legislation aimed at protecting libraries, librarians, trustees, and patrons from challenges related to materials selection and retention (see sample legislation in appendix);

- Consider including library programming, displays, and exhibitions in legislation aimed at protecting libraries, librarians, trustees, and patrons from challenges based on content;

- Require all Vermont libraries to have a robust materials selection policy and reconsideration procedure that protects 1st Amendment rights and also complies with Vermont's public accommodation law;

- Provide funding to the Vermont Department of Libraries to increase access to training and education on the principles and practice of intellectual freedom for

  - Library professionals

  - Library trustees and volunteers

  - The general public and library users

- Pass legislation to increase privacy protections for young library users by lowering the age in which public library patron records can be disclosed to those under 12 years old; and

- Pass legislation similar to that in California and the European Union that protects the privacy of library users when accessing online library resources including databases, eBooks, and other web-based information tools.

The Working Group endorses a suggested change in Vermont's Legislative Findings related to Libraries proposed by John Chrastka, Director of EveryLibrary:

> "Vermont could add a "Legislative Finding" to 13 VSA § 2802: (1) Libraries and educational institutions carry out the essential purpose of making available to all citizens, a current, balanced collection of books, reference materials, periodicals, sound recordings and audiovisual materials that reflect the cultural diversity and pluralistic nature of American society. (2) It is in the interest of the state to protect the financial resources of libraries and educational institutions from being expended in litigation and to permit these resources to be used to the greatest extent possible for fulfilling the essential purpose of libraries and educational institutions. - As proposed in Rhode Island's 2023 HB6066; inspired by Wisconsin at WSA § 944.21 8(a)"

The Working Group supported the inclusion of draft legislation shared by Chrastka at its September 22, 2023, meeting in the appendix of its report for consideration by the Vermont Legislature.

The Working Group discussed the confidentiality of the public library records of minors as it relates to intellectual freedom. Vermont's current language in statute states:

> **"§ 172. Library record confidentiality; exemptions**
> **(a) A library's patron registration records and patron transaction records shall remain confidential.**
> **(b) Unless authorized by other provisions of law, the library's officers, employees, and volunteers shall not disclose the records except:**
> **(1) with the written permission of the library patron to whom the records pertain;**
> **(2) to officers, employees, volunteers, and agents of the library to the extent necessary**
> **for library administration purposes;**
> **(3) in response to an authorized judicial order or warrant directing disclosure;**
> **(4) to custodial parents or guardians of patrons under age 16; or**
> **(5) to the custodial parents or guardians of a student, in accordance with the federal**
> **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, by the library at the school the student attends.**
> **(c) Statistical records pertaining to the patronage, circulation activities, and use of any service or consultation the library provides, provided that they do not contain the names of patrons or any other personally identifying information, shall be exempt from the provisions of this chapter." (Added 2007, No. 129 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.) 22 V.S.A. § 172 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/004/00172)**

The Working Group inquired of the Department about the age at which the library records of youth in other states are confidential and learned that Vermont has one of the most restrictive statutes on this topic and that in many states, the library records of youth are not mentioned at all. (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/statelaws)

The Working Group discussed lowering the age in statute from 16 to 12 in alignment with health-related privacy laws for youth in Vermont.

Conclusion

While not at the same rate as other states, libraries around Vermont are starting to see efforts to limit library patrons' Intellectual Freedom in the form of book and program challenges. The Working Group heard about book challenges that are initiated by people or groups who want to limit or eliminate access to materials by or about People of Color or LGBTQ+ people. Representatives of these targeted populations, experts on the topic, and librarians throughout the state urged the Working Group to consider proposing legislation to protect Intellectual Freedom in Vermont. They further recommended that

all libraries put policies in place that directly support upholding Intellectual Freedom and that the Department support this work through ongoing training. The Working Group also considered possible changes to the confidentiality of the public library records of minors.

Library Structures and Organizations

The topic of Library Structures and Organizations was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, May 26, 2023. The Working Group heard from six community members and heard reports from Department of Libraries staff on the topics of Vermont Department of Libraries History, and Vermont Statutes Relevant to Libraries. The Working Group also heard from these experts on this topic: Tom Frank, Chair, Vermont Board of Libraries; Jeremy Johannesen, Executive Director, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA); and Michelle A. Robertson, American Library Association (ALA) Ecosystem Initiative, Assistant Professor/Program Coordinator Library Media in Education, University of Central Oklahoma. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 16 community members.

In order to understand Vermont's library landscape, it is important to understand that there are four primary types of libraries, each with its own structure, mission, and service population. These four distinct types of libraries are:

- Public Libraries

- School Libraries

- Academic Libraries

- Special Libraries

In addition, each state has a State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA), which supports all libraries. The Working Group extended calls for comment to all members of the library community and heard primarily about public and school libraries, which make up the vast majority of libraries in the state. While the Working Group did hear from academic libraries and special libraries, there were far fewer participants providing feedback on these library types, so the report focuses less on them.

Public Libraries

> "The General Assembly declares it to be the policy of the State of Vermont that free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every citizen of the State of Vermont should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits of a free public library." 22 V.S.A. § 67 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00067)
>
> A "public library" is "any library established and maintained by a municipality or by a private association, corporation, or group to provide basic library services free of charge to all residents of a municipality or a community and which receives its annual financial support in whole or in part from public funds." 22 V.S.A. § 101 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00101)

While statute makes it clear that every Vermonter should have access to a free public library, it does not make clear the mechanism through which each Vermonter should have that access.

That said, the importance of public libraries in the minds of the General Assembly may help us to understand why our state has so many public libraries despite its relatively small population and geographic area.

Municipal and Incorporated Public Libraries

In Vermont, there are two types of governance structures for public libraries: incorporated and municipal. Both incorporated and municipal public libraries perform the same basic functions and provide the same basic services, so it can be confusing to understand the differences between them. Typically, whether a public library is municipal or incorporated depends primarily on how that public library was originally formed.

In Vermont, both municipal public libraries and incorporated libraries are tax exempt. (22 V.S.A. § 109 https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00109)

Vermont's **municipal public libraries** were typically formed by municipalities to provide library services. It should be noted that Vermont has traditionally had "community libraries," which are municipal libraries that are housed in schools and also serve as school libraries. The number of community libraries has decreased significantly and only a few of that type of combined school/public library remain. These combined school/public community libraries fall within the municipal library category. There are also some public libraries in Vermont that are not joint public/school libraries but have the word community in their name.

Vermont's **incorporated public libraries**, on the other hand, were typically formed when an individual or family made a bequest or donation to start a public library for a community. That donation led community members to form an incorporated entity separate from the municipality that oversees the community's public library.

That said, it is possible for a public library to change its *type* over time. For example, a public library that began as an incorporated library may have become a municipal library.

> **"(a) A municipality may establish and maintain for the use of its residents public libraries.**
>
> **(b) A municipality may provide library services to the residents of other municipalities, upon terms to be agreed upon, and may annually contract with a library or library corporation to furnish library materials to its residents free of charge and may appropriate money for that purpose and may annually appropriate money for the maintenance, care, increase, and support of a library held in trust for the residents of the municipality." 22 V.S.A. § 141 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00141)**

Municipal Public Libraries

Municipal public libraries operate within the context of a municipality and their library boards operate within the context of that municipality. Library trustees of municipal libraries are often appointed by the governing body of the municipality but may also be elected by the community.

Municipal public libraries have a board of trustees with no fewer than five members and no more than 15 members. Unless a municipality has established that library trustees are elected by the public, municipal library trustees are appointed by the municipality.

> **"Unless a municipality which has established or shall establish a public library votes at its annual meeting to elect a board of trustees, the governing body of the municipality shall appoint the trustees. The appointment or election of the trustees shall continue in effect until changed at an annual meeting of the municipality. The board shall consist of not less than five trustees who shall have full power to manage the public library, make bylaws, elect officers, establish a library policy and receive, control and manage property which shall come into the hands of the municipality by gift, purchase, devise or bequest for the use and benefit of the library. The board may appoint a director for the efficient administration and conduct of the library." 22 V.S.A. § 143 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00143)**

Per statute, municipal library boards are responsible for managing the public library including establishing library policy and managing library property.

Statute is also clear that municipal library boards may appoint a library director. However, statute does not clearly define who *supervises* the director of a municipal library once they have been appointed by a library board. This lack of clarity in statute has led to disagreements between the boards of municipal public libraries and municipalities.

In 2002 the Vermont State Supreme Court ruled in *Hartford Board of Library Trustees v. Town of Hartford* that "To the extent that a municipal library can be considered a department of the town, it certainly is not a department over which the town manager has been given direct control." (https://law.justia.com/cases/vermont/supreme-court/2002/2002-207eo.html) Despite this Vermont Supreme Court ruling, confusion remains around this question today.

Additionally, the Working Group heard information from some library directors that their library boards functioned differently from what is outlined in statute. One director or a municipal library shared that their public library board is "advisory" and that it does not control the budget of their library or have authority to establish library policies and procedures, and that these functions are performed by the municipality. Another municipal public library director shared that their town charter gives the municipality administrator the authority to hire and supervise the library director. While the Working Group did not perform a comprehensive study of municipal charters in Vermont, it heard that some municipal charters provide for different governance structures for municipal public libraries than are outlined in statute.

Municipal public library boards are public bodies so must adhere to Vermont Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 310–314), statute pertaining to access to public records, (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/01/005), and the Agency Specific Record Schedule for Municipal Library Board of Trustees (https://sos.vermont.gov/media/hfei51zdmunicipallibraries_approvedrecordschedule.pdf)

Incorporated Public Libraries

Incorporated public libraries are non-profit corporations formed to provide a community with free public library service. Incorporated libraries have governing boards of at least five people and operate independently from the municipality whose people they serve. Incorporated public libraries form in a similar way that *other* non-profit corporations form in Vermont, by drawing up documents of incorporation and filing those documents in the office of the Secretary of State.

The documents include:

- the name of the public library;

- the name of the municipality where the public library will be located; and

- the names of the members of the original board.

Incorporated public libraries are governed by state and federal laws for incorporations and must adhere to Title 11B: Nonprofit Corporations (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/title/11b), which applies to all non-profit organizations in Vermont.

Like municipal public library boards, the boards of incorporated public libraries must have five members. However, statute also states that incorporated public library boards may have no more than 15 members. **22 V.S.A. § 104** (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00104)

Like municipal public library boards, the board of an incorporated public library may appoint and employ staff "***as they may deem necessary for the efficient administration and conduct of the library and all the affairs of such corporation.***" **22 V.S.A. § 108** (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00108) The board of an incorporated public library supervises the director of their public library.

Incorporated public library boards are not public bodies, so are *not* required by law to adhere to Vermont Open Meeting Law, the Secretary of State's Records Retention Schedules, statute pertaining to access to public records, but are encouraged by the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries to do so.

Public Library Funding

Municipalities fund their public libraries through appropriations of municipal tax dollars. Per statute, if a municipality chooses, it may contract with another town's municipal or incorporated public library to provide library services for its residents. A number of Vermont municipalities choose this route of providing their residents with library services rather than establishing and maintaining a public library for their community.

> **"A municipality establishing and maintaining a library or contracting for library services may appropriate money as necessary for suitable facilities and for the foundation of a public library and shall appropriate money annually for the maintenance, care, and increase of the library in an amount voted at its annual meeting." 22 V.S.A. § 142 (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/003/00142)**

While statute gives municipalities the authority to "appropriate money as necessary for suitable facilities" and for "maintenance, care, and increase of the library," statute does *not* require municipalities to do so, nor does it specify *what level* of support municipalities must contribute toward the establishment and maintenance of a public library, and municipal funding for municipal public libraries varies significantly from town to town.

As would be expected, there is wide variation in Vermont in the total amount of municipal funding of libraries with different service populations. Libraries serving smaller populations receive less municipal funding than those serving larger populations. This correlation aligns with national data. However, the amount of support that Vermont's public libraires receive is lower across the board, with one exception: the one library serving a population category of 25,000-49,999.

The 69 reporting public libraries in Vermont that serve populations between 1,000 and 2,500 people receive municipal support at only 61% of the national average according to the 2019 PLS data.

Population	# of Public Libraries in U.S.	National Average Municipal Support	# of Public Libraries in VT	Vermont Average Municipal Support	% of National Municipal Support
25,000-49,999	996	$1,459,362	1	$2,181,176	149.46%
10,000-24,999	1,761	$690,454	12	$506,707	73.39%
5,000-9,999	1,488	$290,909	19	$264,444	90.90%
2,500-5,000	1,266	$139,725	38	$115,597	82.73%
1,000-2,500	1,467	$70,732	64	$43,378	61.33%
Less than 1,000	930	$32,003	25	$24,962	78.00%

Sources:
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/PublicLibraries/Statistics/Report_Spreadsheets/PLS_Stats_2019.xlsx
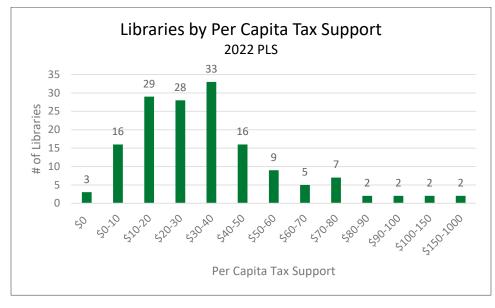
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_7_thru_13a.xlsx

According to the 2019 PLS the average municipal support at libraries that serve the least people is far lower ($22,962) than the median municipal support at libraries with the largest service population ($2,181176).

The financial support that Vermont municipalities provide public libraries per person also varies significantly. Of the libraries that responded to the 2022 PLS, 48 receive less than $20 in municipal funding per person they provide with library services. Sixty-one libraries receive between $20 and $40 per person in municipal support, 25 receive between $40 and $60 per person, and 16 receive between $60 and $100 per person. Only four libraries receive more than $100 per person in municipal support. Surprisingly, three libraries reported that they receive *no* funding from any municipality.

Libraries by Per Capita Tax Support
2022 PLS

Source: VT 2022 PLS
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/PLS_Stats_2022.xlsx

In 2019, among the 50 states and Washington, D.C., Vermont was close to the national average in per capita local or municipal support for libraries, with public libraries receiving an average of $37.05. (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_7_thru_13a.xlsx) The Working Group heard that Vermont's public libraries do not receive sufficient support to meet their operational needs from the municipalities whose residents they serve. For that reason, most municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont raise funds through direct donation or rely on disbursements from investments.

The reliance of Vermont's public libraries on donations and gifts is reflected in the national data, which shows that Vermont ranks 4th in the nation for "other" sources of funding per person. While the average amount of per capita other funding for the 50 states and Washington, D.C. is $3.22, Vermont libraries receive $7.77, more than twice

the national average.
(https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_7_thru_13a.xlsx)

Population	# of Libraries	Median Municipal Support	Municipal Support % of Budget	Median Other Income	Other Income % of Budget
Incorporated - Under 1,000	3	$26,000	70.08%	$8,204	26.26%
Municipal - Under 1,000	12	$17,000	75.94%	$5,704	11.90%
Incorporated - 1,000-2,500	25	$26,200	34.47%	$21,989	51.94%
Municipal - 1,000-2,500	42	$40,719	77.29%	$5,973	12.76%
Incorporated - 2,500-5,000	13	$83,504	48.38%	$58,365	29.21%
Municipal - 2,500-5,000	21	$125,171	87.44%	$8,500	5.80%
Incorporated - Over 5,000	14	$184,210	67.70%	$79,262	28.50%
Municipal - Over 5,000	19	$492,291	91.73%	$15,392	2.42%

Source: 2022 VT PLS
https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/PLS_Stats_2022.xlsx

State PLS data from 2022 shows that both municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont receive a significant portion of their funding from "other income"—namely through fundraising and bequests. (Note that percentages in the chart above may not add up to 100% because the percentages shown are medians and because "other income" does not include grant funding.)

According to 2022 PLS data, the 19 municipal public libraries in the state that serve populations greater than 5,000 people receive nearly all of their funding from municipalities (91.73%). By contrast, the 14 incorporated public libraries in the state receive only 67.70% of their funding from the municipalities they serve. Libraries serving all population sizes have a discrepancy between municipal funding of municipal and incorporated public libraries. This difference is least pronounced in communities where the public library serves fewer than 1,000 people and most pronounced in communities where the public library serves more than 5,000 people.

The proportion of other income for incorporated libraries is particularly large. This heavy reliance on funds outside of tax revenue points to the potential for budget shortfalls and the possibility of irregular funding for public libraries.

Typical Public Library Board Responsibilities

While *not* articulated in Statute, typical responsibilities of **both** municipal and incorporated public library boards in Vermont include:

- hiring and supervising the library director;

- reviewing and updating bylaws;

- creating, reviewing, and updating library policies;

- establishing the library budget and requesting funding from the municipality;

- stewardship of the library's financial resources;

- stewardship of the library buildings and grounds;

- meeting regularly and effectively;

- being a champion for the library; and

- ensuring compliance with funding and grant terms.

Library Systems, Cooperatives, and Consortia

Vermont public libraries are overwhelmingly stand-alone institutions, whether they function as a department within municipal government or as an even more isolated incorporated non-profit library. Vermonters often point with pride to the fact that Vermont has more libraries per capita than any other state. However, the national statistics on this point are slightly misleading due to the larger organizational structures at play in most other states. In instances where communities combine library forces, banding together to form county systems, the countywide library system often reports as one entity when completing the Public Library Survey (PLS). In the case of Hawaii, where all of the public library branches are outlets of the one state library, that overarching state system reports as one entity when completing the PLS. Vermont is unusual in that it has just a couple of libraries with branches, but its status as "having more public libraries than any other state" does not bear up under close scrutiny. Unfortunately, what this statistic may be highlighting is that Vermont's many small, independent libraries do not reap the benefits of being part of larger structures that could potentially provide greater service to the public at a lower cost. While some of Vermont's public libraries have informal collaborations such as the reciprocal borrowing agreement between the Platt Memorial (Shoreham) and Orwell libraries, the LOCAL (Libraries of Craftsbury and Albany) collaboration, or One Card (https://www.hartlandlibraryvt.org/one-card-system/), there are very few cooperative or collaborative public library entities in the state.

Library Consultant Lawrence Webster shared with the Working Group that there is an enormous amount of goodwill within Vermont libraries but that the lack of formal support structures results in the isolation of individual public libraries. Webster conveyed her belief that at a time when the democratic principles on which libraries and indeed our country are founded, are being challenged, it is more important than ever to ensure the health of our civic infrastructure—and that improved library structures could help Vermont's libraries to provide the best possible service to the most people, as required in state statute.

> *Library systems seem to work well on two fronts: first, by increasing a patron's access to collections outside their home library, and second, by consolidating certain collection management costs and efforts. Middlebury is one of very few public library systems in Vermont; we have a main branch, Ilsley Public Library, and a branch in East Middlebury, the Sarah Partridge Library. Patrons have full access to both collections, and materials travel between the two locations. We are able to reduce duplication of work by having all cataloging and book processing take place at Ilsley, and of course there is a savings in having both libraries share one catalog system. This works well for Middlebury, on a micro level."—Dana Hart, Director, Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury*

Webster shared that implementing library systems in Vermont could provide Vermonters with access to more material in more formats, equalized service across the system, more seamless requesting and delivery of material, increased options for online learning, convenient access to library locations in established service areas, and efficiencies for shared library tasks such as technology support and administrative functions.

Webster shared that the two main structures to be considered are consolidated systems, which have a more centralized decision-making system, and cooperative systems, which retain decision making at the local level. Webster shared her belief that in Vermont, where independence is highly valued and the fear of losing local control cannot be underestimated, cooperative systems would allow for all the benefits of a centralized system without the centralized decision making that would likely be considered by many to be a negative aspect of integrating systems into libraries.

That said, implementing any structures could pose challenging given the many years of independence among Vermont's many existing public libraries and the need to work cooperatively to form new governance structures and identify funds to support this shared effort.

> *"While there are services provided through my former Library System that I miss, I think the individuality and strong sense of mission that each library in Vermont carries is absolutely invaluable. I would hate to see our state forsake its defining characteristic solely for some of the services a system provides unless it has better protections in place that keep libraries truly autonomous."—Katie Male-Riordan, Director of the New Haven Community Library*

Katie Male-Riordan, Director of the New Haven Community Library, shared a perspective informed by having worked in a library system in New York and in an independent public library in Vermont. "The biggest advantage to being part of a library system meant small libraries were provided with additional, necessary support to help them work towards staying at pace with modern library services. It was also a cost-effective way to have access to some of the more expensive aspects of library service while paying a smaller fee for those services because of a collective agreement—though it should be noted a large portion of library system funding in NYS is provided for through system aid, not individual library's budgets."

Male-Riordan went on to point out that "…these advantages came at a cost. The System also tried to standardize parts of libraries' operation, including universal cards, returning borrowed titles to non-home libraries, requiring all libraries to allow transit on new titles, and accepting patron payments on fines and fees from another library. Practices like these made it difficult to understand resident and non-resident use, added labor for staff to process stacks of titles checked out from neighboring libraries and prep them for transit, inequitable access to new materials, and confusion and liability issues for accepting payment for items from a separate organization.

Though a cooperative system keeps libraries autonomous, many processes within the library are now tied within a system and are subject to system rules, making it hard for individual libraries to be dynamic to community needs."

Statewide Public Library Borrowing

The Working Group heard from several members of the community that a statewide public library card would benefit Vermonters. The idea that was shared with the Working Group is by offering borrowing privileges to all Vermonters, public libraries could better serve Vermonters.

Some public libraries in Vermont have reciprocal lending agreements to serve one another's patrons, waiving out-of-town member fees. Some of these agreements are informal in nature. Other agreements of this nature have been formally approved by library boards, which provides more stability in the relationship. This type of reciprocal agreement between neighboring communities often works well to ensure public access to collections, in-person service hours, and programming among people likely to visit libraries near their homes and workplaces in their day-to-day lives. Reciprocity between two or three public libraries in a region can help ensure that members of a region have access to library services more days and hours of the week and have access to a wider range of library materials, services, and programs.

Vermont has at least two groups of libraries that have chosen to provide reciprocal borrowing to a wide number of Vermonters: the members of the Homecard and Onecard Library systems.

The Homecard Library System is a cooperative lending program of 28 libraries in northwestern Vermont. The system has members in Grand Isle, Franklin, Chittenden, and Addison Counties. Patrons who register for Homecards can visit any member Homecard library for additional access to that library's collection.

The Onecard Library System is a cooperative lending program of 15 libraries in eastern Vermont. The system has members in Windsor, Orange, and Caledonia Counties. Patrons who register for Onecards can visit any member Onecard library for additional access to that library's collection.

Some who shared their thoughts with the Working Group were seeking an even broader network of reciprocal borrowing. Almy Landauer the Adult Services Librarian at the South Burlington Public Library, shared with the Working Group her feeling that "for all residents and especially for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, youths and children, immigrant and migrant communities, and people living in poverty, unequivocally the best way to improve access to library services and collections is to develop and implement a state-wide library card and catalog. This is something that librarians have been talking about and requesting for many years."

If Vermont had one statewide library card, a patron who wished to borrow an item from a nearby library could drive to that library and check it out directly. This would enable the person to obtain the book very quickly and would also eliminate the costs associated with moving the book to their home library.

The Working Group heard from some community members about the desirability of county-wide networks of borrowing that exist in other states. These county-wide borrowing networks are most often the result of county-wide library systems which exist within a state governance structure with a strong county government and multiple county-wide departments and services that the public supports with tax dollars. In many states, municipalities opt to participate in county library systems, so county library services are not necessarily provided to every resident of a given county. Non-resident library card fees would likely apply to those who reside in adjacent counties or in non-resident municipalities within a county.

The models in place in different states that facilitate statewide borrowing vary. For example, the structures that underpin statewide borrowing in Pennsylvania and California differ. According to the State Library of Pennsylvania's website, the statewide library card program is a "reciprocal partnership among state-aided local libraries and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" with a purpose "to increase the availability of library materials for Pennsylvanians who live in a municipality in which a state-aided local library is supported by facilitating direct borrowing of physical items and use of onsite services at participating libraries. The program's underlying principle is reciprocity. Each state-aided local library agrees to honor library cards from other state-aided local libraries with the understanding that borrowing privileges will be extended to its own users by other state-aided libraries." The state of Pennsylvania requires that all public libraries that receive Quality Libraries Aid from the state participate in this

program. Pennsylvania residents who live in a municipality that does not participate are not eligible for the statewide library card. Pennsylvania established this statewide card through Access Pennsylvania Statewide Library Card Program legislation (Title 24 PA. C.S.A. § 9334 (c)(1)). (https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Libraries/Library-Programs-and-Services/Pages/Statewide-Library-Card-Program.aspx)

By contrast, in California, there is not one library card for the entire state. Instead, libraries that participate in universal borrowing issue their institutions' card to any California resident. Universal borrowing was established in California through the California Libraries Services Act. According to this act, "A California public library may participate in universal borrowing. A public library participating in universal borrowing shall not exclude the residents of any jurisdiction maintaining a public library." (Local Public Library Services, California General Education Code Provisions, § 18731, 2016.) While participation in California's universal borrowing is widespread, it is optional, and some libraries choose not to participate. (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&sectionNum=18731)

The suggestion of formalizing one statewide library card or universal borrowing would require further study as it might have budgetary implications at the local and state level. There are libraries in the state that receive appropriations from nearby towns with no library so that their residents may use that library. If a state card or universal borrowing were implemented in Vermont, a municipality might decide not to pay another public library for services and instead rely on that other public library to provide services for free. Library budgets might also be impacted by this model as online resources are typically priced based on the size of a library's service area, so more research into this area by the Department of Libraries would be needed.

Public Libraries Conclusion

Vermont has many independently operating public libraries, which demonstrates the importance of public libraries to Vermonters. The strength in this model is that each community is able to directly participate in the governance of its local public libraries and to contribute to its success.

However, a significant challenge faced with this model is that many of Vermont's public library staff report feeling isolated and unsupported in their work. New public library directors and staff also report significant training needs associated with learning to do their work well.

Another challenge this organizational structure poses is that each independent public library has significant overhead and administrative costs. Further, the administrative efforts of library directors and boards are duplicated many times in communities around the state.

Finally, the organizational structure of Vermont's many independently operating public libraries does not lend itself to economies of scale.

Other states' organizational structures indicate there may be benefits for public libraries in joining together into library systems and consortia. Statute does not preclude this option, and local library boards and staff are encouraged to consider if forming library systems would serve their institutions well.

The Working Group heard from the public library community that it wants to provide the best library service possible to Vermonters, and that access to collections is one very important piece of that service. Exploring simple ways to increase access to collections, including opting-in to provide reciprocal borrowing privileges such as those California has codified in statute would be one way to affect that change in Vermont.

Finally, the Working Group heard that in addition to a common desire to consolidate some aspects of their operations, Vermonters also value the independence of their public libraries and the ability to respond quickly to community needs. In other words, the Working Group heard from Vermonters that they desire *both* the freedom of independent control and the unity of shared systems.

School Libraries

There is no uniform organization of school libraries in each of Vermont's many schools. That said, each school library operates within the context of a school to support the learning of students per the established curriculum. Public schools in Vermont operate within the framework of school districts, and most of Vermont's private schools operate independently of one another.

Typically, school libraries are staffed by a "library media specialist", or, as they are commonly called in Vermont, a school librarian. Per the Vermont State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices Series 2000 Education Quality Standards, the number of certified school librarians a school needs is determined by the number of students at the school.

> **"The services of a certified library media specialist shall be made available to students and staff. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy, information and technology standards. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library media specialist on a pro-rata basis." 2121.2. Staff (https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-state-board-rules-series-2000.pdf)**

This means that schools in Vermont that have fewer than 300 students may have less than one full-time school librarian. School librarians provide instruction and support the

instruction of other teachers and the learning of students by providing resources and research assistance. They also develop and maintain a collection of materials to support the school curriculum and for pleasure reading by students. School libraries typically have support staff who assist with checking out, checking in, and shelving materials. Support staff also ensure that the school library's physical collections are in good repair and assist with oversight of the school library, among other things.

Per the information Charles Dabritz, co-president of the Vermont School Library Association (VSLA), provided to the Working Group, "The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided support for establishing school libraries, and as far as we know, that was reflected in Vermont through the Department of Education (DoE) [sic] hiring a School Library Consultant sometime in the late 60's." The work of the School Library Consultant was done in coordination with the Department. The School Library Consultant partnered with Department of Libraries staff to conduct quarterly collections meetings at public and school libraries. The consultant also represented Vermont school librarians at regional, state, and national conferences, and was the voice of the school library community within state government.

Dabritz shared that, "Leda Schubert was the last School Library Consultant for the Vermont DoE and served for 17 years (1986-2003). As the Vermont School Library Consultant Leda would provide support for school librarians around library programming, weeding their collection, helping with material challenges (we were reminded that the 1990s was a period of intense pressure on banning books as well). She consulted with other state groups, such as the Vermont NEA, in the creation of summer reading programs. She advocated for school librarians to be included in the first writing of the Education Quality Standards in 1999-2000. Over time, the position was reduced from full time to part time and eventually phased out in 2003." Dabritz went on to share that, "Losing an advocate and a voice within the DoE/AoE [sic] was difficult for Vermont School Libraries. As a result, beginning around 2021 the VSLA reached out to the AoE and began meeting monthly… We continue to meet monthly during the school year to discuss issues around library advocacy and have an open line of communication with the AoE. Lisa Helm is our current contact within the AoE. While we now have a positive working relationship with the AoE we still do not have the active services that were provided by the former Library Consultant."

Recently, VSLA and the Vermont National Education Association received grant funding from the Great Public Schools Grant to launch a three-year school library mentorship program to formalize the support and mentorship new school librarians receive through VSLA. VSLA also worked with the Vermont School Board Association to address the need for updated policies around collection development, especially in a national climate where schools are seeing more challenges of materials in their libraries.

Falling enrollments and tightening school budgets have impacted staffing in school libraries in many schools. Although Vermont's Educational Quality Standards specify the requirement of school librarians in schools at a rate of 1 FTE per 300 students, this standard has often not been met. In addition to cuts to professional librarian positions,

support staff in school libraries has also been drastically reduced, with a result that the library professional often ends up doing tasks that could be left to paraprofessionals. This impacts the highly trained librarian's ability to provide much needed information literacy education, co-teaching, classroom teacher support, and collection development duties.

The Working Group heard from multiple members of the public that there are schools in Vermont that do not have a dedicated school librarian and so do not meet this educational standard.

During its November 18, 2022, meeting on the topic of Continuing Education, Working Group Member Meg Allison reminded the Working Group that Vermont schools should meet educational standards for the state and that the current standards require schools to have a School Library Media Specialist.

School Libraries Conclusion

School libraries in Vermont operate within the contexts of the state's many schools and school districts. The community shared that funding for the physical and online resources in school libraries is often insufficient to meet the curricular needs of students. School librarians also shared with the Working Group that they would appreciate additional funding for databases at the state level to support the curricular needs of students.

School librarians provide essential services to the youth they serve. Because school librarians serve a different function from classroom teachers, they often require different support systems with their school and from outside organizations. The Working Group heard from school librarians that cuts to support staff in school libraries have had a negative impact on the quality of service they can provide to students. The Working Group heard that school librarians wish to see support staffing in school libraries increased.

School librarians also shared with the Working Group that they would appreciate additional funding at the state level and hoped for the restoration of a school library consultant at either the Agency of Education or the Department of Libraries.

Associations that Support Vermont's Libraries

Vermont Library Association (VLA)

According to written testimony provided to the Working Group by Brynn Geffert, the Vermont Library Association (VLA) is an educational organization working to develop, promote, and improve library and information services and librarianship in the state of Vermont. The VLA formed in 1893 and has been a chapter of the American Library

Association (ALA) since 1956. The organization currently has more than 300 members. The organization provides library advocacy and education, as well as networking opportunities and an annual library conference. An active intellectual freedom committee provides support to libraries with material or program challenges and provides educational opportunities on the topic of intellectual freedom.

An all-volunteer organization, the Vermont Library Association has a constantly changing cast of officers and section leaders. Geffert shared that it can be challenging to ensure that important information is not lost as leadership transitions. (https://vermontlibraries.org/about)

Vermont School Library Association (VSLA)

According to testimony shared with the Working Group by Charles Dabritz, the co-President of the Vermont School Library Association, VSLA is the professional organization of Vermont's school librarians. VSLA currently has 200 members and membership costs are on a sliding scale. In Vermont's small schools, school librarians are often the only library professional in their school or district. The leadership, advocacy, mentoring, and support provided by VSLA is instrumental for many school librarians. (https://vsla.wildapricot.org/)

The American Library Association (ALA)

According to its website, the American Library Association "is the oldest and largest library association in the world. Founded on October 6, 1876, during the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the mission of ALA is 'to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.'" (https://www.ala.org/aboutala/)

Vermont Consortium of Academic Libraries (VCAL)

The Vermont Consortium of Academic Libraries "supports higher education in Vermont by providing students, faculty, and staff at the state's colleges and universities with enhanced access to information resources for study, teaching, research, and scholarship." (https://vtcal.org/)

Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)

The Association for Rural and Small Libraries "builds strong communities through advocacy, professional development, and elevating the impact of rural and small

libraries." ARSL is of particular importance in Vermont, where most libraries fit the definition of rural and small. The ARSL annual conference pulls together librarians from all over the country and typically draws a contingent from Vermont. (https://www.arsl.org/)

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
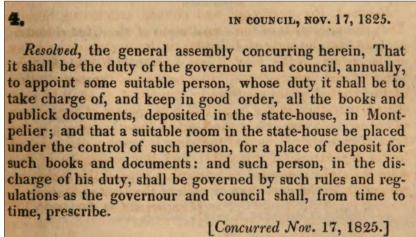
"Representing nearly 9,000 individuals and libraries, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the largest division of the American Library Association, develops programs, products, and services to help those working in academic and research libraries learn, innovate, and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning, transforming scholarship, and creating diverse and inclusive communities." (https://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl)

The Vermont Department of Libraries

To understand the work of the Vermont Department of Libraries today, it is important to understand its history, which is linked with the history of two separate organizations: the Vermont State Library and the Vermont Free Public Library Commission.

Vermont State Library History (1825-1970)

The Vermont State Library began in 1825 after Rober Pierpoint, a Councilor, introduced a resolution that that each year the council and the Governor would appoint "some suitable person" to oversee maintenance of the collection of books and public documents in the State House. Originally, the Vermont State Library was open only to Council members and the General Assembly when in session.

4.   IN COUNCIL, NOV. 17, 1825.

Resolved, the general assembly concurring herein, That it shall be the duty of the governour and council, annually, to appoint some suitable person, whose duty it shall be to take charge of, and keep in good order, all the books and publick documents, deposited in the state-house, in Montpelier; and that a suitable room in the state-house be placed under the control of such person, for a place of deposit for such books and documents: and such person, in the discharge of his duty, shall be governed by such rules and regulations as the governour and council shall, from time to time, prescribe.

[*Concurred Nov. 17, 1825.*]

Scan of document, 1825 resolution, concerning the oversight of state collection of books and documents

Some 13 years later, in 1838, Jackson A. Vail became the first State Librarian to be paid for his services. That same year the State Library became a repository for state publications and became responsible for distribution of the Vermont Reports. In 1840, the State Library became a selective federal depository—a responsibility that continues to this day.

The first appropriation for the Vermont State Library came in 1841 when the General Assembly approved one-time funds for the purchase of books (seven Bibles and two dictionaries). In 1849, the State Library first participated in the exchange of state documents with other State Libraries, which continued through the mid-2010s when most State Libraries transitioned from paper copies of documents to digital versions of documents. In 1854, the State Library received its first annual appropriation ($200) for the purchase of books by the State Librarian.

When fire destroyed the State House on January 6, 1857, State Librarian Harvey Webster removed books from the building as it was burning. While the new State House was constructed, the State Library was housed first in a private home and then in the Masonic Temple in Montpelier. In 1859, when the construction of the current State House was completed, the State Library moved back to that building and was located immediately next to the Governor's office in what is now the Cedar Creek Room. In 1886 the Annex to the State House was built to house the State Library. That same year a schedule change was approved, and the State Library began remaining open year-round, not just when the Legislature was in session.

In 1902, the first full-time State Librarian, George W. Wing, was hired. The year 1914 saw a growth in space and availability as the building at 109/111 State Street and the Supreme Court building were built. The State Library then moved to the Supreme Court building where it was open to all Vermont residents.

On November 3, 1927, some 50,000 state documents from the State Library were destroyed when Montpelier flooded.

The State Library was located at the Pavilion in Montpelier from 1914 – 2018. Immediately adjacent to the Vermont Supreme Court and just one block from the Washington County Court House, the State Library's extensive law collection was housed at this location, which was conveniently located for use by the Legislature, law professionals, and the public. Since 2018, the Department of Libraries and State Library reside at the Vermont History Center in Barre.

Vermont Free Public Library Commission (1894-1961)

The Vermont Free Public Library Commission began in 1894. The first secretary of the Commission was Miss Mary L. Titcomb, who had the idea of using a horse-drawn wagon to carry books to small libraries and farming families. The Commission denied

her proposal, and she eventually moved to Massachusetts where she implemented a similar program to great success.

On May 25, 1922, the Vermont Free Public Library Commission became the first New England State Commission to own a motorized bookmobile. Dubbed the "Alice Coolidge Bookwagon," it was given to the commission by the Vermont Federation of Women's Clubs and was named for Mrs. Omeron H. Coolidge of Rutland, the first president of the Federation and a friend of Mary Titcomb.

The Alice Coolidge Bookwagon
Source: Department files

In 1923, the Free Public Library Commission was abolished, and its duties were assigned to the Commission to the Board of Education. However, in March 1937, the Legislation approved "adequate funds" to set up a state-wide regional library service and reestablished the Free Public Library Commission. In 1937, the Free Public Library Commission established regional bookwagons with small library collections housed in local public libraries.

In 1960, the Legislature abolished the Board of Geographic Names, initially transferring those responsibilities to the State Librarian. In 1961, the Legislature changed course and transferred geographic naming responsibilities for the state to the Board of Trustees and the Free Public Library Commission. The same year, the Free Public Library Commission was renamed the Free Public Library Service, and a five-member board was established.

Vermont Department of Libraries (1970-present)

The Vermont Department of Libraries (the Department) was established on March 31, 1970, when the Vermont State Library merged with the Vermont Free Public Library

Service. While the services the Department provides have evolved over time, the Department has existed continuously since that time.

In 1971, the Department launched Vermont BookFetch, a publication of the state library catalog (with supplements from participating libraries) in local newspapers. Members of the public could review the contents of BookFetch and then request books from the Department of Libraries by mail.

BookFetch catalog
Source: Department files

In 1980, the Department of Libraries implemented its first automated collections, and in 1987, launched the Vermont Automated Library System (VALS), a union catalog. Libraries that were members of VALS submitted additions and deletions from their catalog to the Vermont Department of Libraries where Department staff updated the union catalog manually.

In 2017, the VALS system was replaced by SHAREIt, an interlibrary loan (ILL) product from the company Auto-Graphics. Branded as "CLOVER", this system enables staff at public libraries across the state to easily check whether items their patrons are interested in are available at other institutions and to learn whether those items are currently checked-in and able to be requested through ILL. The implementation of this technological solution eliminated the need for the Department to maintain one shared union catalog to support ILL.

The Department's Five Regional Libraries (1967-2018)

Between 1967 and 1972, the Vermont State Library opened five regional libraries throughout the state, each with professional librarians and paraprofessionals who served the public directly. These libraries served as de facto regional book repositories, supplementing the collections available in Vermont's many small, rural libraries. The public was able to visit the regional libraries during their open hours. Library staff from

nearby public libraries also visited the Department's Regional Libraries to gather materials to circulate to the public. Each of the regional libraries was managed by a library consultant who provided guidance and offered support to library directors and staff in the region they served. As their workplaces were embedded in Vermont's communities, the consultants were able to make regular visits to public libraries to support the directors and trustees in their day-to-day work. Some of the staff of the regional libraries worked on bookmobiles, delivering library materials from the regional library to schools and other service points in rural Vermont communities.

The Department of Libraries once had five regional library facilities. These regional library facilities opened between 1967 and 1972, starting in the southwest quadrant of the state, which was originally known as the Rutland Regional Library.

Regional Library	Opening Year	Closing Year
Midstate Regional Library (Originally called the Montpelier Regional Library)	1968	2018
Northeast Regional Library (Originally called the St Johnsbury Regional Library)	1968	2010
Northwest Regional Library (Originally called the St. Albans Regional Library)	1972	1997
Southeast Regional Library (Originally called the Brattleboro Regional Library)	1967	2000
Southwest Regional Library (Originally called Rutland Regional Library)	1967	1997

The Department began closing its regional libraries beginning in 1997 in response to significant cuts to its budget. Four of the facilities had closed their doors by 2010, and the final regional library, then known as "Midstate" closed in 2018.

In July 2018 the Vermont Department of Libraries moved its staff to one location, a space leased from the Vermont Historical Society in their building at 60 Washington Street in Barre. Through this move, the Department's shelf space was reduced by 85% and its physical collections were reduced accordingly.
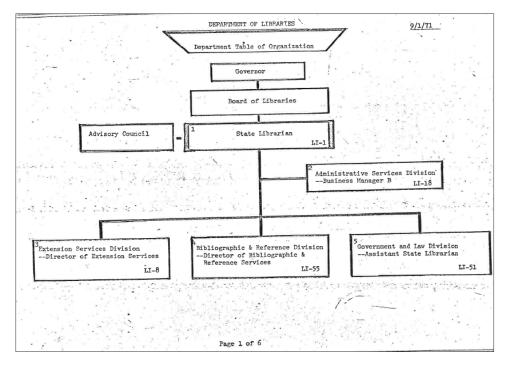
The Department continues to adapt and strives to fulfill its statutory obligations using a blend of modern and traditional approaches. While the Department no longer has the resources to maintain large collections of print materials at regional libraries, it provides support for resource sharing among local libraries across the state through the courier program and facilitating in-state and inter-state interlibrary loan services. While the

State Library no longer includes the law library collections and staff, the Department now provides selected State of Vermont staff with access to a legal database to meet their information needs and provides public access to legal collections and legal reference services through a grant to the Vermont Law and Graduate School in Randolph.
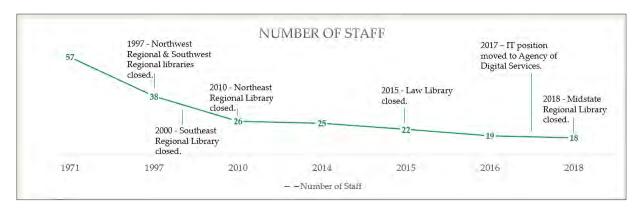
Department of Libraries Staffing

Department records show that in 1971, the Department was staffed by fifty-seven (57) staff members. Department staff members were divided into three divisions: Administrative Services, Extension Services, Bibliographic & Reference, and Government and Law.

Cuts to the Department's budget led to the closure of the five regional libraries and a dramatic downsizing of its staff between 1971 and 2010. The reduction of staff through budget cuts, closure of the Department's Law Library, Department-specific Human Resources, Finance, and Information Technology staff moved to other departments of the state, and the closure of the final regional library (Midstate), reduced the Department to its current size.
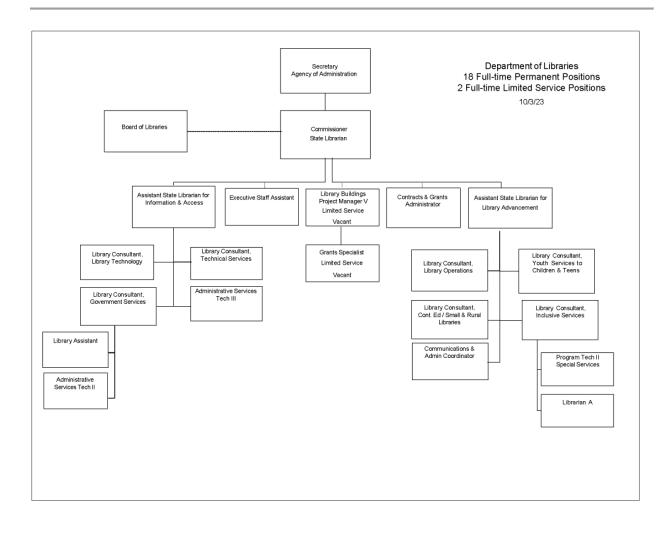
Since 2018, the Department has had 18 full-time positions organized into three work units: Information & Access, Library Advancement, and the business unit. In fiscal year 2022 the Department was authorized by the Legislature to bring on two temporary staff members to support its two federal Capital Grants programs.

Staffing at State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAAs) is variable throughout the country and to some extent staffing levels relate to the differences in the size of the population served. That said, most SLAAs with a similar population size to Vermont's have more staff than the Vermont Department of Libraries. Jeremy Johannesen, Executive Director of COSLA shared with the Working Group that "the average staffing level at the state library agencies is 49 with a mean of 39.

Secretary
Agency of Administration

Department of Libraries
18 Full-time Permanent Positions
2 Full-time Limited Service Positions
10/3/23

Board of Libraries

Commissioner
State Librarian

Assistant State Librarian for
Information & Access

Executive Staff Assistant

Library Buildings
Project Manager V
Limited Service
Vacant

Contracts & Grants
Administrator

Assistant State Librarian for
Library Advancement

Library Consultant,
Library Technology

Library Consultant,
Technical Services

Grants Specialist
Limited Service
Vacant

Library Consultant,
Library Operations

Library Consultant,
Youth Services to
Children & Teens

Library Consultant,
Government Services

Administrative Services
Tech III

Library Consultant,
Cont. Ed / Small & Rural
Libraries

Library Consultant,
Inclusive Services

Library Assistant

Communications &
Admin Coordinator

Program Tech II
Special Services

Administrative
Services Tech II

Librarian A

Department Budget

In fiscal year 2024, the Legislature approved a budget for the Department of Libraries of $3,600,000. Approximately two-thirds of the Department's approved budget is made up of $2,100,000 in General Funds and one-third is the state's federal award through Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/AboutUs/Libraries%20FY24%20Budget%20Book_011923.pdf)

State Funds Budgeted to the Department of Libraries:

2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2023
$1,835,067	$2,331,998	$2,616,539	$2,746,649	$2,062,056	$2,004,119

Source: Department files

Federal funding from IMLS LSTA Grants to States program:

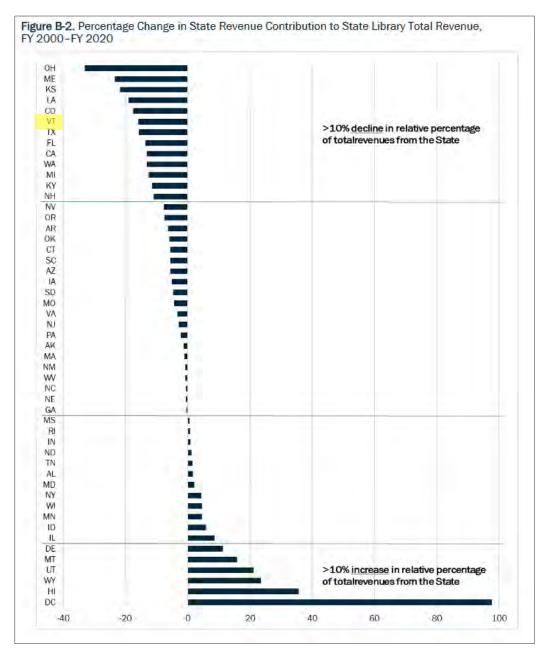| 2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2023
$598,361	$815,233	$955,355	$912,082	$1,032,931	$1,247,111

Source: Department files and https://www.imls.gov/grants/grants-state/state-allotments

These annual allotments show that while federal funds the Department has been awarded have kept pace with inflation, state funding to the Department has not. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, $1.00 in 2000 is equal to $1.82 today. By that measure, federal funds have seen a modest increase from the 2000 amounts in 2023.

When taking into account the rate of inflation over the past twenty-three years, state funding to the Department would need to have increased by $1,335,703 in fiscal year 2023 for the Department to have the same spending power it had in 2000. A significant portion of the decreases in the Department's budget can be traced to budget cuts in fiscal years 2015 and 2016. As passed, the fiscal year 2015 general fund allotment for the Department was $2,746,649. In August 2014, a rescission cut the budget by $125,131. The Department then absorbed a $500,000 cut in fiscal year 2016, reducing the budget to $2,252,941. In total that year, the Department lost $625,131 in state funds. Changes to staffing allocations at the Department in the past decade included structural changes that led to the removal of the Department's IT Librarian position and reductions through attrition following early retirement incentives. As the size of the Department was reduced, so was the size of the support it could offer to libraries statewide.

According to IMLS data, the Department's budget has decreased by more than 10% relative to the State's total revenues since 2020. Among the states, Vermont has the sixth largest decline in relative percentage of total revenues from the state, after Ohio, Maine, Kansas, Louisianna, and Colorado.
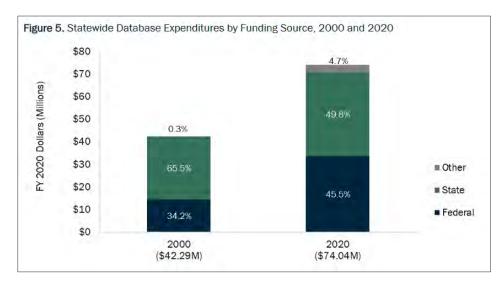
Figure B-2. Percentage Change in State Revenue Contribution to State Library Total Revenue, FY 2000–FY 2020

While many SLAAs have seen decreased funding over the past 20 years, they have faced rising costs for the shared, centralized collections they provide. For example, the cost of statewide database expenditures reported by state libraries has grown from $42.2 million in 2000 to $74.04 million nationally in that time.

Figure 5. Statewide Database Expenditures by Funding Source, 2000 and 2020

[Bar chart showing FY 2020 Dollars (Millions) on the y-axis from $0 to $80.

2000 ($42.29M): Federal 34.2%, State 65.5%, Other 0.3%

2020 ($74.04M): Federal 45.5%, State 49.8%, Other 4.7%

Legend: Other, State, Federal]

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf

Department Leadership

In recent years, the Department has undergone significant changes in leadership, having had four state librarians since January 2017.

The Department is supported in its work by the Vermont Board of Libraries. As Board Chair Tom Frank shared with the Working Group, the seven-member Board of Libraries serves as an advisory body to the State Librarian and works in consultation with the Agency of Administration in the appointment of the State Librarian. The Board typically meets four times a year.
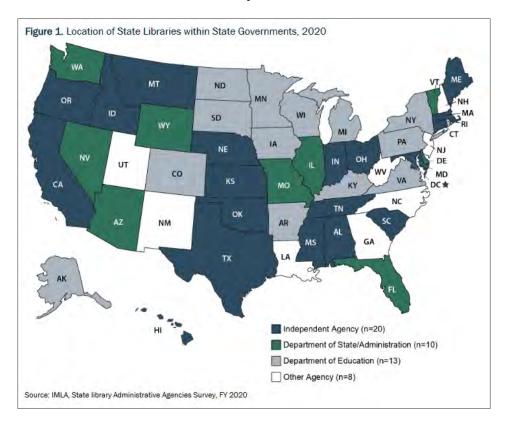
In Vermont, the Board of Libraries also handles geographic naming for the state. This is a unique role: no other state has geographic naming as a responsibility falling to the Board of Libraries. Board Chair Tom Frank reports that in recent years, the Board's time has been split approximately 80% to geographic naming responsibilities and 20% to advising the State Librarian. However, Frank shared with the Working Group that by updating its Geographic Names Procedure in August 2022, the board has streamlined and clarified its process. These improvements have significantly reduced the amount of time the Board has spent on Geographic Naming in 2023 and provide the board with more time to dedicate to its primary role: advising the State Librarian.

The Functions of the Vermont Department of Libraries

The Vermont Department of Libraries is a department within the State's Agency of Administration. The Department is led by the State Librarian and Commissioner, who is

appointed by the Secretary of Administration after consultation with the Board of Libraries and with the approval of the Governor and consent of the Senate. Statute requires that the State Librarian be a professional librarian with a master's in library science from an American Library Association accredited institution.

Figure 1. Location of State Libraries within State Governments, 2020

Independent Agency (n=20)
Department of State/Administration (n=10)
Department of Education (n=13)
Other Agency (n=8)

Source: IMLA, State library Administrative Agencies Survey, FY 2020

Source: https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf

Vermont is one of ten SLAAs housed in their state's Agency of Administration: Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada, Washington, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia. Thirteen SLAAs are housed in the Agency of Education, twenty are Independent Agencies, and eight are housed in other agencies within state government.

The varied locations of the 51 SLAAs within their respective state governments are emblematic of the many differences that can been seen between the SLAAs. As Jeremy *Johannesen, t*he Executive Director of the national Chief Operating Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), told the Working Group, "If you've seen one state library, you've seen one state library. There are absolutely no universals."

That said, according to Johannesen, one common feature of all 51 SLAAs is that they serve as the "coordinating hub for best practices in the administration of local library services."

Department of Libraries: Duties and Functions

The Department's specific role is outlined in **Chapter 13 of Title 22: Libraries, History, and Information Technology**. (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/22/013)

The work of the Department is outlined in two sections **22 V.S.A. § 605: Duties and Functions** (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00605) and **22 V.S.A. § 606: Other Duties and Functions** (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00606).

> **Statute shows that the Department's first duty and function is to "provide, administer, and maintain:**
> **(1) A law library to serve the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, other members of the Judiciary, the legal profession, members of the Legislature, officials of State government, and the general public."**
> **22 V.S.A. § 605**
> **(https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00605)**

The Department has not had a had a law librarian since 2015 and has not had a law library since 2018. Instead, the Department administers a contract with Westlaw through which departments and agencies provide their staff with access to legal resources.

Since 2016, the Department has met its charge of providing access to legal resources and references to the public through a grant to the Vermont Law School's Community Legal Information Center (CLIC) (https://www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/library/CLIC). Through CLIC, the public can access the collections of the Cornell Library of the Vermont Law and Graduate School in South Royalton in-person and can obtain assistance from professional law librarians from 8am to 8pm seven days a week. CLIC has a dedicated full-time law librarian, the CLIC Coordinator, who serves the public from 10:30am-4pm Monday through Friday. In addition to using these resources on-site in South Royalton, the public can call or email CLIC for answers to their legal reference questions.

The Department fulfils its responsibility to provide a collection of federal documents by serving as a partial federal repository. This means that the State Library collection includes documents and materials that are sent by the Federal Government and makes these available to the public. The nearest full federal repository in the region is in Maine. The Federal Government now publishes many of its materials online, which can be found and used by the public through the Department's online catalog.

The Department meets its obligation to provide access to information on public policy and topics pertinent to State government through the databases of the Vermont Online Library. The Department also has a modest collection of print titles on public policy matters in the State Library which can be checked out by members of the Legislature

and State of Vermont employees with their State Library Card. Members of the public can access these physical items by appointment at the Department's office in Barre, Vermont or can request to borrow them through Interlibrary Loan.

Another duty of the department is to maintain collections in support of other libraries in the state that can be used by all Vermonters.

> **"(4) A general library collection of a sufficient size and scope to reinforce and supplement the resources of local and regional libraries. All materials of the Department of Libraries shall be available for free circulation to all citizens, institutions, and organizations under regulations of the State Librarian except that the State Librarian may restrict rare or reference-type materials to one location. The Department shall arrange, classify, and catalog all materials in its custody and provide for their safekeeping and shall rebind books as needed. The Department shall provide service to other libraries in the State, schools, and individuals and may provide service by mail or book wagon or otherwise."**
> **22 V.S.A. § 605**
> **(https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00605)**

With the closure of the regional outlets of the State Library, and the downsizing of its space to hold physical collections, the Department has turned toward meeting this statute by providing more online resources to the public, including eBooks and online journals. The Vermont Online Library (VOL) is a collection of databases that the Department provides for all Vermonters with their public, school, and academic library card. The resources are available online every hour of every day and Vermonters can access them either in the library or remotely. The Vermont Online Library provides a core collection of curated, vetted, and reliable information from a variety of newspapers, magazines, academic journals, and books providing a robust depth of information than can be found through a basic internet search. The Department contracts with vendors to provide this core set of database resources, which helps local libraries keep their costs lower. Some libraries in Vermont use their local funding to provide additional resources to the communities they serve. In addition to databases, the Department also provides all Vermonters online learning platforms through which they can learn skills related to work readiness and lifelong learning.

According to an IMLS report, "access to statewide databases expanded between 2000 and 2020… other state agencies increasingly relied on the state library's licensing of statewide databases."(https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf) Across the country, between 2000 and 2020, SLAAs increased the databases they provided, both for the public and also for other state agencies. The Department provides all State of Vermont employees with access to the Vermont Online Library, which includes scholarly articles, news, and other publications relevant to their work. The Department also manages a contract for Westlaw that provides licenses paid by individual departments. The Department of

Libraries also provides reference services, including article retrieval and interlibrary loan, to assist state employees in locating information related to their work.

Table 5. User Groups Covered by Statewide Database License Expenditures

User group	2000	2020	Difference: 2020–2000
Public libraries	47	48	1
Academic libraries	38	41	3
School libraries	38	42	4
Special libraries	34	36	2
Library cooperatives*	32	34	2
Other state agencies	33	43	10
Remote users	42	47	5

* The term "library cooperatives" was used in both the 2000 and 2020 SLAA surveys.

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf

In Vermont, many public libraries, schools, and academic institutions have had to reduce the number of databases they provide over the past two decades due to escalating database costs. This has resulted in more public, school, and academic libraries relying on the databases provided by the Department so they can put more of their local dollars towards other collections and programs. (*See Collections Chapter for more information on databases for all Vermonters*)

In recent years, the Department has begun building out its core collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks for the public, which it makes available through the Palace App. Like the Vermont Online Library collection, the Department's collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks serve as a shared statewide resource that all Vermonters can access using their public library card. If their library has not yet added its digital book collections to the Palace App, the Department will be providing Vermonters with temporary QR codes they can use to access these resources. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/find-books-and-more/ebooks-and-audiobooks/palace-project-downloadable-books-all-vermonters) (*See Collections Chapter for more information on the Department's collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks for all Vermonters*)

> **"(5) A service of advice and consultation to all libraries in the State, in order to assist them in realizing their potential. This service shall be provided at a regional level as well as at the State level. The Department may provide centralized cataloging and other related technical services to libraries in the State to the extent feasible."**
> **22 V.S.A. § 605**
> **(https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00605)**

The Department provides a service of advice and consultation to all libraries in the State, in order to assist them in realizing their potential. The Department has a team of Library Consultants who are experts in the areas of library technology, technical services, government services, professional development, library operations, youth services, and inclusive services. The team works together to respond to inquiries and requests for support from libraries statewide. During the COVID-19 health emergency, the Department realized that it was able to most effectively serve the greatest number of libraries statewide by shifting more of its consultation services to telephone and online calls. However, Department staff do continue to connect with libraries in-person through outreach visits. The Working Group heard kudos from many library staff for the support provided by the Department's team of Consultants.

In addition to supporting the many public, school, and academic libraries around the state, the Department provides physical collections to meet the needs of those in the six state correctional facilities, the state's psychiatric facilities, and the Veteran's home as required by statute.

The Department also oversees a program that provides library service to blind Vermonters and those with physical disabilities that prevent them from using traditional print materials directly: the ABLE Library. The ABLE Library also serves those who have learning differences that make reading traditional print materials difficult, and also has a collection of large print books available. The Department is building out its collection of materials to support Vermonters' diverse access needs, including those with learning differences.

In addition to the functions specified in section 605 of this title, the Department has additional duties articulated in **22 V.S.A. § 606**.
(https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00606)

An important function of the Department is the administration of Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States funds allocated to Vermont by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) each year. Nationally, this work is performed by all 51 SLAAs. Each year, the Department grants some of the Grants to States funds for Vermont directly to libraries and library cooperatives. Nationally, 42 other SLAAs (78%) also grant funds to libraries and library cooperatives. This work is done in keeping with statute that pertains to aid to local libraries:

> **"The State Librarian may assist free public or other nonprofit libraries which formulate and implement plans for the systematic and effective coordination of libraries and library services. Grants may be made in accordance with standards of the service, consistent with the Federal Library Services and Construction Act, chapter 16 of Title 20, U.S. Code as amended." 22 V.S.A. § 634**
> **(https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00634)**

Through its Grants to States program, the IMLS allocates a base amount to each of the SLAAs, plus a supplemental amount based on population. Funding from the IMLS Grants to States program comprises roughly one-third of the Department's total annual budget.

The funds received from the Grants to States program are intended to supplement funding from the state and local governments to support library service in the state of Vermont according to the purposes of the Library Services and Technology Act. (https://www.imls.gov/grants/grants-state/purposes-and-priorities-lsta)The Department develops and follows a five-year plan for the use of these funds, and then completes an evaluation at the end of the five-year grant period.

The Department's current Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027), can be found online. (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/state-profiles/plans/vermont5yearplan.pdf)The Department's three goals for the current period of performance are:

- Strengthening Libraries

- Enhancing Access to Information

- Fostering Learning and Building Community

The Department's most recent evaluation, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Program Implementation Evaluation Federal Fiscal Year 2018 - Federal Fiscal Year 2022, is also available online. (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/state-profiles/evals/vermont5yearevaluation.pdf)

Statute also empowers the Department to "prepare plans and applications to obtain federal aid monies which may be available." In Federal Fiscal Year 2020, the Department was awarded $56,384 in IMLS CARES Act Grants for Museums and Libraries program to support the role of museums and libraries in responding to the coronavirus pandemic. The Department awarded grant funds to help libraries improve connectivity and computer access for their patrons. Through this program, thirty-three libraries received a $400 micro-grant that they used for a variety of expenses including improvements to networks and purchasing exterior electrical outlets and other accommodations to support outdoor computing by the public. The Department also made bulk purchases of PPE and plexiglass shields and distributed them to public and academic libraries throughout the state.

In 2021, the Department was granted $2,135,819 in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding by IMLS. Through this program, IMLS designated $200 million in pandemic response funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Grants to States program. The Department used these funds to provide two rounds of non-competitive grants to public libraries, museum partnerships, and

statewide library consortia. The Department also used the funds to enhance existing statewide services.

Most recently, the Department has also sought and was awarded $16.4 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury and $10 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to support capital improvement projects at public libraries in our state, which it will subgrant to Vermont's public libraries. The funding from the U. S. Department of Treasury is through the American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") Capital Projects Funds which provides $10 billion for payments to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Department will utilize $16.4 million of Vermont's Capital Project funds toward capital improvements at Vermont's public libraries that support continued or improved public access to high-speed internet to directly enable work and health monitoring. The Department will make subgrant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant available for the state's small, rural public libraries to support them in repairing their library buildings, with a focus on economically depressed areas in the state.

In recognition of the importance of communication between libraries and particularly around sharing resources, statute requires the Department to promote improved communications among libraries in the State as well as cooperative use of facilities through hosting and participating in regional meetings of libraries and by hosting well-used email listservs for library staff and trustees.

Statute also enables the Department to conduct **"*seminars, workshops, and other programs to increase the professional competence of librarians in the State.*"** (*https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00606*)

The Department's continuing education offerings and the Certificate of Public Librarianship program are both ways it meets the charge of conducting seminars, workshops, and other programs to increase the professional competence of librarians in the State. Nationally, 49 other State Libraries provide continuing education for library staff in their state.

According to statute, the Department *"(8) Shall be the primary access point for State information, and provide advice on State information technology policy."* (https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/22/013/00606)

The Department does not serve as the primary access point for State information. Vermont 211 launched in 2005 and has served as the primary access point for telephone inquiries for information about state government for nearly two decades. Many Vermonters now access information about state services online. Agencies and Department of the State of Vermont do not interact with the Department with regards to the content they share online or the organization of that information.

The Working Group recommends that the Legislature consider repealing this portion of statute.

Direct Funding from the Department to Local Libraries

Many of Vermont's public libraries receive non-competitive grants from the Department annually for such activities as Summer Reading and the Interlibrary Loan Courier Service. They also receive support in the form of shared services including the statewide Interlibrary Loan and access to databases and electronic books through the Department. Public Libraries also received direct grants of one-time IMLS funds in response to the COVID pandemic, which were administered by the Department.

The Department has historically provided direct aid to libraries through grant programs. Most significantly, the Department issued substantial grants to public libraries around the state between 2000-2010 after receiving a grant of more than $10M from the Gates Foundation. These grants enabled many libraries to fund capital improvements.

The Department has applied for and been awarded two significant federal grants to support public libraries with capital improvements: $10 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and $16.4 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury. The Department plans to award these funds to public libraries in fiscal year 2024.

Unlike the majority of State Library Agencies across the nation, the Department does not provide annual grants to libraries from general funds, or "state aid." According to an IMLS report issued in November 2021, forty-two (42) SLAAs provide aid to public libraries on an annual basis.

At its meeting on September 22, 2023, a Working Group member brought up the topic of "State Aid" for discussion. While the IMLS State Library Administrative Agencies Survey Fiscal Year 2020 shows that 42 SLAAs provide annual "state aid" directly to eligible public libraries (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf), that report does not show how much aid to public libraries each state provides, whether each state provides that funding annually, or what the parameters for such aid might be.

The Working Group did not hear from experts on this topic, nor did it request that the Department research the specifics of other SLAA's direct aid to public libraries for this report. However, the Department connected with the SLAAs in New England and New York State to gather information on what "state aid" they provided to public libraries, if any.

The Department learned that, like Vermont, the New England states, New Hampshire, Maine, and Connecticut do not make direct state aid available to public libraries. It is important to note that, like the Vermont Department of Libraries, the SLAAs in these

states do support their libraries through centralized statewide programs and grants from funding sources other than the state.

New England states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, offer varying levels of programmatic state aid as does neighboring New York.

Massachusetts disburses three state aid awards: the Library Incentive and Municipal Equalization Grants, and a Nonresident Circulation Offset to all certified public libraries (https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/index.php)

Rhode Island offers Public Library Grants-in-Aid, Public Library Construction Reimbursements, and Institutional Library Grants-in-Aid, and supports the Statewide Reference Resource Center (https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/index.php)

New York makes annual disbursements in the form of Library Aid, Central Library Aid, and Construction Aid. (https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libaid.htm)

The Working Group did not reach consensus on a recommendation related to state aid.

Vermont Department of Libraries Conclusion

Despite the many changes that have come its way, the staff of the Department of Libraries have shown resilience and a commitment to supporting the library community in the state. During the meetings of the Working Group, the community frequently called for the Department to do even more to support libraries in Vermont while simultaneously hearing positive feedback about the work that it is doing now. Community members also voiced recognition that the Department today is far smaller and has less spending power to support Vermont's libraries than it did, even 25 years ago.

The Department of Libraries has seen a consistent reduction in staffing for decades, and any replication of larger regional consolidated or cooperative systems that might be created for Vermont cannot come from the Department of Libraries as currently staffed. The Working Group understands that the Department is working to capacity and with its full budget to provide the services currently and that any new or additional services would either require additional support or cuts to existing services.

Staffing

The topic of Staffing was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, July 22, 2022. The Working Group heard from nine community members and heard a report from Department of Libraries staff on the topic of Staffing. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by 15 community members.

The Working Group heard from community members about staffing levels in Vermont's school, public, and academic libraries, including feedback about staffing levels and compensation. This information is challenging to understand both within the state and also within the broader national context for two primary reasons:

1. staff of Vermont's libraries sometimes go by different titles than those performing the same work in neighboring municipalities and in other states; and

2. educational requirements for library staff in Vermont sometimes differ from the requirements to perform the same work in other states.

For these reasons, it is important to understand the roles performed by library staff in Vermont and how it fits within the national context.

National Comparison: Librarians and Media Collection Specialists

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides data on the compensation of librarians in a variety of library settings including annual mean wages and hourly mean wages. The BLS data refers to "media collection specialists, who prefer to be referred to as "school librarians" in Vermont. The BLS includes "public librarians" within the "Local Government, excluding schools and hospitals" grouping.
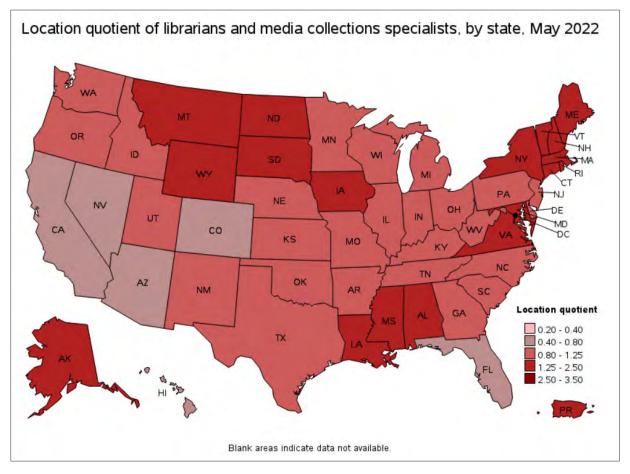
Industries with the highest levels of employment in Librarians and Media Collections Specialists:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
Elementary and Secondary Schools	49,420	0.59	$ 32.38	$ 67,360
Local Government, excluding schools and hospitals (OEWS Designation)	42,540	0.79	$ 28.35	$ 58,970
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	19,220	0.64	$ 33.18	$ 69,020
Web Search Portals, Libraries, Archives, and Other Information Services	7,300	4.15	$ 28.33	$ 58,920
Junior Colleges	3,900	0.62	$ 35.64	$ 74,140

Source: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254022.htm#st

The BLS explains that Librarians perform many tasks. Librarians "Administer and maintain libraries or collections of information, for public or private access through reference or borrowing. Work in a variety of settings, such as educational institutions, museums, and corporations, and with various types of informational materials, such as books, periodicals, recordings, films, and databases. Tasks may include acquiring, cataloging, and circulating library materials, and user services such as locating and organizing information, providing instruction on how to access information, and setting up and operating a library's media equipment." (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254022.htm#st)
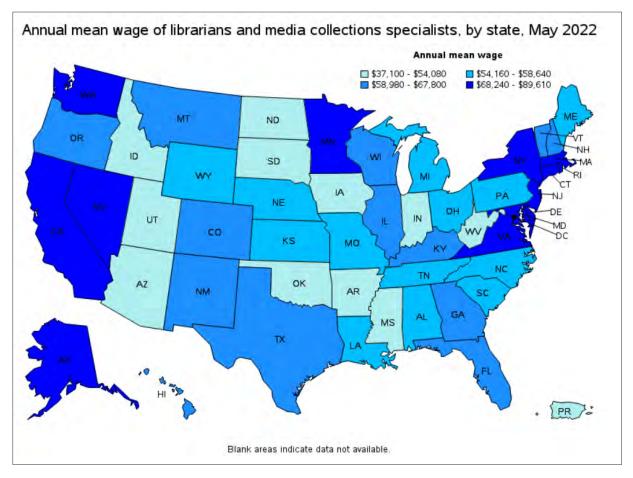
According to BLS data from 2022, Vermont, like the rest of New England and New York, has a slightly higher ratio than average of people working as librarians compared to other professions.

Location quotient of librarians and media collections specialists, by state, May 2022

Blank areas indicate data not available.

Location quotient
- 0.20 - 0.40
- 0.40 - 0.80
- 0.80 - 1.25
- 1.25 - 2.50
- 2.50 - 3.50

Source: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254022.htm#st

According to BLS data from 2022, the average mean wage of librarians in Vermont is between $58,980 and $67,800. However, as the Working Group heard from the community, the average wage of public librarians in Vermont is far lower than the average wage of school librarians and academic librarians in Vermont.

Annual mean wage of librarians and media collections specialists, by state, May 2022
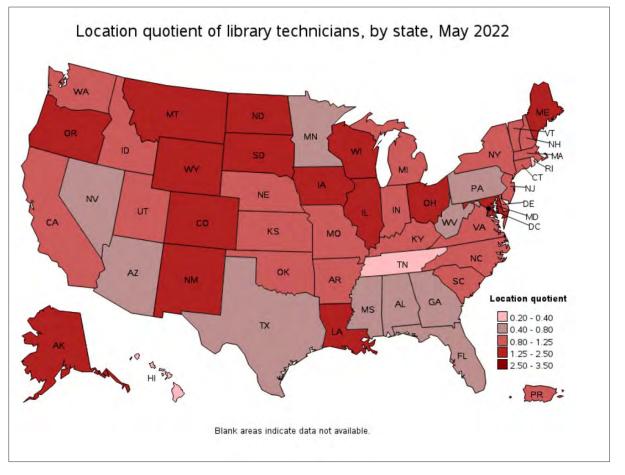
Source: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254022.htm#st

National Comparison: Library Technicians
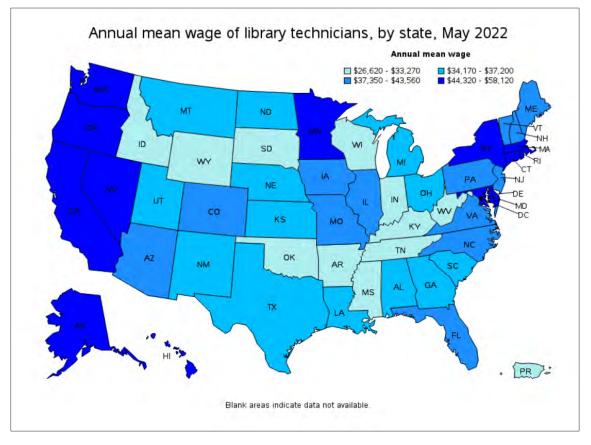
Another key group of workers in libraries are library technicians. In Vermont, however, few staff go by this title. Instead, library staff who perform these duties are commonly called Circulation Supervisors, Circulation Staff, and Library Assistants. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Library Technicians: "Assist librarians by helping readers in the use of library catalogs, databases, and indexes to locate books and other materials; and by answering questions that require only brief consultation of standard reference. Compile records; sort and shelve books or other media; remove or repair damaged books or other media; register patrons; and check materials in and out of the circulation process. Replace materials in shelving area (stacks) or files. Includes bookmobile drivers who assist with providing services in mobile libraries."

Vermont, like New York and many New England States, ranks high in its number of library technicians when compared with other states.

Location quotient of library technicians, by state, May 2022

Location quotient
- 0.20 - 0.40
- 0.40 - 0.80
- 0.80 - 1.25
- 1.25 - 2.50
- 2.50 - 3.50

Blank areas indicate data not available.

Source: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254031.htm#st

The average annual mean wage of library technicians in Vermont is $37,350 to $43,560 annually. Like the BLS data for librarians, it is likely that this number is lower for library technicians working in public libraries than those working in school and academic libraries.

Annual mean wage of library technicians, by state, May 2022
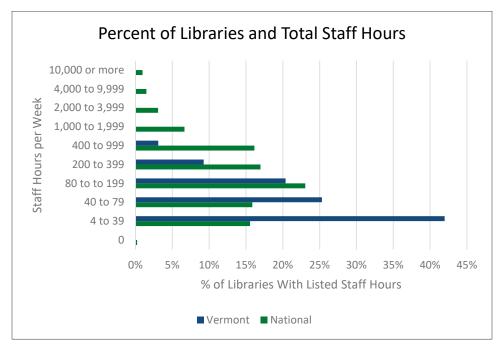
Source: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254031.htm#st

Public Library Staffing National Comparison

According to the data reported nationwide through the Institute of Museum and Library Services 2019 Public Library Survey (the PLS), Vermont ranks ninth in total paid full-time equivalent staff hours with 16.33 full-time equivalent (FTE) library staff per 25,000 people. Vermont ranks second for paid FTE librarians with 10.6 librarians per 25,000 population. That said, the definition of "librarian" varies from state to state. Some states require that a person hold a master's degree in library science from an American Library Association-accredited institution (ALA-MLS) to work as a librarian, other states, like Vermont, do not require that degree in order to work in positions public libraries with the librarian title.

Percent of Libraries and Total Staff Hours

Source:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_26_thru_27a.xlsx

According to 2019 PLS data, Vermont's libraries do not have as many staff hours per week as the national average. More than 40% of Vermont's libraries have between 4 and 39 staff hours per week, a far greater percentage than the national average, which is roughly 16%. About 25% of Vermont's libraries have 40 to 79 hours of staff hours per week as compared with a national average of 17%. However, the national PLS data set includes many large library systems with multiple buildings and many staff.

Vermont ranks 45th in the percentage of total librarian hours with an ALA-MLS, as only 31% of librarians in Vermont have earned that credential.

Table 43. Number of total paid full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff and paid FTE librarians of public libraries per 25,000 population and percentage of total FTE librarians with ALA-MLS degrees, by state ranking: Fiscal year 2019								
Total paid FTE staff[1]			Paid FTE librarians			Percentage of total FTE librarians with ALA-MLS[2]		
State	Ranking	Per 25,000 population[3]	State	Ranking	Per 25,000 population[3]	State	Ranking	Percentage
Total[4]	†	11.37	Total[4]	†	4.02	Total[4]	†	66.78
Ohio	1	20.58	New Hampshire	1	10.60	District of Columbia	1	100.00
District of Columbia	2	19.13	Vermont	2	10.59	Georgia	1	100.00
Illinois	3	18.29	Iowa	3	8.30	Hawaii	3	98.88
Indiana	4	18.08	Connecticut	4	8.10	New Jersey	4	93.76
Kansas	5	17.71	Maine	5	7.46	California	5	93.41

State	Rank	Value	State	Rank	Value	State	Rank	Value
						North Carolina	6	92.43
Wyoming	6	17.43	Kentucky	6	7.44			
Connecticut	7	16.63	Kansas	7	7.27	Rhode Island	7	91.77
New York	8	16.59	Massachusetts	8	7.17	Virginia	8	88.68
Vermont	9	16.33	Wyoming	9	7.04	South Carolina	9	87.54
New Hampshire	10	16.24	Illinois	10	6.99	Florida	10	87.15
Colorado	11	15.57	Oklahoma	11	6.86	Washington	11	86.66
Louisiana	12	15.19	Nebraska	12	6.69	Oregon	12	82.59
Missouri	13	15.13	Louisiana	13	6.63	Arizona	13	82.43
Rhode Island	14	14.60	Indiana	14	6.26	New York	14	82.17
Iowa	15	14.53	Ohio	15	6.24	Nevada	15	81.40
Maine	16	14.45	Rhode Island	16	5.94	Ohio	16	71.61
Idaho	17	14.02	Montana	17	5.83	Pennsylvania	17	69.57
Massachusetts	18	13.95	Maryland	18	5.75	Michigan	18	69.56
Maryland	19	13.88	New York	19	5.74	Connecticut	19	69.42
Oregon	20	13.87	South Dakota	20	5.62	Colorado	20	68.43
New Jersey	21	13.44	Mississippi	21	5.60	Illinois	21	68.29
Wisconsin	22	13.34	Wisconsin	22	5.31	Texas	22	67.65
Washington	23	13.13	West Virginia	23	5.13	Massachusetts	23	67.05
Nebraska	24	13.06	North Dakota	24	5.05	Indiana	24	65.46
Kentucky	25	12.91	Alaska	25	4.90	Minnesota	25	64.66
Virginia	26	12.74	Michigan	26	4.73	Wisconsin	26	60.79
Michigan	27	12.47	New Mexico	27	4.55	Utah	27	59.85
Oklahoma	28	12.16	District of Columbia	28	4.43	Delaware	28	53.16
Alaska	29	11.94	Colorado	29	4.32	Alaska	29	53.11
New Mexico	30	11.66	New Jersey	30	4.08	Maryland	30	49.15
South Dakota	31	11.53	Alabama	31	4.01	New Mexico	31	48.61
South Carolina	32	11.35	Idaho	32	3.94	Tennessee	32	47.67
Utah	33	10.86	Minnesota	33	3.88	Idaho	33	45.32
Montana	34	10.25	Missouri	33	3.88	New Hampshire	34	45.10
Arkansas	35	10.24	Oregon	35	3.85	Alabama	35	44.53
Minnesota	36	10.13	Arkansas	36	3.55	Maine	36	44.35
Hawaii	37	9.93	Utah	37	3.44	Arkansas	37	41.45
Pennsylvania	38	9.63	Delaware	38	3.32	Kansas	38	39.06
Delaware	39	9.48	Pennsylvania	39	3.30	North Dakota	39	38.76
North Dakota	40	9.44	South Carolina	40	3.16	Louisiana	40	38.01
West Virginia	41	8.81	Hawaii	41	3.15	Missouri	41	36.01
Alabama	42	8.74	Virginia	42	3.11	Oklahoma	42	31.71
Florida	43	7.70	Washington	43	2.94	Montana	43	31.64
Tennessee	44	7.51	Texas	44	2.47	Wyoming	44	31.12
Arizona	45	7.47	Tennessee	45	2.45	Vermont	45	31.00
North Carolina	45	7.47	Florida	46	2.39	Iowa	46	30.97
California	47	7.46	California	47	2.19	Kentucky	47	29.73
Mississippi	48	7.38	Arizona	48	2.09	Nebraska	48	28.69

			North					
Nevada	49	7.08	Carolina	49	2.08	South Dakota	49	25.77
Texas	50	6.80	Nevada	50	1.86	West Virginia	50	22.45
Georgia	51	6.34	Georgia	51	1.38	Mississippi	51	18.10

† Not applicable.

[1]Paid staff were reported in FTEs. To ensure comparable data, 40 hours was set as the measure of full-time employment (for example, 60 hours per week of part-time work by employees in a staff category divided by the 40-hour measure equals 1.50 FTEs). FTE data were reported to two decimal places but rounded to one decimal place in the table.

[2]ALA-MLS: A Master's degree from a graduate library education program accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). Librarians with an ALA-MLS are also included in total librarians.

[3]Per 25,000 population is based on the total unduplicated population of legal service areas. The determination of the unduplicated figure is the responsibility of the state library agency and should be based on the most recent state population figures for jurisdictions in the state.

[4]Total includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia but excludes outlying areas, libraries that closed or temporarily closed in FY 2019, and libraries that do not meet the FSCS Public Library Definition.
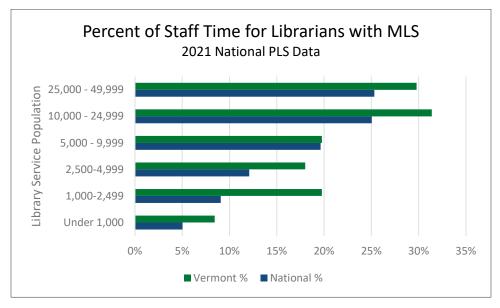
NOTE: The District of Columbia, although not a state, is included in the state rankings. Special care should be used in comparing its data to state data. Caution should be used in making comparisons with the state of Hawaii, as Hawaii reports only one public library for the entire state. Additional information on nonsampling error, response rates, and definitions may be found in Data File Documentation Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal year 2019.

SOURCE: IMLS, Public Libraries Survey, FY 2019.   Data elements TOTSTAFF, LIBRARIA, MASTER, POPU_UND from the Public Library System Data File (PLS_AE_PUD19i) were used to produce this table.

Table 43 Source: https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_26_thru_27a.xlsx

According to the United States Census Bureau's 2022 population estimates for the largest cities in Vermont—only Burlington, which is estimated to now have 44,595 inhabitants—currently has a population greater than 25,000. South Burlington, with an estimated 20,624 inhabitants, is the next largest city in the state, followed by Colchester (17,604), Rutland (15,695), Bennington (15,312), Essex Town (15,312), Brattleboro (12,106), Essex Junction (10,917), Hartford (10,764), Milton (10,689), and Williston (10,104). The remaining communities in Vermont all have a population less than 10,000.*

When considered against the cohorts of public libraries that have a population of legal service area of 24,000 people or fewer, Vermont's percentage of librarians with an ALA-MLS compares favorably.

Percent of Staff Time for Librarians with MLS
2021 National PLS Data

Source: https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/pls_fy2021_csv.zip

Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Vermont: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022
https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/cities/totals/SUB-IP-EST2022-POP-50.xlsx

Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Minor Civil Divisions in Vermont: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022
https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/mcds/totals/SUB-MCD-EST2022-POP-50.xlsx

In most other states there are library consortia or library systems. In those states, it is often the case that non-MLS librarians working at libraries that serve small, rural communities work under direct supervision or with the direct support of an ALA-MLS librarian. In Vermont, where the libraries of each municipality function autonomously, there are no direct lines of supervision or support from ALA-MLS librarians to non-MLS librarians.

In Vermont, the only source of support that many non-MLS librarians have from ALA-MLS librarians with professional training in library services is provided by peers who volunteer to mentor them and by the Consultants at the Department. This leads to an increased need for professional development and consultation among library staff in Vermont. The Working Group heard from the library community that non-MLS librarians can often feel underprepared for their work and that they greatly appreciate the advice and support provided through trainings and consultations by the Department and from peers within the county meetings.

Table 26A. Number of paid full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff in public libraries, by type of position; percentage of total librarians and total staff with ALA-MLS degrees, and number of public libraries with ALA-MLS librarians in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, by population of legal service area: Fiscal year 2019

Population of legal service area	Number of public libraries	Paid FTE staff[1]				Percentage of total FTE librarians with ALA-MLS	Percentage of total FTE staff with ALA-MLS	Number of public libraries with ALA-MLS librarians[3]
		Total	Librarians		Other			
			Total	Librarians with ALA-MLS[2]				
Total[4]	9,057	143,882.85	50,925.72	34,006.92	92,957.13	66.78	23.64	4,124
1,000,000 or more	35	19,662.80	6,036.64	5,342.19	13,626.16	88.50	27.17	35
500,000 to 999,999	57	18,803.36	5,308.71	4,325.12	13,494.65	81.47	23.00	57
250,000 to 499,999	113	16,631.36	4,988.89	3,850.27	11,642.47	77.18	23.15	112
100,000 to 249,999	367	22,839.37	6,890.99	5,286.97	15,948.38	76.72	23.15	363
50,000 to 99,999	577	18,114.87	6,237.73	4,593.89	11,877.14	73.65	25.36	559
25,000 to 49,999	996	18,095.88	6,955.02	4,652.32	11,140.86	66.89	25.71	904
10,000 to 24,999	1,761	16,710.89	7,235.78	4,093.35	9,475.11	56.57	24.50	1,254
5,000 to 9,999	1,488	6,906.15	3,374.86	1,277.42	3,531.29	37.85	18.50	577
2,500 to 4,999	1,266	3,254.82	1,897.92	383.74	1,356.90	20.22	11.79	193

1,000 to 2,499	1,467	2,149.23	1,447.03	165.74	702.20	11.45	7.71	62
Less than 1,000	930	714.12	552.15	35.91	161.97	6.50	5.03	8

[1]Paid staff were reported in FTEs. To ensure comparable data, 40 hours was set as the measure of full-time employment (for example, 60 hours per week of part-time work by employees in a staff category divided by the 40-hour measure equals 1.50 FTEs). FTE data were reported to two decimal places but rounded to one decimal place in the table. Paid staff is one of four criteria used in the Public Libraries Survey to define a public library. Some states report public libraries that do not have paid staff but meet the definition of a public library under state law

[2]ALA-MLS: A Master's degree from a graduate library education program accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). Librarians with an ALA-MLS are also included in total librarians. Nationally, 5,164 Master's degrees in library science were awarded by institutions of higher education in 2018-19 (Digest of Education Statistics, 2020, Table 323.10. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

[3]Libraries were counted as having an ALA-MLS librarian if they reported FTE librarians with an ALA-MLS greater than or equal to 1.

[4]Total includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia but excludes outlying areas, libraries that closed or temporarily closed in FY 2019, and libraries that do not meet the FSCS Public Library Definition.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. For item(s) with response rates below 100 percent, data for nonrespondents were imputed and are included in the table. Data were not imputed for the outlying areas. Additional information on nonsampling error, response rates, and definitions may be found in Data File Documentation Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal year 2019.

SOURCE: IMLS, Public Libraries Survey, FY 2019. Data elements TOTSTAFF, LIBRARIA, MASTER, OTHPAID, POPU_LSA from the Public Library System Data File (PLS_AE_PUD19i) were used to produce this table.

Table 26A Source: https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/fy2019_pls_tables_26_thru_27a.xlsx

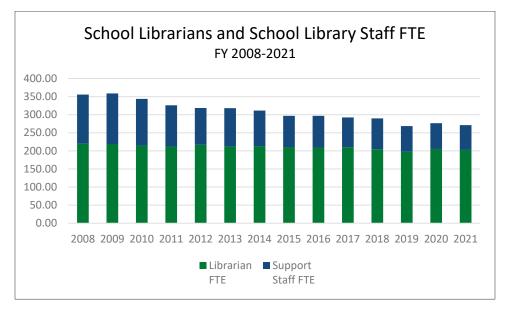# School Library Staffing in Vermont

The Agency of Education maintains a data set that includes the number of school librarians and the number of support staff working in school libraries. The data reflects that:

- the number of School Librarian FTE has dropped 7.7% from 219.75 in 2008 to 202.8 in 2021; and

- the number of library support staff FTE has dropped 49.5% from 136.08 in 2008 to 68.63 in 2021.

According to information provided by Charles Dabritz, co-president of Vermont School Library Association (VSLA), to the Working Group, "While the numbers of school librarians has remained about the same over time (2008 numbers showed 220 librarians in the state) the number of library support staff has dramatically decreased. In 2008 there were 136 library support staff in the state while today there are only 68.63—an almost 50% decrease in library support."

Dabritz went on to share that "Many smaller, more rural schools tend to share a librarian. One school librarian may work at two or three schools. Other schools employ one full-time librarian. Some of the larger schools in the state have more than one full-time librarian on staff. Some of our school libraries have support staff, however many function without support staff and all duties are carried out by the school librarian." The Working Group heard that working at multiple school libraries and working without support-staff is leading to fatigue among school librarians, who shared concerns about whether these circumstances truly provide staffing "sufficient" to meet the Educational Quality Standards.

Source: VT Agency of Education Teacher and Staff FTE Report, https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/school-reports/teacher-staff-fte-report

Series 2000 Education Quality Standards (EQS) that went into effect in 2016 tie the number of school librarians to the number of students at a school:

> "The services of a certified library media specialist shall be made available to students and staff. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy, information and technology standards. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library media specialist on a pro-rata basis."

The size of Vermont's student population has decreased from 84,432 students in 2017 to 80,292 students in 2023. (Vermont Education Dashboard: Enrollment)

Fiscal Year	Total Students	Librarian FTE	Students per Librarian FTE	Support Staff FTE	Students per Support Staff FTE
2007-2008	90,537	219.75	412.00	136.08	665.32
2008-2009	89,148	218.88	407.29	139.90	637.23
2009-2010	87,438	215.22	406.27	128.48	680.56
2010-2011	86,129	212.12	406.04	113.91	756.11
2011-2012	85,089	216.85	392.39	101.88	835.19
2012-2013	83,985	212.57	395.09	105.71	794.48
2013-2014	86,075	213.44	403.27	97.86	879.57
2014-2015	85,359	210.63	405.26	86.30	989.10
2015-2016	84,545	209.38	403.79	87.52	966.01
2016-2017	84,446	210.31	401.53	82.09	1028.70
2017-2018	84,432	204.47	412.93	85.20	990.99
2018-2019	88,283	197.24	447.59	71.45	1235.59
2019-2020	84,728	205.43	412.44	70.96	1194.02
2020-2021	84,846	202.8	418.37	68.63	1236.28

Sources: VT Agency of Education Teacher and Staff FTE Report, https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/school-reports/teacher-staff-fte-report

Vermont Education Dashboard, https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard/vermont-education-dashboard-enrollment

The community of school librarians has observed the decline in the number of school librarians in the state. Peter Langella, School Librarian at the Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg wrote "it's my opinion that the decrease is mostly due to an overall decrease in student enrollment."

Langella continued, "The implications for our profession are huge. And these numbers are before the pandemic. That 'and sufficient support staff' from EQS is being ignored in a big way. Half of our school library support staff FTE has been cut in a decade." Langella goes on to raise the concern that the trend of fewer school librarians and support staff in schools likely generates larger DEI concerns in the state.

"It is my guess that districts who educate higher percentages of low-income and rural students, as well as districts who have the highest percentages of English Language Learners, have been impacted the most heavily by this inequity."—Peter Langella, School Librarian, Champlain Valley Union High School, Hinesburg
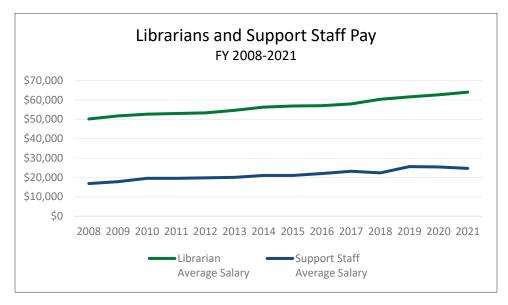
Langella's comments highlight the vague nature of the EQS as it relates to support staff. While an appropriate number of school librarians per 300 students is called out in the standards, the standards do not make clear how many support staff are needed to run a library of sufficient size to meet the needs that same group of students saying only "and sufficient support staff".

School Librarians shared that the decreased number of library support staff statewide has had negative impacts on school librarians, who must perform clerical functions support staff used to perform, such as repairing books and checking them in and out, in addition to their professional work as teacher librarians.

Working Group Member and U-32 High School Librarian Meg Allison shared oral testimony that further illustrated the reduction in FTE school librarians and support staff. Allison also pointed out the variability in the language of the state's EQS, which state that schools that have more than 300 students need to have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy information and technology standards. Allison noted that the use of the phrase "sufficient staff" poses a gray area that is left up to interpretation that can be damaging to a library program. Allison shared that in her experience, the term has been used to varied degrees and can often be impacted by the "support of a building administrator or a superintendent or a school board or just the profound advocacy talents of an individual school librarian or library team at a district level, but it certainly isn't any standard across the board for school library support staff."

The Agency of Education maintains a data set that includes the school librarian pay and school library support staff pay. The data reflects that:

- the compensation of School Librarians has risen 27.5% from $50,177 in FY 2008 to $63,998 in 2021; and

- the compensation of library support staff has risen 46.4% from $16,859 in FY 2008 to $24,685 in 2021.

Librarians and Support Staff Pay
FY 2008-2021

(Line chart showing Librarian Average Salary rising from about $50,000 in 2008 to about $64,000 in 2021, and Support Staff Average Salary rising from about $17,000 in 2008 to about $25,000 in 2021.)

Legend:
— Librarian Average Salary
— Support Staff Average Salary

Source: VT Agency of Education Teacher and Staff FTE Report,
https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/school-reports/teacher-staff-fte-report

Academic Libraries

Staffing at academic libraries throughout the state is highly variable. Staff of every academic library that shared feedback with the Working Group emphasized that their institutions staffing levels do not meet the research and information literacy needs of the students and faculty they serve.

Vermont's academic institution positions typically require that librarians have an ALA-MLS.

Depending on budgetary differences, both staffing levels and student worker opportunities vary greatly. For academic units whose budgetary restraints do not allow them to hire student workers, paraprofessional tasks often fall to librarians, which stretches the professional staff's time and capacity. These lower staffing levels also impact general library open hours and librarian availability to assist patrons. Eileen Gatti, the former Director of Information Access at Goddard College shared with the Working Group that "We are woefully understaffed. At current staffing levels, we are able to maintain basic services for our users and strive to be responsive and flexible. Original cataloging is a challenge given the skillset of the current staff, and we collect several fairly unique items. We are doing a fairly minimal job at managing our electronic resources and don't have the time or expertise to truly maximize our discovery service or our web presence and UX [user experience]."

Recruitment, hiring, and retention are a serious concern shared in the testimony submitted by the academic library community. High cost of living, low wages, chronic understaffing, and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are major contributing factors to

academic libraries' inability to recruit and hire adequate numbers of staff. The UVM Libraries Inclusive Excellence committee noted: "This is distinctly a DEI issue because we cannot offer attractive packages to candidates. We also will eventually end up with an inequitable and less than inclusive workforce if the only candidates who can afford to take a job at UVM Libraries have additional sources of income at their disposal. We have heard it said that not finding housing in Chittenden County just means employees should live further away from UVM. Not only does this attitude make UVM's physical campus less accessible for any number of reasons (access to vehicles/public transportation, family obligations, time constraints of additional commute length) many BIPOC and LGBTQ candidates do not feel comfortable living in rural areas, outside of Chittenden County or the Burlington area."

There is a high level of concern in the testimony from academic libraries about their inability to anticipate the needs of their patrons or to be innovative with their services. The Dean's Council of UVM Libraries states: "The UVM libraries are currently not staffed at a level necessary to support work similar to that of other flagship institutions. For instance, digital collections and digital preservation needs can't be met by current staff levels and our low level of IT staffing limits our ability to be innovative."

Academic libraries do not report their staffing levels or compensation to the Department or the Agency of Education.

Public Libraries Staffing

Testimony from the staff, patrons, and trustees of public libraries offered a variety of staffing needs and concerns. Much of the testimony discussed concerns about the changing and increasing demands on public library staff and the lack of adequate staffing levels and compensation for public library staff.

Similar to the comments shared by academic libraries, public libraries also face the inability to be competitive in recruitment of qualified staff largely due to budgetary restrictions. This appears to be even more prevalent in smaller libraries, which have inherently smaller budgets.

The Director of the New Haven Community Library, Katie Male-Riordan, shared that, "When it comes to hiring staff in rural libraries—especially single-staff libraries—this means search committees often look for a hard-to-find, highly skilled candidate while some larger libraries and other industries/fields can solve the challenge with multiple hires that specifically fit one or two expertises. Job duties for a single-staff library director can include administrative tasks, collection and circulation management, readers advisory, reference & research, grant writing, fundraising, social, web, & print marketing, janitorial & building care, program coordination, volunteer recruitment, IT management & training, and community engagement. It is almost impossible to find a person with this level of skill let alone be able to compensate for the full value they may bring depending on their skill set if they do apply. As innovative and new technologies

are incorporated into a library's plan of service, the scope of what a rural library must be prepared to help with further increases. Add that many single-staff organizations continue to bulk up programming efforts with events like book clubs, story hours, maker spaces, summer reading for all ages, after school programs, and guest speakers—it becomes all too clear that for some library staff, job tasks feel more like a toppling to be read pile that will never be finished."

The Working Group heard from the community that retaining staff is increasingly difficult and that staff are sometimes leaving the library profession for careers in food service, as administrative assistants, and as childcare workers. Library directors shared the challenges of finding qualified staff to fill their vacant positions and spoke to the challenges of maintaining public service hours with fewer and fewer staff in their teams.

> *"Public librarians in the 21st century are administrators, business managers, IT professionals, social workers. These jobs are in addition to the traditional roles librarians have had: reference librarian, collection development, readers advisory, and cataloger. As our jobs have grown more complex, there has not been a consistent response from libraries regarding compensation."*
> *—Susan O'Connell, Library Director, Craftsbury Public Library*

Another concern the Working Group heard repeatedly is that public libraries rely heavily on volunteers. Directors and trustees shared that their budgets are too small to pay for enough staff to meet the existing needs of the communities they serve—let alone meet the emerging needs of those communities. Some public library staff reported that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed just how much public libraries—especially those in small and rural communities—rely on volunteers to maintain daily operations.

Abby Adams, Director of the Platt Memorial Library in Shoreham shared, "I think that volunteers get used too much in Vermont libraries, which is a direct result of lack of funding. We even still have libraries in the state that are totally run by volunteers. This represents a problem in several ways—one, there's no accountability for practice. Two, a volunteer may or may not have any training in best practices. Three, a community may be getting an inconsistent or inequitable level of library service."

Dana Hart, the Director of the Isley Public Library in Middlebury shared, "Stakeholders also must understand that libraries cannot be staffed with volunteers. Volunteers play an important role in supporting their local libraries by offering their expertise on a short-term project, or by pitching in on a one-time effort that requires many hands. But volunteers absolutely cannot replace the work of paid library personnel. Likewise, volunteers should not be used to establish and maintain new library services or hours. This can be a legal issue, if library personnel are union, but it is a bad habit to get into regardless of union status."

> *"A good rule of thumb is to ask, "If this volunteer didn't feel like coming in for a week, would we have to arrange coverage for their duties?" If the answer is yes, the library should not be relying on volunteers to carry out those duties. To do so is to misrepresent what it costs to run the library and undermine the long-term stability of library operations."—Dana Hart, Director, Isley Public Library, Middlebury*

That said, the Minimum Standards for Public Libraries indicate that "The library may be staffed entirely by volunteers." (https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/documents/Scanned1986Standards.pdf) and some libraries in the state are run exclusively by volunteers, including the Cornwall Public Library.

Laura Fetterolf, Cornwall Public Library Trustee, shared that "Cornwall is a small town of 1,207 people in the middle of Addison County. Our library is "staffed" entirely with volunteers—the seven trustees of the library. And the reason this is possible is the library is situated within the Cornwall Town Hall—so the library is open Tuesday–Friday from 9am-5pm, and the town clerk is also a library trustee. The reason we're all volunteers is that we are granted $4,000 each year from the Town of Cornwall at Town Meeting, which goes to pay for library materials. We do receive some gifts and donations, and we do run a very profitable book sale each fall, but our total budget is still somewhere around $6,000. We don't pay rent, or utilities, though we do pay for a dedicated phone line for the library's computer. When we have needed 'big ticket items' - an entire set of bookshelves for the space in the newly renovated Town Hall, or a new computer for our catalog and self-checkout, we have done a public appeal and our townspeople have been generous. But we definitely do not have the funds to pay the salary of a trained librarian."

> *"…we are granted $4,000 each year from the Town of Cornwall at Town Meeting, which goes to pay for library materials. We do receive some gifts and donations, and we do run a very profitable book sale each fall, but our total budget is still somewhere around $6,000… we definitely do not have the funds to pay the salary of a trained librarian."—Laura Fetterolf, Cornwall Public Library Trustee*

The trustees of the Cutler Memorial Library in Plainfield shared written comments with the Working Group that highlighted the challenges incorporated libraries face related to fair compensation of their staff. They wrote, "Given the smaller budgets of many incorporated libraries, many librarians of unincorporated libraries and many part-time

librarians in the state make ends meet by availing themselves of state benefits (3 Squares, heat subsidies, Medicaid). Often, when we consider raising pay, library boards have to take into consideration that doing so would make the employee lose their state benefits, putting the employee in a worse financial situation than they were before. As a board, it is incredibly challenging to offer a true benefit, one that isn't financially out of reach for the employee—particularly for a part-time librarian who would receive a pro-rated benefit.

The state health exchange does not provide a solution, as even very high deductible plans can be costly and using town plans may also be prohibitively expensive. Library boards themselves can usually not afford to pay the premiums for small nonprofits' employer-sponsored plans, even if the plans were affordable for an employee. If librarians have to use the state health care exchange, there are subsidies, and for many, these could be helpful, but once you make too much to receive Medicaid, essentially any pay raise gets eaten up by the lessening of your health care subsidy. Even the worst plans are so expensive that you must make a great deal to break out of that cycle. When a plan with a $7,000-$8,000 per person deductible (though it covers preventive care), a plan which also may have co-insurance for things like MRIs or inpatient/outpatient hospital visits, costs one person $650/month or a family $1,800/month (without subsidies), that is a pretty profoundly broken option."

In their written comments, the Cutler Memorial Library trustees went on to call for the state to subsidize health benefits for the staff of non-profit incorporated libraries and for the Working Group to explore other creative solutions to this problem.

> *"…we are asking individuals to take on enormous workloads covering a broad range of skill sets for nominal pay and usually no benefits. That they do so is a credit to their devotion to the cause of literacy and information access, community building, food security, digital literacy, and public programming. Still, it is unconscionable of us to rely on their self-sacrifice any longer."*
> *—The Cutler Memorial Board of Trustees*

Conclusion

The Working Group consistently heard from public libraries that they need more high-level staff to meet the information and programming needs of their communities and that they need the budgets large enough to enable staff to be compensated with livable wages.

Due to the complexity of this topic and the number of comments and concerns raised to the Working Group by the community about low wages and low staffing levels in Vermont's public libraries, the Working Group commissioned an independent study of

staffing and salaries at Vermont's public libraries for inclusion within its report to the Legislature. The study, Public Library Compensation and Salary Survey Analysis—and an overview presentation—are in the Appendix of the report.

Continuing Education

The topic of Continuing Education was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, November 18, 2022. The Working Group heard comments from four community members and heard reports from Department of Libraries staff on the topics of Continuing Education for Library Staff and the Department of Libraries' Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) 5-Year Plan. The Working Group also heard from the following expert on this topic: Deborah Ehler-Hansen, Coordinator of the School Library Media Studies Program and Lecturer, University of Vermont. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by five community members.

Professional Training for Librarians and Directors

In the United States, a Master's in Library Science (MLS) from a college or university program accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) is typically required to attain a professional library position. According to ALA's website, "Most employers require an ALA-accredited master's for most professional level positions, and some states require an ALA-accredited degree to work as a professional librarian in public or school libraries. ALA accreditation indicates that the program has undergone a self-evaluation process, been reviewed by peers, and meets the Standards established by the American Library Association and Committee on Accreditation." (https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/accreditedprograms)

There is some variety among accredited MLS programs in the United States in terms of the specific courses required for graduation. MLS programs have multiple tracks of study including but not limited to public, school, and research libraries; archives and special collections; law and business libraries; and information architecture. According to the ALA website, "Considerable variation exists in curricula offered by programs, including the number and types of required courses. The number of academic credit hours required by programs for a master's degree varies from 36 semester hours to 72 quarter hours.

Some programs emphasize full-time studies, while others have a larger percentage of part-time students, however, most have a time limit for completing a degree. While some programs can be completed in one calendar year with full-time attendance, many require two academic years to complete. In addition, programs requiring a thesis or practicum may require more time to complete. Course availability for a chosen area of specialization or career pathway may also impact the length of time to complete the degree." (https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/accreditedprograms/guidelines-choosing-masters-program-library-and-information-studies)

There are no colleges or universities in Vermont that offer a Master of Library and Information Science (MLS) degree in librarianship accredited by the American Library

Association. While a number of universities in the greater Vermont region offer in-person or online MLS programs, such as McGill University (Montreal), Simmons University (Boston) and Albany University at SUNY (https://www.ala.org/CFApps/lisdir/directory_pdf.cfm), the salary for librarians and library directors in Vermont libraries, especially the small ones, is often too low to justify the cost of obtaining a masters in library science, which can range in price from $23,000 to $49,000.

Per **22 V.S.A. § 606**, The Department of Libraries is authorized to "conduct seminars, workshops, and other programs to increase the professional competence of librarians in the State." For at least 25 years, the Department has provided continuing education for the staff of Vermont's libraries - including administering the program of study for the Vermont Certificate of Public Librarianship.

The Vermont Certificate of Public Librarianship

Most public libraries in Vermont do not require that library directors have a Master of in Library Science (MLS) from an ALA-accredited program. While the boards of large public libraries in Vermont often do require their directors to have an MLS, many small and medium-sized public libraries in the state do not have that requirement. Libraries that do not require that directors have an MLS typically make employment contingent on the attainment of the Vermont Certificate of Public Librarianship program (the Certificate). Completion of the Certificate program is often cited as a necessary credential in Vermont library job postings, and it has been used as a career advancement tool by staff who wish to progress in their career and become library directors in Vermont.

In the 1950s, the Certificate of Librarianship was administered by the Vermont Library Association (VLA), a professional organization for public and academic librarians as well as trustees and friends. The VLA is "an educational organization working to develop, promote, and improve library and information services and librarianship in the state of Vermont." While the VLA continues to provide continuing education opportunities for library staff, including hosting an annual conference, it no longer administers this program.
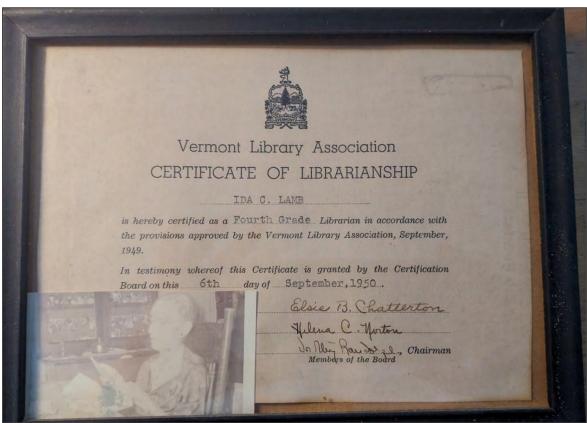
**Photo of a VLA Certificate of Librarianship, issued in 1950,
seen at Ainsworth Public Library in July 2023 (Williamstown, VT)**

Originally designed for staff without formal library training who were serving as directors of small Vermont public libraries, the Certificate program has grown to include public library support staff, library trustees, people hoping to work in Vermont libraries, and public library volunteers, as space permits. The Department has also seen enrollment from new-to-Vermont librarians with an MLS who wanted to learn about the unique characteristics of Vermont public libraries.

The Certificate program at the Department of Libraries began more than twenty-five years ago but was largely dormant between 2014 and 2018 and no certificates of completion were issued in those four years. Department records show that just 17 workshops were offered in 2016 and seven in 2017. No Certificate core courses were offered in those two years. The dormancy of the Certificate program had negative impacts on the library workforce in the state. Library boards had challenges finding staff with the necessary basic proficiency to take on library director roles. Individuals who hoped to become library directors or learn more about a career in public libraries had their aspirations put on hold. Staff who had been in the Certificate program were not able to complete the coursework quickly enough to meet the requirements of

employment. The dormancy of the Certificate program contributed to a shortage of trained library staff in the state.

The Certificate program rebooted in the spring of 2018. Since that time, each of the core courses has been offered at least once per year. Beginning in the spring of 2024, the Department will offer all core courses twice annually. Since 2018, the Certificate program has graduated an average of twenty-five people for each of the past three years. In 2023, the program has more than 150 registrants. The program attracts participants from around the state, and its current registrants hail from all fourteen of Vermont's counties. Sixty-three people enrolled in the Certificate program between January and September 2023.

It is important to note that the Vermont Department of Libraries does not have a practice of reviewing the credentials of library staff or issuing certificates to those who show proof of having earned an MLS. The Department's certification process is to administer classes, track participant progress, and provide a certificate of completion to individuals who have met the established requirements.

The Department's course of study for the Certificate program comprises 150 units and must be completed within five years. Participants are required to take four core twenty-five-unit courses:

- Basic Public Library Administration

- Cataloging

- Collection Development

- Reference

Each of the 25-unit core courses are offered in five sessions of 90 minutes. In addition to time spent in class, each of the core courses requires approximately five hours of homework. Participants are also required to take 40 units of Continuing Education elective courses and ten units of library technology courses. The formula for calculating units of non-core courses is that one contact hour equals one continuing education unit (CEU). Each non-core multi-week course or conference may earn up to 12 (CEUs).

Those who have completed the Department's Certificate program report that it provides relevant and practical learning that is directly applicable to the work they do every day in public libraries. That said, the courses provided by Department staff in the Certificate program are not as time-intensive or as rigorous as graduate-level courses at accredited institutions of higher education, and the coursework is not graded. The Certificate program provides library staff with an introductory overview of the information they need to begin their career in public librarianship. The Certificate is specific to

Vermont and is not portable to other states like an MLS from an ALA-accredited program.

There is no fee for participants in the Certificate program, which is open to people living in Vermont or associated with a Vermont library. All certificate requirements can be met through content provided online by the Department. The Department also communicates regularly with participants about other providers of applicable content.

The State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAA) of Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, and Nebraska offer educational programs comparable to Vermont's Certificate of Public Librarianship program. Some of those states require that one staff member in each library holds a certification to be eligible for state funding. These states also offer tracks specific to library director, library staff, and youth services staff and provide multiple levels of certification. The four core topics (administration, cataloging, collection development, and reference) within the Vermont Department of Libraries' program are included in the certificate programs in these six states as well. These SLAA-run certificate programs are provided free of charge, as is the Vermont Department of Libraries' program. Fee-based certificate programs or associate degrees offered through library associations, community colleges, or universities typically cost $5,000-$8,000.

The Working Group heard that the Certificate program is of vital importance to the library community in Vermont as there is a great need for library staff and very few opportunities for professional education in the field of librarianship in the state. Many members of the community shared that the Certificate is set at the right price point: free. Community members expressed that accredited MLS programs, which are not offered in Vermont, are prohibitively expensive for librarians of small libraries—the investment necessary would never be recouped by most library professionals in the state. The community also stressed that unlike the broad-ranging content of MLS programs, all the content in the Certificate program is relevant to the day-to-day operations of a public library in Vermont and essential to learn for library directors.

Some members of the community shared concerns that there are no requirements for ongoing learning associated with the Certificate program, so some library staff's knowledge might be stale. They suggested that ongoing courses should be required to maintain certification as a librarian in the same way that teachers must continually take classes to maintain their teaching credential in the state of Vermont.

Professional Training for Library Technicians

While many people think of everyone who works in the public library as a librarian, there are many specific job roles within most libraries. Library Technicians or Library Assistants play a very important role in public libraries—one that is often different from the role a Librarian plays.

According to the American Library Association, "Library technicians help librarians acquire, prepare, and organize materials and help users to find those materials. Library technicians usually work under the supervision of a librarian, although they often work independently. Technicians in small libraries handle a range of duties. Those in large libraries usually specialize.

The work of library technicians includes but is not limited to directing library users to standard references, organizing and maintaining periodicals, preparing volumes for binding, handling interlibrary loan requests, preparing invoices, performing routine cataloguing, and coding of library materials, and retrieving information from computer databases." (https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/education/paths/assistant/tech)

Just as the work performed by a Library Technician is specialized and different from the work of a Librarian, so too are the training and education necessary to do this work well. According to ALA, "Training requirements for library technicians vary widely, ranging from a high school diploma to specialized postsecondary training. Some employers only hire individuals who have library work experience or college training related to libraries; others train inexperienced workers on the job."
(https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/education/paths/assistant/tech)

While there are completely online programs in this field, there are no Library Technician programs offered by Vermont colleges or universities. In Vermont, most library technicians are trained on the job.

Continuing Education for Library Staff

In addition to the Certificate program, the Department offers many continuing education classes to public library staff, school librarians, academic librarians, and library trustees. The scope, topics, and format of these trainings are informed by statewide and national library trends. Additionally, the Department gathers suggestions and requests for training through regular communication with the Vermont library community, including post-training evaluations.

The Department subscribes to an online learning management system called Niche Academy. This platform is used to make the content of classes offered by the Department continuously available. The platform also includes curated online content from providers throughout the country on a wide range of topics relevant to library professionals. Access to Niche Academy is free to all library staff, trustees, and volunteers throughout the state with individual logins provided by the Department.

In the past few years, the Department has funded library staff attendance at virtual national conferences and other online training provided by professional library organizations such as the American Library Association, Library Journal, and the

Association for Rural & Small Libraries. These opportunities for professional development would not otherwise have been available to many participants.

The Department regularly develops and hosts trainings for library staff across the state in collaboration with state agencies, non-profits, and other Vermont organizations that do library-adjacent work. Key partners include:

- Department of Health

- Attorney General's Office

- State Archives and Records Administration

- Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

- Community Legal Information Center at Vermont Law and Graduate School

- Vermont Historical Society

- UVM Extension

- Vermont 211

- Inclusive Arts Vermont

- New England ADA Center

- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity

- Northeast Organic Farming Association

The Department also facilitates networking and peer-to-peer learning and resource-sharing opportunities such as an annual Library Director's Summit, a mentoring program, and county-wide meetings of library directors. The Department also hosts regular round tables for library staff on specific topics including Small and Rural Libraries, Interlibrary Loan, and Collection Development. The informal round tables provide opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing and problem-solving and provide library staff with direct access to the Department's consultants, who are the state's experts in their fields.

From January 1 through August 31, 2023, the Department offered thirty-six workshops, which had a total attendance of 663. In that time, the Department also hosted thirty county meetings for library directors and a total of nine round tables on three topics: cataloging, interlibrary loan, and small and rural libraries. Responding to a request from the library community, the Department launched a mentorship program in 2022 and has already matched fifteen library directors with mentors.

After each training, the Department requests attendees to complete an evaluation to assess the quality and impact of the content, format, and presenter, and solicits suggestions for future training topics.

The following quotes were shared with the Department through post-training evaluations:

- "It gave me a renewed sense of purpose and dedication to my little library."

- "Tons of practical ideas, resources, and support to make it successful and tailored to our communities."

- "Excellent wealth of information and realistic solutions for a common issue among VT Libraries."

- "Thank you for the online format!"

- "It helped me feel part of something, instead of an island."

While there are many opportunities for continuing education, some library staff— particularly those who work in smaller libraries— face challenges that limit their participation. Staff that work part-time struggle to fit training into the hours they are paid to work. Some Vermont public libraries have only one paid staff member, and if that person is attending training, it can be difficult to find substitute coverage so the library can remain open to the community.

Support for continuing education from library trustees is essential to developing and sustaining a workforce of capable library professionals with strong skills. Support for continuing education varies from library to library. Some libraries encourage their staff to take classes and continually learn new skills. Other libraries, which may be understaffed and underbudgeted, offer staff fewer opportunities to participate. Chronic lack of access to or participation in continuing education could lead to undertrained library workers and lower service levels.

The Department strives to provide Vermont's library professionals with the continuing education opportunities necessary to meet the needs of the public they serve. That said, the Department is sometimes challenged to fully meet the continuing education needs of the Vermont library community due to limited staffing capacity. Continuing education costs were not called out in prior Departmental budgets, so it is not possible to evaluate changes in funding over time.

In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Department was able to use IMLS ARPA funding to expand the continuing education opportunities for library staff and trustees in response to the evolving learning needs of the state's libraries during the pandemic.

Continuing Education is a top priority for the Department and $28,500 has been allocated toward this effort in fiscal year 2024.

The Department's Continuing Education resources are allocated as follows:

- $15,000 for continuing education in support of services to youth (Smith Funds);

- $6,000 for book award speakers (Smith Funds);

- $2,000 for continuing education in support of access services (GF/LSTA); and

- $5,500 per year for continuing education on general topics for library directors, staff, and trustees.

In addition to bringing in paid speakers, the Department plans to continue to identify low-cost and no-cost speakers and schedule trainings presented by its team of Consultants.

The core courses for the certificate program have filled quickly and had waiting lists in recent years, so the Department will be offering these courses twice each year beginning in 2024.

At times there are requested training topics outside of the Department's areas of expertise, and the Department's budget to hire outside presenters for these is limited.

From October 2019 through June 2023, the library staff statewide have benefited from training presented by a staff member of the UVM Extension and organized by the Department. Through that partnership, library staff in Vermont had access to a trainer with expertise in human resources, strategic planning, and library finances. UVM Extension staff shared information with the library community through resource guides, collaborative workshops, and one-on-one consultations.

Between October 2019 and June 2023, UVM Extension staff taught an average of four webinars each year. Topics included: hiring, supervising, and evaluating library directors, other staff, and volunteers; retaining library staff; library budgets: creating, managing, adapting to Covid budget-wise, adapting to current economic climate, dealing with cuts and level funding, presenting and advocating for passage of the budget, endowments, and fundraising. The UVM Extension staff member taught six sessions within the Basic Public Library Administration core course of the Certificate program and offered regular open office hours to provide individual support.

The UVM Extension staff member also provided "HR Minutes" and "Budget Minutes," two newsletters specific to public libraries. These resources were hosted on a UVM Extension site and linked from the Department website. The resource pages and guides created through this partnership had 605 pageviews with 449 unique visitors. With the

retirement of the staff member from UVM Extension, these resources were removed from their webpage and moved to the Department's Niche Academy space.

These efforts were part of UVM Extension's Cultivating Health Communities Business and Community Development efforts. With the retirement of the staff member at UVM Extension who had developed the materials and provided training, this partnership was discontinued by UVM Extension.

The Department is working to find other methods of continuing this type of training, which is largely outside the expertise and purview of its staff but is needed by library directors and trustees to perform their roles and provide high-quality library services to the public.

The Department regularly gathers training needs that library directors, staff, and trustees share in regional meetings, through the library listservs, and through continuing education evaluations, and plans future continuing education offerings to meet those needs. During the April 21, 2023, meeting of the Working Group on Continuing Education, the Department heard from many members of the library community that they would appreciate training on the topic of intellectual freedom and privacy in libraries. Recognizing the importance of this topic to libraries at this time, when many libraries across the nation have been called on to respond to materials and program challenges, the Department planned a series of workshops with an expert in this field who presented three sessions of 90-minutes each between September and October 2023, and the three sessions had a combined attendance of 54. The $3,250 cost of the series was funded entirely by an Engagement Hub grant from the American Library Association.

The Working Group heard from the community that the classes offered by the Department cover a broad range of subjects and that experts are brought in to fill any gaps of knowledge. They noted that there is a wealth of knowledge throughout the state, and that they appreciate both formal and informal opportunities for learning from their peers. The community shared that the free opportunities for continuing education provided by the Department are typically their primary source of professional development and learning opportunities. The community conveyed that these learning opportunities are vitally important to maintaining and improving the quality of library services they provide to their communities.

The Working Group heard from some individuals that they miss the opportunity to attend the in-person trainings offered by the Department in the past, which they expressed enabled them to forge connections and create alliances with other librarians in the state. However, others conveyed that while they miss the human contact of in-person training, they are pleased that they no longer have to travel far distances to attend in-person trainings. Community members agreed that virtual training is easier for library staff and trustees from around the state to attend. Attending online training can

be done with fewer impacts to local library schedules, budgets, and the environment. Recordings of online trainings can be viewed when convenient, which many noted was a positive change.

The community overwhelmingly shared that it is important that the Department continue to provide free training to Vermont's library staff. While there are many opportunities provided by national or regional organizations and there are conferences that take place outside of Vermont, such as the classes offered by the American Library Association or the Association of Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL), there is usually a fee associated with these courses. The fee is a deterrent for many libraries in Vermont, which do not have sufficient resources to support training budgets for staff.

Training for Youth-Serving Librarians at Public Libraries

For youth-serving public librarians who do not have an MLS in this subject area, much of the learning occurs on the job. Library directors are not always well-versed in the principles of youth librarianship and do not necessarily have the background and skills to teach or model best practices for their staff. For these reasons, supplemental training is necessary for librarians who serve children in many of Vermont's communities.

The Working Group heard from several members of the library community that the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) has significant benefits as it helps youth-serving librarians to improve the quality of early literacy library programming for their communities by informing their work with early childhood literacy principles. The Working Group also heard that the need for early childhood literacy training exceeds the current capacity of the VELI program. Department records show that prior to moving to Vermont Humanities, VELI had provided this training to 30 libraries annually. VELI currently provides training to ten to 15 libraries in each annual cohort.

VELI was housed in the Department of Libraries and managed by the non-profit Mother Goose which received funding from the Department. In 2021, it moved over to Vermont Humanities. VELI's work with public libraries was funded by a $20,000 annual grant from the Department prior to its move, and this amount is now granted by the Department to Vermont Humanities in support of VELI's engagement with public libraries. Vermont Humanities began discussions with the Vermont Center for the Book in the Fall of 2018 about the feasibility of merging the VCB programs with Vermont Humanities' Literacy Programs. During the first year of the pandemic, 2020, the two organizations began work to bring the best aspects of both literacy initiatives together. An official announcement in 2021 noted that Vermont Humanities was now also the Vermont Center for the Book, joining with over a dozen other Humanities Councils serving as the Library of Congress Center for the Book for their state or jurisdiction.

The Working Group heard from Wendy Martin and Johnny Flood from the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) who described their organization's program that supports Vermont's public librarians in growing their skills as early childhood educators. VELI training emphasizes the importance of bringing the community together to support early childhood literacy. The VELI program's method is to deliver focused training to a small cohort. VELI currently provides training to a cohort of eleven public libraries and has expressed a willingness to grow the cohort size over time. The VELI model includes site visits to strategize with libraries to best suit their individual needs and to distribute books.

The Department has provided limited direct training in early childhood literacy over the past five years as it relied on VELI to conduct this training as funded by the annual grant award for this activity. The Department values both the deep, focused learning over a year in a small cohort that VELI provides and sharing information with many youth services librarians through one-time, individual training sessions on specific topics. The Department plans to incorporate training on early childhood literacy into its regular continuing education offerings as there is a clear need to share this information more widely in the state at a quicker pace to meet existing education needs in this area. However, in response to feedback heard from the Working Group that there is a greater need for early childhood literacy training among library staff statewide, the Department will begin providing early childhood literacy programs open to all library staff in fiscal year 2024.

The Department hosts an annual conference and several trainings to encourage public and school libraries in Vermont to participate in the state's youth book award programs. The three youth book award committees operate independently of the Department but with departmental support. The Department hosts the annual youth book award conference with the three youth book award committees and provides funding for the authors who speak at the event.

The Department has heard through the Working Group meetings and regional meetings that there is need for more support for youth services in libraries and has included a goal of increasing supports for youth-serving librarians by providing training at least quarterly in Fiscal Year 2024 in its State of Vermont Strategic Plan. The Department will also launch a youth services round table in Fiscal Year 2024.

The Department's Consultant for Children and Teen Services has collaborated with youth services consultants from Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine to offer free library staff training for youth services-focused library staff from across New England and across the country. These states have collaborated for the last several years to offer The New England Teen Summit and the New England Summer Summit virtual conferences. Both conferences are free to public and school librarians across New England.

Over 500 people registered, including 38 Vermont library staff, for the annual New England Teen Summit which was held via Zoom on November 18, 2022. Attendance at each of the eight hour-long sessions focusing on teen-services topics presented by organizations and library staff from across New England ranged from 25 to 188 individuals. The pre-recorded keynote by author Mike Curato had 1,665 views. All of the Teen Summit sessions were recorded and are available along with related handouts and resources.

The Department also supported youth-serving librarians by co-hosting the New England Summer Summit on March 31, 2023. Nearly 450 people registered for the summit including 73 Vermont library staff. This full-day conference had two tracks of workshops, each of which was attended by between 40 to 150 people. Sessions covered a wide range of topics related to summer reading including a session led by the Department's Consultant for Children and Teen Services and a session on inclusive summer services led by the Department's Consultant for Special Populations. All sessions were recorded and are available along with related handouts and resources.

For the last three years, the Department's Children's and Youth Services Consultant has collaborated with a colleague from the New Hampshire State Library to offer a five-week Transforming Teen Services online course. This series is geared toward library staff who work with teens in Vermont and New Hampshire. 18 Vermont Library staff participated in the 2023 cohort that was offered in March and April. The 2023 teen summit was presented with support from a grant from IMLS. Transforming Teen Services: a Train the Trainer Approach (T3) is a Nationwide initiative of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association, which aims to elevate teen services in libraries and other learning environments by integrating connected learning, computational thinking, and youth development to help build responsive services for and with teens.

The Working Group heard from Cassie Willner, the Program Manager of the Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF), who shared comments emphasizing that that organization's dedication to supporting underserved children in Vermont and New Hampshire. CLiF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is "to inspire a love of reading and writing among under-resourced children up to age 12 throughout New Hampshire and Vermont." Each year, through its Rural Libraries Grant, CLiF supports twelve rural communities in Vermont and New Hampshire in advancing childhood literacy. Each site receives:

- two storytelling performances hosted by CLiF's professional presenters;

- new books for the public library;

- new books for the local elementary school library;

- ▪ a mini grant for library programming; and

- ▪ new books for children to choose and keep for themselves.

Willner informed the Working Group about other opportunities CLiF makes available, including opportunities for library staff and volunteers to become adept at writing grants to capitalize on free programs for the community and opportunities for professional development for anyone associated with the public library. Willner shared that the CLiF website is another source of free information that provides programming ideas along with videos for those seeking to improve their book sharing skills with children.

The Working Group heard community members express their appreciation for the CLiF program and the boost it provides to rural communities in Vermont.

Continuing Education for Public Library Trustees

Each public library in Vermont is governed by a library board of at least five individuals. The board is responsible for the public library and supports its overall well-being. For each public library to succeed, its trustees must be knowledgeable about their responsibilities, the role of library staff, and the legal framework within which public libraries operate in Vermont. The Department's Consultant for Operations and the Continuing Education Consultant provide trustees with materials to support their learning and conduct both live and asynchronous webinars for training and continuing education. In addition to the trustee-specific trainings, library trustees are welcome to attend many of the training classes offered by the Department to library staff. The Department has found that virtual trainings for trustees reach a wider audience than the in-person trainings it hosted pre-pandemic and plans to continue providing primarily virtual trainings for trustees.

The Department's Consultant for Operations provides direct support to public library trustees to increase their understanding of their role as library trustees including their essential duties and helps point them toward information about statutes and laws that govern public libraries. That said, the Consultant for Operations is not an attorney and does not provide any legal advice to public libraries. The Department encourages library boards to seek legal guidance with any legal matters they need to resolve on behalf of their institution.

In keeping with Title 22 of the Vermont State Statute and the Department's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant Five-Year Plan (https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/state-profiles/plans/vermont5yearplan.pdf) with a goal of fostering strong and sustainable public libraries that will continue to provide essential public library services to Vermont communities for years to come, the Department offers training and support for members of boards of trustees of public libraries statewide.

In its LSTA Grant Five-Year Plan, the Vermont Department of Libraries outlines several of its goals related to supporting public library trustees. Goal 1: Strengthening Libraries includes two projects that directly shape the work of training and supporting library trustees.

Project 1.1, Staff and Leadership Development and Training states, "This project provides professional development and leadership training to library directors, library staff, and library trustees. Content is provided through in-person sessions and through both synchronous and asynchronous online training opportunities such as webinars and presentations available from a wide variety of sources." The desired outcome from Project 1.1 is that "Library directors, school librarians, public library staff, and trustees who are well-equipped to successfully fulfill their responsibilities and ensure continuity in library services. Other desired outcomes involve building a sense of community between and among library directors, library staff, and library trustees throughout the state and fostering the leadership skills necessary to position libraries as vital civic hubs."

Project 1.2, Professional Consulting Assistance states, "This project supports a variety of activities designed to improve library operations at the local level. Both personal contact and online tools are used to make school librarians, library directors, library staff, and trustees aware of best professional practices, to help them solve specific problems, and to alert the library community of grant and staff development opportunities. The professional consulting assistance is provided by Department of Libraries staff who specialize in specific topics." The desired outcome from Project 1.2 states, "Libraries that offer relevant, responsive, library services based on sound professional practices and that utilize techniques and technologies that increase efficiency and add value to end-users of libraries." In the 'Summary of Needs' section from the LSTA plan it is stated, "Consultancy support to library boards and trustees is needed to address significant variations in access to library materials and services that can be found between Vermont's municipalities."

Some examples of the resources and trainings the Department provides to trustees are a trustees' manual, recorded videos, and resources in the Trustee section of the Department's Niche Academy learning portal. The Department makes these training resources available at no cost to public libraries and their trustees.

Since July 2022, the Vermont Department of Libraries Continuing Education Program has held 14 webinars on a variety of subjects relevant to library trustees including:

- Library Safety and Security

- The Americans with Disabilities Act: What Libraries Need to Know

- Three-part budget series:

- Rafting Down the Economic Rapids

- Batten Down the Hatches: Budget Triage

- Setting Your Sails to Future Budgets

▪ Library Renovations: Grant Opportunities, Historic Buildings, Project Planning & Management

▪ Strategic Planning Series:

- Getting Started with the Planning Process

- Community Engagement & Data Gathering

- Drafting Plan Content

- Plan Implementation & Evaluation

▪ Creating a Transgender-Inclusive Workplace: A Legal Update

▪ Working Towards Anxiety-Free Annual Performance Evaluations

▪ When Things Aren't Going the Way You Hoped: Employee Performance Improvement

▪ Hiring Well and Getting Your New Employee Off to a Good Start

▪ Attracting Community Gifts to Library Capital Projects

▪ Overview of Resources for Public Library Trustees

▪ Resources and Funding Opportunities for Rural Libraries

The Department also facilitates information-sharing by administering the Vermont Trustees and Friends Listserv: LibTRUSTFRIEND. This listserv is designed for library trustees, Friends of the Library, and staff with interest in topics relevant to trustees and Friends. The Department also hosts a Trustee and Friends Conference to support the educational needs of trustees and connections between trustees. The Vermont Library Association has a Friends and Trustees section, which facilitates communication, information sharing, and connections among trustees. The Vermont Secretary of State, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. also support library trustees.

National Resources for Public Library Trustees

In addition to the resources and trainings available to trustees from within the state of Vermont, there are several national organizations that provide information to public library trustees. While national resources are not necessarily specific to trustees or the Vermont library landscape, they cover many topics of interest in public libraries and are a good source of information for trustees who wish to keep their finger on the pulse of library topics.

The American Library Association offers an annual conference for library trustees and friends called United for Libraries. United for Libraries provides a training portal for library trustees called Trustee Academy (https://www.ala.org/united/training/trustee_academy).

- The United for Libraries courses include:

- Working Effectively with the Library Director

- The Library's Budget for Trustees

- Everyday Advocacy—Why the Library Matters!

- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: What Library Trustees Need to Know

- Vendor Negotiation That Supports Patron Privacy and Intellectual Freedom

The United for Libraries platform includes Short Takes for Trustees, Trustee Academy, or an All-Access Pass. Institutions can join the platform for an annual fee. The Department obtained a quote from United for Libraries in September 2023 and at that time pricing was as follows:

- Short Takes: $35 per public library per year, $6,400 for all public libraries in Vermont;

- Trustee Academy: $45 per public library per year and $8,300 for all public libraries in Vermont; and

- All Access: $100 per public library per year and $18,800 for all public libraries in Vermont.

Nineteen State Library Administrative Agencies provide trustees with access to some or all of these resources. (https://www.ala.org/united/stateaccess) The Vermont Department of Libraries has not traditionally provided this level of curricular support to public library trustees and does not have sufficient funding to support statewide access to these resources.

Maintaining awareness of the issues facing libraries is important for library trustees, and the Department of Libraries strives to provide trainings that support trustees in this area. For example, with the number of challenges of library materials rising steeply in recent years, continuing education to support local library boards to develop policies that will enable them to respond appropriately to book challenges in their community is a current topic of interest. Similarly, trainings to support library boards to develop and refresh all their policies are continually of interest in Vermont.

Trustees are responsible for the financial oversight of their public libraries, so trainings on financial management are also of importance—as are trainings on effective fundraising and advocacy.

Trustees are responsible for long-range planning for their libraries. For that reason, in FY 2023 the Department of Libraries supported trustees and library directors in learning best practices of strategic planning. After learning from the library community that many public libraries wanted to update their strategic plans coming out of the pandemic, the Department contracted with a vendor to offer a series of four 90-minute sessions on strategic planning for library directors and trustees. These sessions took place between October 2022 and January 2023 and the four trainings had a combined attendance of 71. In addition to the four trainings, the vendors made themselves available for group "office hours" sessions and individual consultations. The $9,300 cost of the series was funded entirely with federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) LSTA ARPA funding.

The community shared how important it is to them that the Department continue to offer free courses for library staff and trustees. They noted that this model supports equity and access for everyone and enables the trustees of even the smallest libraries to access the information they need to do their work well.

While the Department's consultants are qualified to provide library-specific information and training to public library trustees, these trustees may have other learning needs related to their non-profit or municipal organizations that others may be better qualified to meet. Ultimately, the responsibility for trustee training rests with each library board as each board operates independently of the Department and is a separate entity. For example, municipal library boards can obtain support from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, a "nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that was founded in 1967 with the mission of serving and strengthening Vermont local government." (https://www.vlct.org/) Incorporated library boards can obtain non-profit specific support from Common Good Vermont, a "statewide organization in Vermont dedicated to uniting and strengthening all of Vermont's mission-driven organizations. Common Good Vermont serves as the "go to" resource for our peers to share resources, gain skills, and build partnerships." (https://commongoodvt.org/) Both municipal and incorporated library trustees are supported by the Vermont Library Association, which has a Friends and Trustees Section. Vermont-specific and national organizations are well-positioned to assist with

trainings to support the learning needs of library trustees including advocacy and fundraising efforts by library boards.

School Library Training

The Working Group heard from Deborah Ehler-Hansen, coordinator and lecturer at the University of Vermont's School of Library Media Studies. This program was started by Professor Helene Lang 1978 and is housed within UVM's Department of Education. Coordinator and Lecturer, Judith Kaplan, who started as a Lecturer in 2001, led the flourishing program and transformed learning in School Libraries for PK-12 students in Vermont for almost two decades, until retiring at the end of July 2022. Deborah Ehler-Hansen took over the program as Coordinator and Lecturer in August 2022.

According to the program's website, UVM's Library Media Studies "program is designed for practicing educators who would like to add another endorsement to their educator license."

Ehler-Hansen shared with the Working Group that "The University of Vermont offers graduate educational opportunities for those interested in school library media studies to gain an educator licensure in Vermont or to acquire a graduate degree in school library media." According to the school's website, "The school library media courses are offered as six standalone courses that are aligned with the school librarian endorsement for Vermont educators, or as a strand within the Master of Education program within the College of Education and Social Services. The six school library media courses are offered in a two-year cycle, one per semester, and are delivered in a blended synchronous and asynchronous online format that is convenient for distance learners." (https://learn.uvm.edu/program/school-library-media-studies/faqs/)

The program's six required courses (https://learn.uvm.edu/program/school-library-media-studies/curriculum/) are:

- Managing and Leading School Library Media Centers

- Developing and Organizing School Library Media Center Collections

- Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers

- Information Sources and Services for School Library Media Centers

- Designing Learning in School Library Media Centers

- Children's and Young Adult Literature

Ehler-Hansen informed the Working Group that the Agency of Education identified a statewide shortage of School Librarians or "Library/Media Specialists" for the 2022-2023

School Year. (https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/2022-2023%20Teacher%20Shortage%20Areas.pdf) Ehler-Hansen shared that the UVM program for school librarians was over-enrolled for the 2022-2023 academic year and expressed a desire for UVM to expand its program to:

- accommodate more students and meet the needs of schools throughout the state;

- create a dual MLS/MEd program; and

- offer additional professional development courses for school librarians.

Ehler-Hansen shared that "in addition to coursework, candidates enrolled in the UVM School Library Studies Sequence have opportunities to extend their learning through performance tasks and projects embedded in coursework that apply theory to authentic practice in the field" including practicums and research.

Ehler-Hansen explained that "Upon successful completion of the two-year series, qualified individuals may request a Transcript Review by the Vermont Agency of Education." While designed primarily for those who already have a valid teaching credential in Vermont, there are pathways to becoming a teacher for those who come from other fields. Hansen shared that "for those seeking to change careers, the school librarian endorsement also has an option for non-educators to enter the profession through Transcript Review for Initial Certification." (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ECLmEPwkM9n35qQBEUFTBdGsNyruSs1S/edit)

The Working Group was reminded by Meg Allison, School Librarian for U32 High School and past president of the Vermont School Library Association (VSLA), that all school librarians need to be re-licensed on a continual basis. Allison shared that credit hours for re-licensing may be obtained by attending conferences and courses that pertain to the core standards. Allison shared that whether school districts or schools pay the costs associated with school librarian's maintenance of their certifications depends upon the school district that the librarian is from, and upon what resources the district or school make available for school librarian training. Allison reported that in her capacity in the leadership of the Vermont School Library Association, she had heard from many school librarian colleagues that they must pay for their own continuing education.

The Working Group heard from Judith Kaplan, a retired school librarian who shared comments related to Mentoring Matters for School Librarians, a grant funded program sponsored by the VSLA and Vermont National Education Association (VNEA). Aimed at new school librarians that are matched up with a mentor, the program has created a wider range of learning opportunities, helped maintain credential requirements, and highlighted conferences. Currently there are forty-six mentors and sixty-eight mentees. The program results in a high level of retention for new school librarians. Kaplan also

shared that the VSLA has carried out periodic strategic planning sessions to develop goals for improving school librarians and the school librarian profession.

The continuing education needs of school librarians in Vermont are also supported by VSLA, which provides professional development and conferences for teacher librarians, including an annual conference. VSLA also connects newly hired school librarians with mentors in their field.

Conclusion

Vermonters have limited access to higher education in public librarianship due to the cost of these programs and the lack of in-state offerings. Library staff and directors frequently learn on the job, through trainings offered by the Department, and through trainings provided by library associations and associations that support boards—which makes these trainings vitally important to the continued success of public libraries in the state.

Professional development and training for library professionals must be ongoing, not one-time so that library professionals can continuously learn about new technologies and emerging trends in librarianship—and so that they can keep their skills fresh. While school librarians must take courses to maintain their professional certification, public librarians and directors have no similar requirements, which could contribute negatively to public library service in the state.

Emergency Preparedness

The topic of Emergency Preparedness was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, March 24th, 2023. The Working Group heard from six community members and heard reports from Department of Libraries staff on the topics of COVID 19 Response by the Department, and COVID 19 Impacts on Libraries. The Working Group also heard from these experts on this topic: Ben Rose, Recovery and Mitigation Section Chief, Vermont Emergency Management; Rachel Onuf, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA); and Matthew Bollerman, Sustainable Libraries Initiative. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by eight community members. The topic of the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency was included within the umbrella of emergency preparedness and response.

The term "emergency preparedness" means the steps one takes to make sure you and those you are responsible for are safe before, during, and after an emergency or natural disaster.

In a presentation, Ben Rose, the Recovery and Mitigation Section Chief at the Vermont Division of Emergency Management provided several useful tools for librarians to have at the ready. Rose encouraged librarians to be active participants in local emergency planning efforts. Rose also stated that all libraries should know who their local Emergency Management Director is and how to contact them. Rose went on to share resources that libraries can use to prepare for and respond to emergencies including:

- Vermont's **Hazard Mitigation Funding Programs**, which make funds available to municipalities and other organizations to help reduce or eliminate loss of life and property by taking measures to reduce the impacts of future disasters. (https://vem.vermont.gov/funding/mitigation)

- Vermont's **Municipal Energy Resiliency Program (MERP)** provides staff support, application and technical assistance, and funding to increase energy resilience, reduce energy use and operating costs, and curb greenhouse gas emissions by promoting weatherization, thermal improvements, fuel switching, renewable energy, battery storage, electric vehicle charging, and enhanced comfort in municipal buildings. Municipal public libraries should connect with their municipality to apply for these funds. (https://bgs.vermont.gov/municipal-energy-resilience-program)

- Vermont's **Department of Public Safety: Vermont Emergency Management** provides assistance to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made threats and hazards to ensure the safety of Vermonters and our visitors. (https://vem.vermont.gov/)

- **Vermont School Safety Center** offers best practices and recommendations on how to keep schools—and school libraries—safe. (https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/)

- **State of Vermont: Agency of Education** provides weekly "field memos" that include emergency preparedness tips which school libraries may find useful. (https://education.vermont.gov/content/weekly-field-memo)

Rachel Onuf, Vermont Historical Records Director with the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), presented emergency resources available to support Vermont's libraries with a focus on responding to emergencies that impact library collections. Onuf is the lead of the Vermont Arts & Culture Disaster and Resilience Network (VACDaRN), which "builds relationships among people involved with arts and cultural heritage. VACDaRN provides resources and training in readiness and in how to respond in the event of an emergency to mitigate the impact of disasters and ensure that our communities recover quickly and grow more resilient." (https://vacdarn.org/)

Onuf encouraged the library community to be ready for a future with more natural disasters and predicted that mass climate migration due to climate change and extreme weather events could potentially result in people arriving at Vermont's public libraries who need "everything." Onuf emphasized the connection between disaster response and social services—specifically, there's a high potential that climate emergencies will result in a need for even more social services resources in libraries. Onuf shared information with the Working Group including the State of Vermont's contingency contract with Polygon for Document/Record Disaster Recovery, available to ALL public libraries and cultural heritage repositories (https://bgs.vermont.gov/sites/bgs/files/files/purchasing-contracting/contracts/38257%202-2w.pdf) and the State Library of Iowa's Disaster Preparedness Toolkit (https://www.statelibraryofiowa.gov/index.php/libraries/resources/disaster-preparedness-toolkit)

Onuf reiterated that emergency preparedness must be part of everyone's mindset. If libraries have an emergency plan in place, they should schedule regular trainings and know whom to contact when an emergency occurs. If libraries don't yet have a plan, they should begin creating one by seeking help from experts.

Tom McMurdo, the Assistant State Librarian for Information & Access and VACDaRN member shared information about the **Massachusetts Higher Education Cooperative** (MHEC) with the Working Group. (https://www.mhec.net/) MHEC is a multi-state purchasing group that provides services and materials for non-profits, including libraries, at a discount. MHEC maintains contracts with a variety of disaster response companies. These companies are all on the contract designated G32. Eight vendors are on this contract, including companies that do mold remediation and other disaster cleanup. The State of Vermont maintains a relationship with MHEC and registered users in Vermont

can access MHEC's contracts. Instructions for joining MHEC are on the Department of Libraries website. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/mhec-purchasing)

Matthew Bollerman shared information with the Working Group about the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, which empowers library leaders to advance environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices to intentionally address climate change and co-create thriving communities. (https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/)

Impacts of COVID-19 on Library Services in Vermont

The COVID-19 public health emergency impacted public libraries significantly, as it did most other aspects of community life. The majority of Vermont's public libraries closed their doors to the public and staff in the middle of March 2020. At that time, some libraries continued providing library services to the public remotely, with library staff working remotely. Other public libraries temporarily ceased providing service to the public altogether.
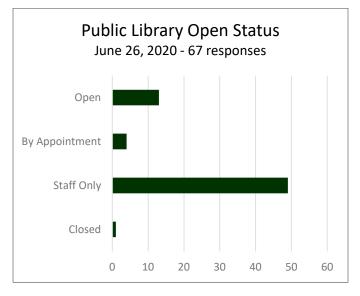
As time wore on, Vermont's public libraries, like those across the country, gradually opened their library buildings for staff, then began to offer curbside pickup, and then reopened to the public. In the early days of the COVID-19 health emergency, curbside services typically focused on making physical library materials available to the public via holds pick-up.

In early May 2020, the Department conducted a one-time survey to collect information from public libraries across the state, to which 80 public libraries responded. At that time, 47 reporting libraries in Vermont were already offering curbside holds pick-up services. Another 23 public libraries indicated that they planned to begin curbside services within the month.

On June 26, 2020, the Department initiated a weekly status survey for public libraries. Sixty-seven public libraries responded to the survey the first week it was administered. Among the responding public libraries:
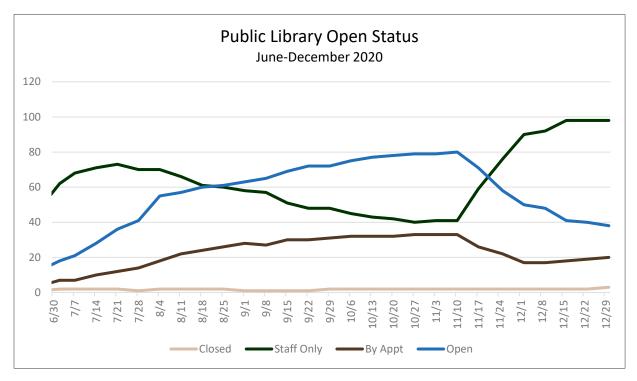
- 13 reported they were open to the public;

- four reported they were open by appointment;

- 49 reported their buildings were open to staff only; and

- one reported they were completely closed.

Public Library Open Status
June 26, 2020 - 67 responses

[Bar chart showing:
- Open: ~13
- By Appointment: ~4
- Staff Only: ~49
- Closed: ~1
X-axis from 0 to 60]

In response to the initial weekly survey of public libraries, 16% of respondents reported that library staff had been furloughed or laid off.

That survey also reflected that 79% of Vermont's public libraries shifted public programming online in response to the pandemic and were providing the public with virtual library programs including storytime.
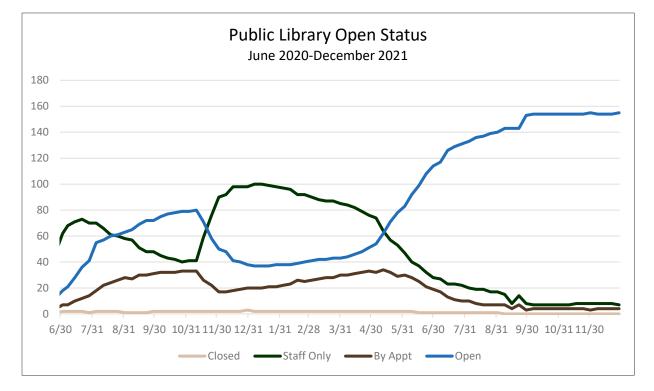
Public Library Open Status
June-December 2020

[Line chart showing Closed, Staff Only, By Appt, and Open status from 6/30 to 12/29. Y-axis from 0 to 120. Legend: Closed, Staff Only, By Appt, Open]

Through the weekly status surveys conducted by the Department, public libraries in Vermont reported changes in the services they provided and the usage of those services over time. Public libraries reported that physical access to library buildings

increased in the summer and early fall of 2020, but then rapidly contracted in November 2020. Public libraries reported that their decisions to close were largely related to colder weather and a lack of fresh air. Following guidance from the public health community, public libraries in Vermont had thrown their windows open, to increase the circulation of fresh air in buildings while also practicing social distancing and good hygiene. With winter came colder temperatures. Many library buildings in Vermont have heating systems with no air filtration or circulation systems. With the windows closed, those libraries were no longer able to safely welcome the public into their buildings and were forced to resume curbside service or cease public service until warmer temperatures returned.

Though the number of libraries that were physically open increased slightly through the winter and spring, the summer of 2021 marked a dramatic increase in open status.
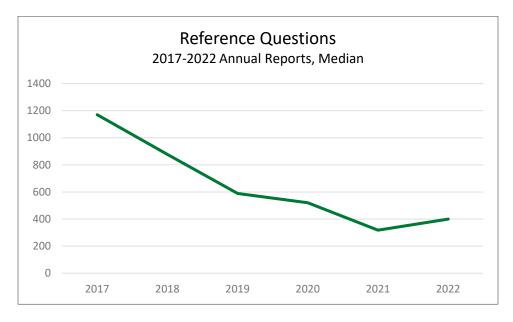

Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Collections and Support from Library Staff
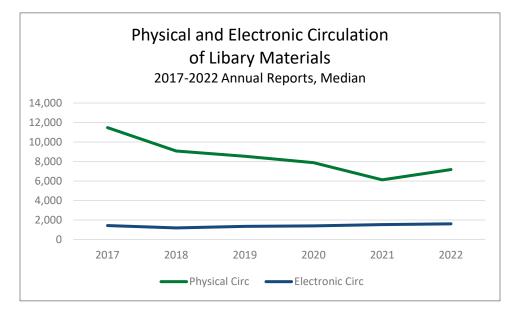
The impact of library closures resulted in a decrease in access to physical collections and browsing. It also had a negative impact on the reference support library staff were able to provide for community members. The topic is covered in more depth in the section of the report on Collections. Unsurprisingly, the statistical impact of the pandemic (especially the early pandemic) was dramatic. Data collected by the

Department shows the enormous dip in annual open hours and visitation from pre-pandemic levels during the height of the pandemic.

The number of reference questions asked in Vermont's public libraries has been declining steadily in recent years, just as it has nationwide. In 2019, the decline of reference questions slowed, but then it dropped precipitously in 2020 when public libraries were forced to close due to the pandemic. The median number of reference questions has been rebounding since 2021 as life in Vermont communities and libraries has stabilized post-pandemic. That said, the median number of reference questions has not reached its pre-pandemic levels. Bolstering library staff training to support the reference needs of the communities they serve and increasing public awareness of reference services continues to be a growth area for Vermont's libraries.

Reference Questions
2017-2022 Annual Reports, Median

Similarly, the pandemic drove circulation of physical books and library materials down dramatically but led to a smaller uptick in electronic circulation. Data collected by the Department reflects that median circulation of physical materials at public libraries has begun rebounding since those buildings reopened to the public. The number of physical items checked out has not reached pre-pandemic levels in Vermont or across the nation. This is due in part to a shift away from checking out physical library materials toward checking out eBooks and eAudiobooks or "electronic circulation" by some members of the community.

Physical and Electronic Circulation of Libary Materials
2017-2022 Annual Reports, Median
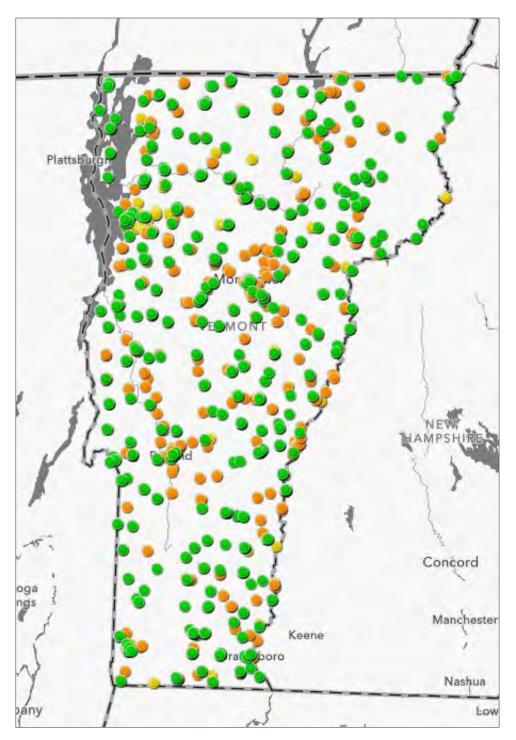
Physical Circ   Electronic Circ

Impact of COVID-19 on Public Internet Access

The closure of public library buildings in Vermont due to the COVID-19 public health emergency resulted in a lack of internet access for many community members. This was particularly problematic because so many facets of school, work, and medical care had shifted online during the pandemic to curb the spread of disease transmission. Vermonters without homes or without access to the internet in their homes were left out of the shift to online daily functions and were at an even greater disadvantage than before the pandemic.

To address that concern, the Vermont Department of Libraries worked with the Vermont Department of Public Service to map public access to Wi-Fi. Then the State added and expanded Wi-Fi coverage to communities with the least coverage and highest need by adding new access points at libraries, schools, stores, and other community-centered locations. At the same time, Vermont's public libraries began to expand access to library Wi-Fi outside the building and/or after hours. Many libraries improved Wi-Fi signals in parking lots and other spaces outside their buildings so that community members could access the internet to attend classes, work or do schoolwork, or attend appointments with health care providers. Post-pandemic, this expansion of Wi-Fi coverage continues to have a positive impact on the lives of Vermonters as many public libraries have maintained this expanded Wi-Fi service, which increases community members' ability to access the internet even when their local public library is closed.
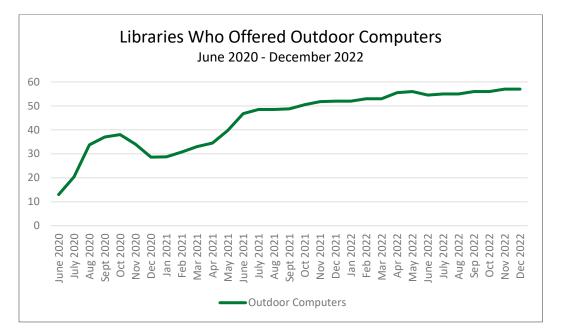
Source: Department of Public Services Wi-Fi Map (Captured 9/7/2023)
(https://vtpsd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c926d155167d4a558 6e8e1aca1701cfa)

The Department of Public Services Wi-Fi Map shows public libraries and other sites with public internet access in Vermont. Green dots are publicly funded sites that provide Wi-
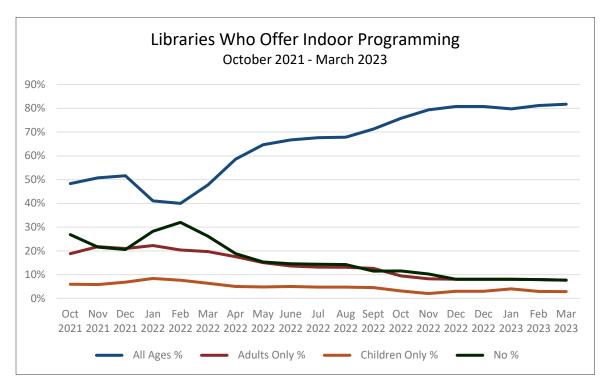
Fi access; orange dots represent sites that provide public Wi-Fi access that were submitted by members of the public; and yellow dots are sites that provide public Wi-Fi sites with a password and were submitted by members of the public. Many of the sites reflected on this map represent the 188 public libraries in Vermont, almost all of which provide Wi-Fi access to the public.

Another way in which Vermont's public libraries changed their services was in relation to technology access. During the pandemic, at times when public libraries were not able to provide access to public computers and the internet indoors, a significant number of public libraries began to offer laptops for short-term outdoor use. By thinking creatively, public libraries were able to respond in innovative ways and continue to remain relevant to the people who need and use their services regularly.

Libraries Who Offered Outdoor Computers
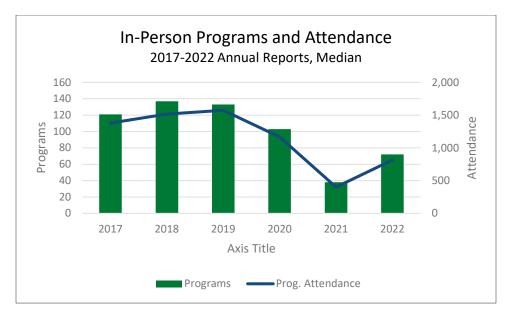June 2020 - December 2022

Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Library Programs

Indoor programming paused and almost completely stopped at many of Vermont's public libraries at the beginning of the pandemic. The Department began to specifically track public library programming in October 2021, when just 50% of libraries reported that they were hosting some programs for all ages. Indoor programming for adults rebounded more quickly than indoor programming for children—largely because the library community felt it was unsafe to provide indoor group programming for children who did not yet have access to COVID-19 vaccinations. The Department's weekly survey data reflects that indoor programming for all ages increased dramatically in the spring of 2022 and into 2023. The Department shifted the survey from weekly to monthly in August 2022, and discontinued it entirely in March of 2023.

Libraries Who Offer Indoor Programming
October 2021 - March 2023

Finally, public library programming and program attendance dropped precipitously during the pandemic. Data gathered by the Department reflects that both programs and program attendance dropped in 2020 and 2021, and that both have begun to rebound but are not yet at pre-pandemic levels.

In-Person Programs and Attendance
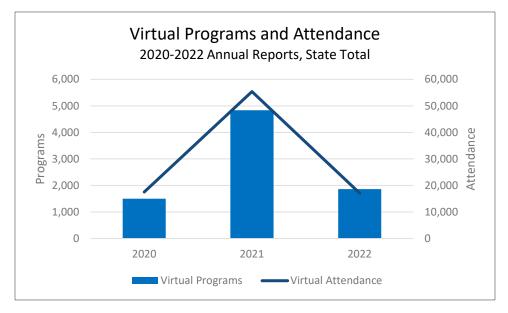2017-2022 Annual Reports, Median

The need for sudden building closures during the pandemic forced library staff and trustees to come up with new approaches to meet the needs of the public. As public health guidance evolved over the course of the pandemic, library staff used creative approaches to ensure that community members could continue to benefit from the

social and education opportunities of public libraries. While the Department did not collect data from libraries about the number of outdoor programs, it heard from many libraries during the pandemic that they had brought their in-person programs outdoors. Many public libraries used ARPA grant funding administered by the Department during the pandemic to purchase outdoor furnishings and equipment, including tents and firepits, creating outdoor spaces for their community to convene more safely.

Department data on virtual programs and attendance at those programs reflects that virtual programming, which was not common in Vermont's public libraries prior to the pandemic, grew dramatically during the pandemic. Virtual programming decreased when Vermonters gained access to COVID-19 vaccinations and is now less prominent than it was at the height of the pandemic. That said, some public libraries do continue to offer virtual and hybrid programming, particularly during the winter months.

The Vermont Department of Libraries took a multi-pronged approach to responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic. During this time, the Department focused its efforts on supporting the state's public libraries and their staff by sharing vetted and reliable pandemic-related information, facilitating peer information sharing, increasing continuing education offerings, adapting information delivery modes, issuing federal grant funds to libraries and library consortia, and procuring equipment to directly support continued library service for the public.

Information Sharing

To manage the constant flow of pandemic-related updates coming from state, federal, and non-governmental organizations during the height of the pandemic, the Department developed a daily resource update that it sent out on its various listservs. These emails gathered, organized, annotated, and distributed state and federal announcements and

policy changes, learning opportunities, general library-related resources, and wellness resources.

The Department also developed a series of COVID-19 webpages that featured resources and guidance as soon as—and oftentimes before—needs emerged for libraries so library directors and trustees could quickly access the information.

The Department of Libraries regularly collects statistical data from Vermont's public libraries and publishes that information in an annual Public Library Survey. The Department occasionally collects other information from public libraries to gain insight into services and concerns across the state. As mentioned previously, one of the Department's pandemic responses was the development of a new weekly survey that gathered updates on public libraries' service levels (e.g., open, closed, curbside), restrictions (occupancy, time limits, mask requirements), and individual services (computers, programs, meeting space). The results of the survey were published weekly through August 2022, then monthly from September 2022 through March 2023, when it ceased. Local library directors and trustees used the high-level information in the weekly report along with public health information to help inform their local decisions about providing library services. The Department regularly shared a high-level summary of the report with the Agency of Administration, which provided the Administration with insight into responses to the pandemic in Vermont at the local level.

Informal Meetups and County Meetings

Starting in April of 2020, the Department moved its existing county directors' and large libraries directors' meetings fully online. These quarterly meetings with librarians from each county was an ongoing touchpoint before the pandemic started, but the bulk of the discussion in the 18 months after the start of the pandemic turned to COVID-related topics including quarantining books, mask and vaccine regulations, distancing and closure requirements, outdoor programming, virtual programming, staffing, and HR issues caused by the public health situation.

To be able to support the Vermont library staff consistently during this rapidly evolving situation, we started offering initially weekly—then bi-weekly—casual meetups that allowed the Department to provide updates to library staff and provided a forum for idea exchanges and networking.

Continuing Education for Library Staff and Trustees

Prior to the pandemic, many of the Department's continuing education courses were offered in-person. After the start of the pandemic, the Department moved its continuing education efforts entirely online. The Department shifted its library staff training resources to support library staff in attending a number of virtual trainings and national conferences, including LibraryWorks and PCI Webinars, the American Library Association's (ALA) Annual Conference and Library Director Crash Course, and the

Association of Rural & Small Libraries conference. The Department continued offering its Certificate of Public Librarianship program courses but moved these online. Additionally, the Department provided numerous COVID-related webinars on topics including air quality, ventilation systems, distanced library programming, budget and staff planning during a national health crisis, and human resources topics related to state and national health mandates. The Department found that it is able to provide more training opportunities to more participants by offering continuing education online, which has continued to inform how it provides training moving forward.

While the Department and Working Group heard from some members of the community that library trustees will only participate in trainings in-person or at their own library, the Department discovered during the pandemic that trustees from around the state are willing and able to engage in trainings online. For example, after years of offering only in-person training for library trustees, during the pandemic the Department shifted its annual conference for library trustees entirely online. The 2020 conference for library trustees was a free 5-day online program offering synchronous sessions on strategic planning, library policies, budget, board development, library marketing, and a town hall with the State Librarian. The content included a pre-recorded keynote, facilitated listserv discussions, and trivia. This online conference drew twice the number of enrollees of in-person conferences in previous years. Subsequent online conferences for trustees have been similarly successful. Providing this conference online enabled the Department to expand its reach and to provide training to many trustees with very little outlay of funds. The Department was able to focus its limited resources on paying presenters rather than paying for venue rental costs and meals for conference attendees. The Department heard from some trustees that they were pleased to be able to attend the conference, because it was hosted online and required no travel. Many trustees who work full-time reported that they appreciated being able to attend the live sessions, view videos of the sessions at their own convenience, and participate in asynchronous listserv discussions—so the reach of this opportunity was far broader than in-person trainings had been. In this case, changes brought about in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency helped the Department to use its resources more effectively and reach a wider statewide audience.

The trustee trainings offered by the Department online continue to have better attendance than in-person trainings did. Online training enables Consultants from the Department to schedule their time effectively as they no longer spend as many hours driving to libraries around the state to conduct trainings for individual boards of five people. The time saved enables the Consultants to develop more responsive trainings and deliver these trainings to a greater number of trustees. The Consultants do still visit public libraries on occasion to meet with library staff and trustees in-person.

Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) CARES Grant Purchases

In April of 2020, the Department received $56,384 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) grant funds through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support Vermont libraries in responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Department used these funds to purchase plexiglass desktop shields and personal protective equipment for distribution to 118 public and academic libraries throughout the state.

The Department leveraged $10,000 in CARES funding to add a free streaming movie option to the discounted public performance licenses it has offered to Vermont schools for the past 10 years. This enabled teachers in Vermont to assign movies to students for discussion and flipped classroom activities, popular educational methods during the remote schooling days of the pandemic. Vermont public schools serve over 83,000 students. The Department was able to continue this service using subsequent ARPA funds from the Institute for Museum and Library Services through the end of the ARPA grant period in September 30, 2022. The service proved so important to Vermont schools, that the Agency of Education agreed to support the service for an additional two years (through the end of the '23/'24 school year) using federal ARPA Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSR) state set-aside funds. Over the last three years combined, the Vermont school movie portal had 60,228 total portal views. In looking at this program broken down per year, years one and two were right around 18,700 and 18,800 views respectively, with year three—in September 2023—already at 22,722 views.

Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) ARPA Grant

In April of 2021, the Department received $2,135,819.00 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding through IMLS. This funding was intended to help communities respond "directly and immediately to the pandemic, as well as to related economic and community needs through equitable approaches." The Department used this funding to award grants to public libraries, state library consortia, and the Vermont Historical Society. The Department also made purchases to directly support libraries in operating safely during the pandemic. Complete details can be found on the Department's website. (https://libraries.vermont.gov/ARPA2021) The following are examples of IMLS ARPA grant awards made by the Department:

- **Grants to Public Libraries**
  To support continued public library services to the public during the pandemic period, the Department issued $1,193,215.61 to Vermont's public libraries in two rounds of non-competitive grants. These grant awards to public libraries supported the purchase of collections, equipment, and supplies in response

to emergent needs. These included equity diversity and inclusion collections, indoor furniture for COVID-response (including dividers and movable tables), outdoor furniture and place-making items to extend the use of outdoor library spaces, and items that promoted safer building environments (including air purifiers). The Department awarded formula grants based on population served, with a minimum of $2,000 for the first round and a minimum $500 for the second round. For round one, 166 Public Libraries applied and $928,410.84 in grant funds were awarded; and for round two, the Department had 139 applicants and $264,804.77 in funds were awarded.

- **Access Grant to the Green Mountain Library Consortium**
  The Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) comprises 160 member-libraries and provides access to e-resources including eBooks and eAudiobooks. The Department awarded $218,050 to GMLC to help them reduce wait times for eBooks and eAudiobooks. Demand for these resources on GMLC's ListenUpVermont (LUV) eBook and eAudiobook platform increased as a direct result from the pandemic, and this grant helped expand access to these resources for many Vermonters.

- **Personal Protective Equipment**
  The Department procured clear masks and air quality meters and distributed these to public and school libraries to support safe operations during the pandemic.

The added support during the pandemic was necessary not just for libraries, but the communities they serve. As Carolyn Picazio, Director of the Kellogg Hubbard Library testified "libraries are crucial during emergencies. They provide comfortable temperatures (heat/cool), power to charge your devices, a place to attend your work Zoom meeting, and internet/Wi-Fi so that you can check to see if your home power/heat has been restored. Kellogg Hubbard has distributed hundreds of rapid antigen tests and masks." Sharon Ellingwood White, former Director of the Alice M. Ward Memorial Library in Cannan, and Catherine Goldsmith of the Starksboro Public Library brought vaccine clinics to their public library communities, who otherwise would have had to drive over an hour to access this necessary medical service. Furthermore, White shared that "it is often through our library that contacts are made to the rest of our community in the area of public health…We are recognized as a partner with knowledge and integrity."

Three years after the dawn of the COVID pandemic, many library staff in Vermont have incorporated a "pivot mentality" into their everyday lives and try to be ready to change course quickly in response to challenges that arise as they provide library services. Library staff rely on accurate resources and timely communication to facilitate those shifts.

Conclusion

Much like businesses and other public facing entities, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted library service in significant ways. Vermont's public libraries acted on the best available evidence in light of the conditions in their communities and viability of their library buildings to provide services. As vital anchor institutions in towns and communities, library directors and employees reacted accordingly by opening the doors as quickly as was allowable under health guidelines. When having the doors open was not possible, innovative library services emerged, including curbside pickup, outdoor programs, and limited browsing. Wi-Fi was extended and left on at libraries to provide this service to people outside the building.

The Department of Libraries' role sharing information expanded. Online meetings, classes, and consultations took the place of formerly in-person meetings. The Department leveraged federal funds to provide safety equipment to libraries. The expansion of movie streaming licenses provided a crucial resource for schools struggling to get back to learning.

Significant lessons from the pandemic have informed the library community in the case of another such health emergency. Of course, the pandemic occurred concurrently with the increased impacts of climate change. Recent flooding in Vermont has only underscored the information presented to the Working Group from State of Vermont emergency managers and VACDaRN, the cultural facilities emergency group in Vermont. Communications, including who to call and how to proceed during a flood or other climate-related emergency is at the core of any emergency preparedness plan for libraries. A forward-looking philosophy of mitigation, resilience, and readiness must be a high priority for all Vermont libraries.

Safety

The topic of Safety was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, July 28, 2023. The Working Group heard reports from Department of Libraries staff on the topics of Safety in Libraries and Report Writing. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by one community member.

In March and April 2023, the House and Senate Committees on Education asked the Working Group Chair to testify on miscellaneous Senate Bill 133, An act relating to miscellaneous changes to education law, and specifically on language in the bill that would add the topic of gun safety in libraries to the charge of the Working Group. The Department had also heard from Vermont library staff at a "Large Libraries" meeting that they wanted the topic of public and staff safety in libraries to be considered by the Working Group. Through dialog with the committees, the Working Group chair agreed to add the topic of "Safety in Libraries" to the scope of the Working Group. The Working Group scheduled a meeting on this topic on July 28, 2023, and put out a call for written comments in advance of that meeting.

While the Working Group received written comments on safety from one person following its July 28, 2023, meeting, no library directors, trustees, or members of the public provided written comments to the Working Group specifically on safety in libraries in advance of the meeting, nor did anyone attend the meeting to share oral comments. The lack of written or oral comments was unusual as the Working Group followed its regular practices for soliciting feedback on this topic.

During the meeting, the Working Group learned general information that Department staff share with library directors, staff, and trustees on the topic of safety through its continuing education program. This information includes safety tips specific to one-person libraries often found in Vermont's small, rural communities; books and web resources on safety in libraries; and safety trainings provided by the Department and other continuing education platforms for librarians (including the Public Library Association, Library Journal, Library 2.0, and the University of Wisconsin's iSchool Continuing Education program).

Department staff shared general safety tips for library staff in buildings of all sizes including:

- Be aware of who is in the building at all times.

- Create sightlines throughout the building as much as possible.

- Never allow yourself to be trapped. Have more than one way to get out from behind the desk or out of your desk, your office, and the building.

- Never count money out in public.

- Lock away staff valuables— never leave them where they can be seen by the public.

- Share the library key only as needed and be aware of who has a key to the library building.

- Establish code words shared with other staff that let them know you need help.

- Document every incident that takes place in your library.

- Seek training to understand warning signs and potentially problematic behaviors, how to de-escalate situations, and tips for talking with people when they're agitated or upset.

Department staff shared safety tips for staff of small and one-person libraries including:

- Never work alone during the library's open hours.

  o Recruit a list of volunteers.

  o Schedule a volunteer to be at the library whenever just one staff member is scheduled to open the library to the public.

  o Have back-ups available.

  o Have one trustee assigned to each day as a back-up.

- Keep the door locked if you are working alone before or after hours.

- Establish contact with nearby businesses that are open for support when the library is open.

- Establish a list of trustees or other local people you can call for support if needed.

- Take Self-Defense Training.

- Engage a security expert to do a safety evaluation at your library and provide staff education.

- Consider adding security cameras outside your building and develop a clear policy around their location, usage, and viewing and disposing of footage.

- Consider installing a building alarm system.

- Install outdoor lighting to make evening building exits safer.

- Install a panic button that alerts a security company or the local police. Consider carrying the panic button with you.

The Department has created a webpage with these tips, lists of books and online materials, and training resources on this important topic for library staff and trustees.

(https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/public-libraries) under Safety Resources for Public Libraries)

During the July 28, 2023, meeting, Working Group members observed that when talking about safety in libraries at prior meetings, some members of the community have demonstrated a degree of trauma response. Working Group members hypothesized that sharing this type of experience in a public setting or a public meeting might have felt too personal for many members of the community. Given the lack of specific comments from the public on the topic of safety in libraries, the Working Group kept its consideration general and focused on broad topics of safety and on recommendations to improve safety for the public and library staff.

Safety incidents in libraries are handled locally by library staff, library boards, school administrators, and local law enforcement. The Department does not generally receive reports of safety incidents in libraries in Vermont, nor does statute require it to do so.

While there are some individuals and companies that provide training on the topic of safety in libraries, it is challenging to find experts either at the state or national level on this topic who use evidence-based methods to develop their training materials.

Both trainers and library staff frequently conflate medical issues and safety issues, and some of the information shared in prior Working Group meetings has blurred that line as well. For example, when a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they might threaten library staff, which would be a safety incident. However, a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol who is not threatening others would be best categorized as a medical situation in the library. That said, medical situations can be disruptive to library service. Medical situations involving mental health and substance use incidents can be challenging for library staff to respond to and do have the potential to escalate— but not all mental health situations are safety issues. The Working Group and the Department have heard from library staff that additional training on responding to mental health concerns that arise in their buildings and on de-escalating situations would be helpful.

The Working Group heard accounts from library staff at other meetings of situations in which they had felt unsafe due to a delay in response from local or state police to calls from the library about people who were having mental health emergencies in the building or on library grounds. In one situation described to the Working Group, it was not until a member of the public who was experiencing significant mental health distress and disrupting library service began disrobing that the local police responded. Library staff expressed feelings of being on the front lines of the mental health and drug

challenges faced by the community but were not treated as partners in this work by other community organizations and law enforcement.

During the meeting on July 28, 2023, the Working Group Chair Catherine Delneo shared, "The topic of safety in libraries is very important to me. I feel that all members of the public should feel safe and welcome in libraries. I feel that all library staff deserve a respectful, peaceful, and safe working environment. Like all of you, I recognize that these desires I have are aspirational. Like you, I acknowledge that librarians have long been challenged to ensure public safety and that the trustees have long been challenged to ensure staff safety in libraries. My sense is that this concern is particularly challenging in a public library environment on a day-to-day basis, but school and academic library environments also have the potential for significant and often more extreme safety challenges—including gun violence."

Small libraries in Vermont, many of which are rural, face particular safety challenges. These libraries often serve small communities and have limited hours. Staffing levels at these libraries are frequently very low and they are sometimes served by just one paid staff member who serves as the library director. Vermont's rural and small library directors have shared concerns about working in buildings by themselves, particularly in the evening and at night. They report to Department staff that they feel isolated and are concerned that the police would not be able to respond quickly if there was a security incident.

> *"As somebody that worked in a small library for almost 19 years alone, a three-story building, alone, luck has a lot to do with it. State Police are over a mountain away. You're on your own out there and I think that's something that needs to be heard."*
> *—Jeannette Bair, Retired Director, Rochester Public Library*

Written comments received following the meeting from Catherine Goldsmith, Director of the Starksboro Public Library highlighted the challenges of working in a small, rural library alone. Goldsmith acknowledged that it would be best "to eliminate this practice, but it isn't always possible." Goldsmith pointed out that library staff should practice good judgement and think about personal safety when deciding which tasks to do while alone in a library. She wrote, "We try not to climb ladders, counters and bookshelves while we are alone, especially when setting up for programs on off hours... We've all probably heard stories about those accidents." For both personal safety and for emergency responses to incidents in a small, rural libraries, Goldsmith recommended the use of a panic button.

Goldsmith related a story of a safety incident that took place "Many years ago, while I was working in Chittenden County, a librarian in a neighboring library was knocked unconscious by a person with mental health issues who had hid from her while she

closed the building for the night. It can happen anywhere." Goldsmith shared that, "What concerned me in that instance is that her board wanted to keep the incident a secret."

Most large libraries in Vermont are located in urban and suburban communities. At the Large Libraries meetings hosted by the Department, library directors frequently discuss concerns about patron behavior that makes it challenging for them to maintain regular public service— including drug use, drug overdoses, and mental health challenges that pose a safety threat to library staff and patrons. They regularly share accounts of patrons whose social service needs have gone unmet and who then tip into threatening and dangerous behavior in a public library.

Challenging behaviors in libraries of all sizes seem to ratchet up a notch when a weapon is—or might be—present. A person sleeping on the grass outside a public library would not feel like a safety and security matter. However, a person sleeping on the grass with a hatchet next to them, as Fletcher Free Library Director Mary Danko described in her written testimony, caused the day to take a "concerning turn."

People who don't work in libraries are often surprised to learn of how fraught conversations about everyday things can become at the library. Working Group member Jeannette Bair shared an experience from her time as the Director of the Rochester Public Library in which a person who was upset about an overdue fine threatened to go home, get a gun, and then return to the library. Overdue fines seem relatively small, and not a matter for concern for many people in the community—but for others, the library has just asked them to pay another bill that they didn't plan on and simply cannot afford. When an upset patron unleashes anger toward a library staff member, the tone of the entire library changes. What had seemed like a safe place to learn has suddenly turned into an unsafe place where other people's behavior is unpredictable and frightening.

Vermont's public library staff are sharing anecdotes with Department staff that seem to reflect an increase in the number of times they need to call the police to support them in making sure their library spaces are safe. Increasingly, public librarians in Vermont are expressing concerns for the safety of their patrons, staff, and program presenters. Safety concerns around public library programming are increasing as public libraries strive to expand the diversity of the programs they provide for the community. In June 2023, Vermont poet Toussaint St. Negritude said he was "distraught and concerned for his safety after being targeted by protesters at a queer poetry reading he hosted at Lyndonville's public library." (https://vtdigger.org/2023/06/14/after-being-accosted-by-protestors-at-a-queer-poetry-reading-a-vermont-artist-fears-for-his-safety)

With the politicization of book bans and protests at public programs, library staff across the country have found themselves at the center of a culture war. As tension rises around the selection of books and scheduling of programs for the public, library staff across the country are increasingly concerned about being harassed or even physically hurt. Even though there have not been book challenges that have escalated dramatically in Vermont, watching this play out on the national stage is taking a toll on Vermont's library staff and leading them to feel less safe in their libraries. "Amid all the

skirmishes over individual book titles and challenge policies, it's easy to miss the toll it's taking on librarians, kids, and the country…. countless other librarians around the nation who are also feeling the heat are also quitting in droves, leaving libraries short-staffed. It's all driving up the human, civic, and financial costs embroiled in the battle over books." (https://www.npr.org/2023/08/11/1192034923/the-plot-thickens-the-battle-over-books-comes-at-a-cost)

The Working Group discussed Vermont's laws around criminal threatening (13 V.S.A. § 1702 https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/13/039/01702) that were amended during the 2022 Legislative Session and now offer more protection to the staff of municipal public libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries.

> "d) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section by making a threat that places any person in reasonable apprehension that death, serious bodily injury, or sexual assault will occur at a public or private school; postsecondary education institution; place of worship; polling place during election activities; the Vermont State House; or any federal, State, or municipal building shall be imprisoned not more than two years or fined not more than $2,000.00, or both."

The amendment does not apply, however to the staff of incorporated public libraries, which make up roughly one-third of public libraries in Vermont, because they are typically not housed in "municipal buildings."

Conclusion

Safety presents particular challenges in a state that has isolated rural libraries and urban libraries. The preponderance of libraries that are staffed by one or two people in areas not easily served by police puts library workers in a vulnerable position. And while all libraries increasingly find themselves on the front lines of social services, urban libraries regularly encounter members of the public experiencing crises. The increase in homelessness, the opioid epidemic, and the threat of violence due to the politicization of book bans and library programs are all readily visible at libraries in Vermont.

Older buildings with poor sightlines and isolated areas can be potential dangers for both library visitors and staff alike. Mitigation of risk in libraries can be difficult, as library workers are not trained safety professionals. Experience with safety can vary among library workers and even when best practices are followed incidents still occur.

Legal protections have been granted to library staff working in municipal buildings, but their peers working in non-municipal buildings are not extended the same protections.

Social Services

The topic of Social Services was discussed at the Working Group meeting on Friday, March 24th, 2023. The Working Group heard from four community members. Written comments were shared with the Working Group by three community members.

Defining "Social Services"

The term "social services" has no strict, legal definition. Rather, "social services" is a vernacular expression that typically encompasses a range of activities focused on addressing unmet social needs, most often—but not exclusively—for economically and socially disadvantaged residents. Areas such as food and housing insecurity, addiction, harm reduction, domestic violence, physical and mental health, child welfare, economic well-being, and employment fall under this umbrella. In Vermont, a diverse array of community groups, including local, regional, statewide, and national non-profit organizations, and multiple state government agencies all work to provide services to mitigate the impacts of these needs on Vermonters.

For this report, the use of the term "social services" reflects the understanding outlined above: social services are activities undertaken to address economic, physical, psychological, and material needs of residents that are not otherwise being met.

Social Services and Vermont Public Libraries

All Vermont public libraries—rural, urban, and suburban—serve as points of contact for Vermonters in need of social services. Community testimony on the topic highlights the demands placed on library staff as a result, and the necessity for libraries to receive greater support to address these needs.

Vermont statute identifies no role for public libraries to provide social services. As expressed in 22 V.S.A. § 67, libraries are "essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy" and cites where Vermonters "should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits" public libraries provide. The statute also highlights the role of libraries as "Community centers" that "may serve as forums and exhibition areas for the exchange of ideas that encourage the growth of artistic, educational, literary, and scientific knowledge as well as the intercultural understanding of the Vermont citizenry." State statute defines the role of libraries as focused on information, edification, and recreation.

Vermont library community members Barbara Ball (Director, Windsor Public Library), Wendy Hysko (Director, Brownell Library, Essex Junction), Margaret Woodruf (Director, Charlotte Public Library), Carolyn Picazio (Co-Director, Kellogg-Hubbard), Sharon Ellingwood White (former Director, Alice M. Ward Memorial Library, Canaan), Cindy

Weber (retired Director, Stowe Free Library), Catherine Goldsmith (Director, Starksboro Public Library), and Randal Smathers (Director, Rutland Free Public Library), testified that within the scope of their statutory charge, Vermont libraries do provide "informational" support to patrons to identify and access social services through online resources and by directing patrons to materials and organizations that provide aid. However, the testimony submitted to the Working Group also identifies ways in which library staff across Vermont find themselves addressing a range of social service needs beyond those that can be satisfied by providing access to, and assistance accessing information.

In her testimony, Picazio of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier stated the following: "because we are a free, public space we are often called upon to act as de-facto social workers, and responding to issues with people in crisis, or who may be using controlled substances, is becoming an increasing part of what we do." Cindy Weber articulated that public libraries are "the third place (beyond work and home) where communities gather for quiet reflection, learning, and socializing." Picazio identified what many others stated or implied: that because public libraries are that third place or "free, public space," they serve their communities in a wide—and sometimes unexpected—variety of ways.

As expressed in community testimony, in recent years libraries have come to act as sites for food distribution (Ward, Woodruff), warming and/or cooling shelters (Ball, Picazio, Weber, White), vaccine clinics (Goldsmith, White), and COVID test distribution (Ball). Testimony framed these extended community responsibilities as sometimes-challenging points of pride for library staff, and as representative of the deep integration of libraries in their communities, which is a natural extension of what libraries do for the localities they serve.

However, Picazio said, because public libraries are open, public gathering places, public library staff have direct, daily contact with people in need and, often, in acute crisis. Community member testimony emphasizes the difficulty and demands placed on staff and patrons by librarians serving on the front lines of social services as untrained, "de-facto social workers" (Picazio). Testimony repeatedly identified the human impacts of three, often overlapping, factors at the core of the challenges faced by library staff: housing insecurity, mental illness, and active addiction (Ball, Hysko, Picazio, Smathers, Weber). Of course, for urban libraries in the United States and Vermont these issues are nothing new, but testimony presented to the Working Group demonstrates how rural communities, and therefore their libraries, increasingly feel the impact of acute need as well (Ball, Weber). In addition to the three factors identified above, testimony also addressed the role public libraries have come to serve as sites for after school childcare and the disruptions caused by unsupervised youth (Ball, Hysko).

Homelessness, Mental Illness, and Addiction

Certainly not all unhoused Vermonters suffer from addiction and mental illness, nor are all those suffering from addiction or mental illness homeless. However, these factors, independently or in combination, cause widespread impacts on libraries. The housing crisis in Vermont, in conjunction with Vermont's overtaxed, often geographically limited network of social service providers, means that not all those in need can find assistance. Public libraries, as safe, warm, free spaces, often become a refuge for those without homes. Weber and Smathers outline the challenges their institutions face in response to the needs of their unhoused patrons who suffer with mental illness. Testimony from Hysko echoed much of what Weber and Smathers shared and also described the strong local support system available to the Brownell Library and the training opportunities open to the staff, highlighting the great variation in resources across Vermont.

Weber provided an overview of both the limited resources for social support in rural Lamoille County and the impact of these limitations on the Stowe Free Library. In it she presents examples of difficult staff/patron and patron/patron interactions and stresses the divide between what librarians are equipped to do and the needs that frequently confront the staff: "We're well equipped to run a library. We're not well equipped to run social service things for individuals. I don't think that should be on us anymore. I don't think that should be the onus of librarians."

Smathers presented a parallel set of challenges that emerge in urban Rutland related to patron behavior, in particular the difficulty library staff have faced in obtaining support from local mental health agencies and their resulting reliance on the Rutland Police Department to assist when the behavior of patrons in crisis escalates. "We need support. We need people to take this seriously. Either Mary Danko or I are going to have someone die in our library because we don't have support. This is broken."

Fletcher Free Library Director Mary Danko wrote "today's librarians and library staff find themselves dealing with adrenaline-rushing situations that demand nuanced thinking around patron behavior, including mental health and substance abuse issues. Libraries cannot function as day shelters or social service providers, and we can't be constantly worried about potential overdoses or health hazards like needles in the library."

> *"I want to emphasize that we are dedicated to providing compassionate and supportive service to our community. However, the impact of these challenging situations on our staff's mental health, morale, and well-being cannot be overlooked."*
> *—Mary Danko, Fletcher Free Library, Burlington*

Vermont resident Laura Massell shared in written comments to the Working Group that the state should "establish safe injection sites apart from each town's local library so that libraries can remain the safe, welcoming, free information-sharing spaces entire communities need and deserve."

Massell also highlighted the need for "local government and state support for training for mental health stress mitigation and support for library staff who face increasing responsibilities and exposure to the devastating and relentless plight of opiate addiction."

Smathers emphasized the importance of interagency communication when responding to people in crisis at the public library, and how on those occasions where communication ran smoothly it resulted in positive outcomes for both patrons and staff:

> "The other occasion— recently— was how the system should work. A longtime, emotionally troubled, user arrived wailing loudly, sobbing about how her life was useless— and hoping to print out a train ticket. Unable to work with her because of the level of her distress, we called the police, who referred us to Rutland Mental Health, who referred us to the crisis intervention team. Their staffer arrived promptly and between us we were able to calm the user down— and print her train ticket! What worked? Communication, communication, communication..."

In somewhat of a contrast, Hysko discussed both the challenges the Brownell Library in Essex Junction faces as a library in Chittenden County, and the broader network of support available to libraries in that county to support the needs of community members using the library who are in crisis.

Regarding the regional disparities in social service coverage and outside support available to libraries, Hysko stated, "the layout of Vermont libraries is very unique with the number of rural locations we have. We're really fortunate here in Essex Junction to have a police department for one thing…" as well as describing the emphasis the Essex Police Department places on de-escalation and community policing. Hysko also described Brownell's access to Howard Center social workers through the Essex Police, the impact of services provided by the Essex Community Justice Center and the training opportunities that have been available to Brownell staff. Although still overwhelmed by the needs they encounter, Hysko reported that Brownell staff are, for a range of reasons, much better supported.

Conclusion

The Working Group heard that Vermont librarians care deeply about the communities they serve and feel that individuals in crisis should receive the help they need. Vermont librarians are also straining under the demands placed upon them to serve as frontline social service providers, particularly to patrons in acute crisis. Caught between a desire

to help others and the limitations of their ability to do so, they request support to address community needs they are poorly equipped to resolve.

> *"It's very emotional. Very hard when you want to solve everybody's problems, when you want to give resources, when you want to help, but there is nothing you can do. And then you feel for your own safety and the safety of your staff."—Cindy Weber, former director, Stowe Free Library*

In response to the written and oral comments it heard from the community, the Working Group acknowledges the following:

- Broader demands on social services have a direct relationship to increased pressure on libraries to provide services and support,

- The emergence of libraries as de-facto social service providers is outside the training and scope of work of the majority of staff members in Vermont libraries and is extraordinarily challenging for them to address,

- Unresolved social service issues can easily become public safety matters,

- Vermont's rural communities have limited access to social services when compared to our urban and suburban areas, and

- Libraries are challenged when serving as de facto after school childcare.

The Working Group calls upon state and local governments to recognize that Vermont's libraries are increasingly an integral part of our social safety net, serving as frontline sites for social service intervention in our communities. Libraries need support to address these demands in the form of clear lines of communication within municipalities, dedicated staffing, opportunities for training and crisis intervention support from outside partners.

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The Working Group wishes to thank the following individuals who contributed their experiences, thoughts, and advice in testimony and comment:

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Meg Boisseau Allison, School Librarian, U-32 Middle and High School (East Montpelier)*

Joanne Allen, School Librarian, Enosburg Elementary School Library

Julie Altemose, School Librarian, Mary Hogan Elementary School

Monika Antonelli, Outreach Librarian, Library Services, Minnesota State University

Maureen Badger, Library Director, Dailey Memorial Library (Derby)

Jeannette Bair, Former Library Director, Rochester Public Library*

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Appendix

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Written Testimony Submitted to 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,
Constructive Disruption
September 2023

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Introduction &
Survey Process Overview

Part of the charge of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont, created by the Vermont legislature in May 2021, was to study "staffing levels at Vermont libraries, whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet community needs, whether library staff compensation and benefits are sufficient, how libraries rely on volunteers, and what resources are available for workforce development and training of library staff."

To better understand these issues, the Working Group commissioned a Public Library Compensation & Staffing Survey, which was released in summer of 2023. The Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey is intended to be a comprehensive survey of compensation and staffing levels in municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont, and will benchmark current staffing and compensation levels at public libraries in Vermont.

Survey Background and Development

The survey was released in partnership with the Constructive Disruption (https://www.constructivedisruption.info/) consultancy, who was responsible for facilitating the survey and analyzing the resulting data. The Vermont Department of Libraries provided access to its survey platform for this project.

The survey questions were initially developed by the Working Group and revised in consultation with Constructive Disruption.

While the survey collected specific details about each respondent library to help ensure the diversity of libraries in our state are represented in the data collected, the information gathered was kept confidential and reported out in aggregate. This ensured the survey was in compliance with the salary survey "safety zone" guidelines established by the US Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission in 1996. Under these guidelines, information collected must be aggregated in such a way that an individual participant's answers cannot be determined, so that data cannot be attributed in a way that reveals the original source of information.

Ensuring Meaningful Representation

The Working Group set a goal of an 80% response rate from the 188 public libraries in the state. The survey was released via email to the contact on record with the Vermont Department of Libraries the afternoon of Wednesday, July 19, 2023 following a live overview webinar the morning of Wednesday, July 19. This was one week later than originally intended, due to the impact of the significant flooding in the state. The survey was open for all libraries through Monday, August 14.

In addition to the webinar, which was recorded for future reference, Constructive Disruption developed a selection of resources for libraries to use when completing the survey, including a "Get Ready" guide, a series of Frequently Asked Questions with answers, and detailed guides to both the compensation and benefits sections of the survey. These resources are included in this report as appendices.

Throughout the July 19— August 14 open survey period, Constructive Disruption used a variety of follow-up and communication methods to encourage survey completion, including:

- A combination of all-libraries, segmented (for example, by population size, hours open, or county), and individual emails to promote and remind library directors and trustees about the survey, survey resources, and survey response date;
- Continuously thanking the libraries who had completed the survey, asking them to reach out to a colleague to encourage that colleague to complete the survey as well, including providing sample language for libraries to use;
- Individual emails to the libraries impacted by the flooding offering additional support and time, if needed, to complete the survey, from the list provided by the Vermont Department of Libraries;
- Reaching out individually to library directors who lead more than one public library;
- Focused follow up for libraries with "community" in the name, to ensure those truly providing school and public library access to their communities had the information they needed;
- Connecting with leadership at the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) and Vermont Library Association (VLA), reminding the public library members to ensure their library's survey was completed and asking their members to prioritize completing the survey, including providing sample language for the groups to use.

In the last two weeks of the survey, select Working Group members assisted by sending additional personalized emails or making phone calls to individual target

libraries, with some members making multiple rounds of connections. Constructive Disruption followed up directly with libraries where they received out-of-office responses or returned emails, and where Working Group members received questions or requests for follow up from the libraries they connected with. Constructive Disruption had 285 follow up email and 22 follow up phone engagements, answering questions, connecting libraries with resources, seeking additional contact information, or assisting libraries with completing the survey.

In addition, Constructive Disruption used feedback from libraries who had completed the survey to further refine our recommendations for the time the survey would take to complete. While the process began with recommendations to set aside two to three hours to gather the information for and to complete the survey, communications in later weeks emphasized the very smallest libraries could typically complete the survey in 15 minutes and the majority of libraries in the state could expect to need 45 to 90 minutes.
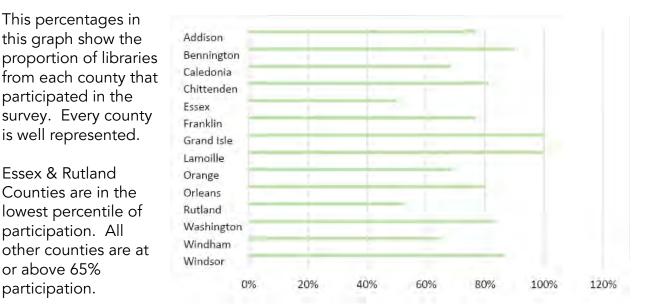
Following the official survey close on Monday, August 14, Constructive Disruption personally reached out to libraries who had not returned a survey via email and/or phone, offering an extension to Monday, August 21.

When the survey fully closed on Thursday, August 24, 144 public libraries had responded, a 77% return rate. More than 75% of the 44 libraries who did not respond to the survey for whatever reason (communicated they would not be filling out the survey, the library experienced damage from the flooding, the library does not currently have a director) received at least one personalized email, phone call, or both from either Constructive Disruption or a Working Group member.

Analysis
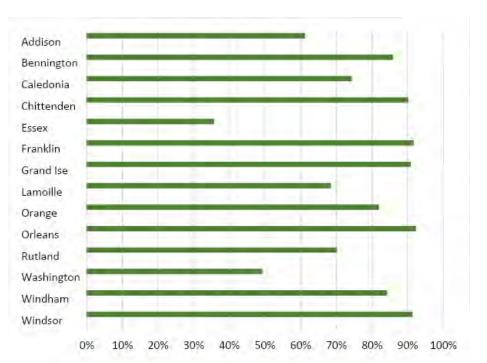
Statewide coverage in the data set

The overall level of statewide representation in the data set is very high, with 77% of Vermont's public libraries having taken the survey. With this high level of survey participation, we can say that the data and analysis are generalizable. That is, this information can be used as a keystone to understand conditions across all Vermont libraries since the majority of them are represented in this data set.

This percentages in this graph show the proportion of libraries from each county that participated in the survey. Every county is well represented.

Essex & Rutland Counties are in the lowest percentile of participation. All other counties are at or above 65% participation.

In addition to assessing representation by counting the number of libraries that participated in the survey, we considered the populations represented by those libraries at the county level.[1]

The chart here shows the percentage of the population for each county that is represented in the survey data.

All counties are represented above the 60% mark, with the exception of Essex (36%) and Washington (49%).

Statewide Coverage Conclusion
Considering these two ways of examining geographic representation, the only county that appears lightly represented in the survey is Essex County, with a total population of 5,994 people.

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[1] County Population has been drawn from the 2020 United States Census data, aggregated by the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.

Population Bands

Population as a factor indicates the potential scale of public demand for a Library's services. Libraries that serve larger populations need more staff members to meet greater public demand for service. For instance, Hancock Free Public Library serving a population of 359 will in principle have less scale of demand than Windsor Public Library serving a community of 3559 people because Windsor's population is ten times the size of Hancock.

Throughout this analysis we have organized data into population bands. This enables benchmarking to compare a specific municipality to peers using population as an indicator of the scale of public demand for a Library's services.

This banded approach also makes it easier to see the different ways libraries are staffed across the state. Some of this also bears out in differences among compensation, particularly when comparing libraries in the largest municipalities to those in the smallest.

The chart below summarizes survey participation by population band.

Population Band	Percentage of survey data
1-1,000	18%
1,001-2,000	30%
2,001-4,000	25%
4,001-6,000	13%
6,001-10,000	5%
10,001-20,000	7%
20,000+	2%

Staffing Levels

Staffing in Vermont libraries varies widely. In the chart below you can use the population bands to compare a specific municipality to peers using population as a benchmark. The chart below indicated averages for: hours open to the public; number of hours worked by staff weekly; and, the number of different types of Library staff positions.
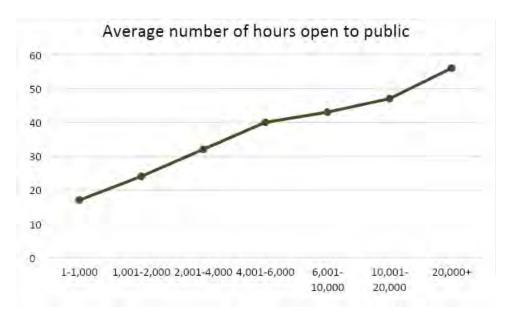
Population Band	Average number of hours open to public	Average number of hours worked by paid staff each week	Average number of paid staff positions
1-1,000	17	33	1.8
1,001-2,000	24	41	2.6
2,001-4,000	32	99	3.6
4,001-6,000	40	163	5.3
6,001-10,000	43	268	8
10,001-20,000	47	283	8.5
20,000+	56	351	10.7

The reason we have linked hours open to the public and staff hours is because many Vermonters access their libraries in person while those facilities are staffed to be open to the public.[2] Digital services that can be accessed remotely and outside of public open hours are an important service that does not require open hours, yet these remote-access digital services are but one component of a library's service profile.

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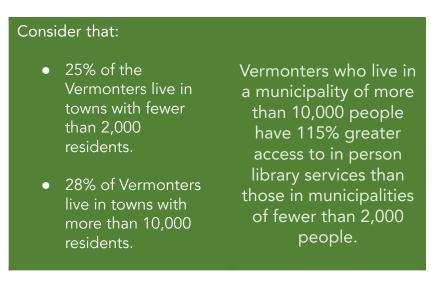
[2] This staffed approach to open public hours is distinct from relatively new public library models for public access, which use technology to provide an unstaffed in person library experience to the public.

Average number of hours open to the public

Irrespective of a community's population size, residents need the same levels of access to in person library services. Access is measurable by looking at the number of hours a library is open to the public.

The data shows that lower population areas offer fewer open hours during which the public may access library services in person.   Let's look at a cluster of the highest and lowest bands to demonstrate the stark difference in access to in person library service between the largest and smallest towns.

Consider that:

- 25% of the Vermonters live in towns with fewer than 2,000 residents.

- 28% of Vermonters live in towns with more than 10,000 residents.

Vermonters who live in a municipality of more than 10,000 people have 115% greater access to in person library services than those in municipalities of fewer than 2,000 people.

As we look at larger towns, the disparity is still significant, although less extreme.

Consider that:

- 22% of the Vermonters live in towns with fewer than 2,001 – 4,000 residents.

- 28% of Vermonters live in towns with more than 10,000 residents.

Vermonters living in a municipality of more than 10,000 people have 47% greater access to in person library services than those in municipalities of fewer than 2,001-4,000 people.

Vermonters who live in the larger towns have nearly double the level of access than those in this smaller population band alone.

When we track and consider the trend in hours open to the public from less to more populated municipalities, it is clear that more highly populated areas offer greater levels of in person access during open public hours.

However, public hours for Vermont public libraries in all population bands overall are part-time. Basically, 3 out of 4 libraries are staffed to support fewer than 40 open public hours each week (73%). This yields an unequal level of public access to libraries that is directly correlative to the size of a municipality served by a library, not the actual needs of the people living in that place.
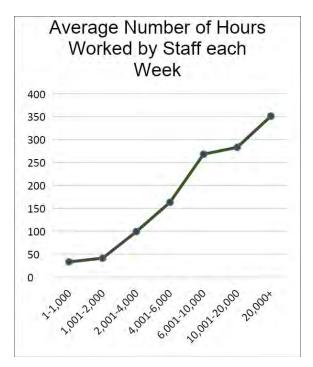
Weekly staffing levels

Information was collected in the survey about the number of hours a library is staffed each week. A review of this data shows that the source of the disparities around access to in person library services also correlates to the differences in staffing levels.

Libraries in the lowest two population bands, which have fewer than 2,000 people, on average staff their libraries at nearly the equivalent to one 40-hour per week full-time position. On average they are staffed 37 total hours each week. The chart to the right shows the average number of hours worked by staff week by population band.

Population Band	Average number of hours worked by paid staff each week
1-1,000	33
1,001-2,000	41
2,001-4,000	99
4,001-6,000	163
6,001-10,000	268
10,001-20,000	283
20,000+	351

Libraries in the highest two population bands are in municipalities with greater than 10,000 people. These libraries typically staff their facilities with an average of 7.9 full-time positions, or 317 hours weekly.

It's clear to see that in terms of weekly staffing levels, there is a great difference among places with larger and smaller populations.

There is a 158% difference in staffing levels between libraries serving 1–2,000 people and those serving 10,000 or more people.

For library workers, this also means that full-time work is more likely to be found in larger municipalities, which offer more hours and need more staffing. This means that libraries in smaller municipalities are likely to experience greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

Number of different types of paid staff positions

Survey respondents shared data about each of the staff positions in their libraries. This enabled us to count the distinct number of paid staff positions, as a way to consider the library's staffing levels beyond that of total staff hours alone.

The chart to the right shows the average number of types of paid staff positions by population band. As might be expected based on other data, higher population municipalities have more different types of paid staff positions.

Population Band	Average number of types of paid staff positions
1-1,000	1.8
1,001-2,000	2.6
2,001-4,000	3.6
4,001-6,000	5.3
6,001-10,000	8
10,001-20,000	8.5
20,000+	10.7

This means that libraries in more populated municipalities retain a staffing profile that supports specialization and focus on different aspects of library programs and services offered to the public. There is not simply more staffing in terms of hours, the staffing is more robust at the structural level.

1 out of 3 libraries that responded to the survey have a staff profile in which one or two team members are responsible for sustaining all aspects of institutional management and delivery of service (36%). Almost all of these libraries are in municipalities of fewer than 2,000 people (89%).

Number of staff members	Percentage of libraries in this range
1-2	36%
3-5	45%
6-10	14%
10+	5%

About half of the libraries that responded to the survey have modest levels of staffing, with 3–5 people on staff (45%). With two exceptions, these libraries all serve in communities with fewer than 6,000 people.

The chart to the left shows the percentage of libraries in the study and the typical number of staff members.

Libraries with staff in a range of 6—10 positions do not cluster around particular population size, since these libraries serve populations ranging from 3,400—15,000. With one exception, the libraries with the highest number of positions serve populations of 10,000 or more (5%). Of the 7 libraries in this last category, 4 are in Chittenden County and collectively they serve about 1 out of 7 people in the state (14%).

Staffing profiles by population band

The following charts show staffing levels by population band at a more granular level. It's clear that municipalities with smaller populations have fewer staff overall, which in effect puts downward pressure on individual staff members to master a broad range of responsibilities. These charts lend insight into the typical staffing structure.

Population 1-1,000

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Assistant Library Director	2	2	9
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	2	2	1
Custodian or Facilities Person	5	6	8
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	10	11	11
Library Director	18	18	20
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	1	2	5
Youth Services Librarian	2	2	20

Libraries in this population band have all part-time employees. Staff most often consists of the Library Director and the Library Assistant positions. The Library Director position is on average half-time.

Population 1,001-2,000

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	3	3	18
Assistant Library Director	3	3	15
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	5	5	2
Cataloger	1	1	5
Custodian or Facilities Person	10	10	2
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	19	22	7
Library Director	39	39	24
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	5	5	7
Youth Services Librarian	8	8	21

Staff size by position type are relatively small and consist of part time employees, although there is some variation in staff composition. Most commonly there is a Library Director and a Library Assistant.

Population 2,001-4,000

When libraries serve a community of greater than 2,000 people there is greater variability in the types of positions that comprise a staff structure. Consistent with libraries larger and smaller, there is the near-constant of a Library Director and Library Assistant positions, and as the population band increases there is likely to be more than one staff member working with the Director.

Also noticeable is the increase in average weekly hours for the Library Director positions at this population band and those above it. With larger sized populations, the Library Director position is much more likely to be nearer to full-time. All other positions remain closer to being half-time positions. Later in this report we will present data that shows part-time positions typically are not fully benefited, especially for health insurance and retirement benefits. This means that in small libraries where there is a demand for accomplishing many different tasks in fewer than 40 hours per week, staff members are least likely to have non-wage compensation.

Population 2,001—4000, continued

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	1	1	24
Assistant Library Director	12	13	26
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	5	5	25
Cataloger	3	3	15
Circulation Supervisor	4	4	25
Custodian or Facilities Person	11	11	5
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	19	32	17
Library Director	35	35	32
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	4	18
Youth Services Librarian	15	15	22

Note about the Bookkeeper/Finance position:
There is a statistical outlier in this and other larger population categories in connection with the Bookkeeper/Finance position. For a number of libraries, the person who does this work for the library has a position that resides in another municipal department. The staff position in these instances was typically reported as full time in the survey, inflating the average weekly hours number for Bookkeeper/Finance. Most libraries do not have full-time bookkeeping roles.

Population 4,001-6,000

For libraries that serve populations in this band, the Library Director position is typically full-time, and it is supported by multiple other positions. While there are fewer Library Assistant positions that occur in this population band, this Library Assistant work is subsumed as part of other job types that occur more often in this band. Notable is the more regular feature of a librarian position that is in addition to that of Library Director, such as Adult Services Librarian, Youth Services Librarian, or Assistant Library Director.

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	6	8	31
Assistant Library Director	4	4	27
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	2	2	19
Cataloger	4	5	30
Circulation Supervisor	3	3	27
Custodian or Facilities Person	6	6	17
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	11	22	26
Library Director	17	17	37
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	4	26
Youth Services Librarian	14	14	32

Note about the Custodian/Facilities position:
There is a statistical outlier in this and other larger population categories in connection with the Custodian/Facilities position. For a number of libraries, the person who does this work for the library has a position that resides in another municipal department. The staff position in these instances was typically reported as full time, inflating the average weekly hours number for Custodian/Facilities. As with the Bookkeeper/Finance position, most libraries retain staff for this work on a very part-time basis.

Population 6,001-10,000

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	5	8	31
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	3	3	19
Cataloger	5	5	27
Circulation Supervisor	2	2	40
Custodian or Facilities Person	5	5	20
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	6	16	17
Library Director	7	7	40
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	2	2	36
Youth Services Librarian	7	7	39

At libraries in this population band, there is consistently a full-time Library Director and a full-time or near full-time Youth Services Librarian. For many of these libraries there is also a part-time Adult Services Librarian.

A range of other types of staff positions that are filled on a part-time basis are part of the staff structure you see in libraries serving 6,001-10,000 people.

Population 10,001-20,000

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	5	5	35
Assistant Library Director	3	3	31
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	4	4	25
Cataloger	5	5	32.4
Circulation Supervisor	5	5	38
Custodian or Facilities Person	6	7	13
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	8	28	18
Library Director	9	9	37
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	5	15	23
Youth Services Librarian	5	6	39

In libraries serving communities of 10,001-20,000 people there are typically multiple full-time professional positions, with variations in the number of positions by type.

Also noticeable in these larger communities is a larger number of Library Assistant and Library Technical Assistant positions when compared to libraries in smaller-sized municipalities. The staff are scaled up, relatively speaking, to serve more people during the greater number of hours libraries in these communities tend to be open. The staff structure in larger facilities clearly supports a greater diversity of professional level services to the public, along with increased access to those services.

Population 20,000+

Just a few libraries in the state serve populations larger than 20,000 people. For those that reported in for the survey, it is clear that most positions tend to be full-time. Additionally, the data for these libraries shows there to be a relatively full complement of staff in terms of specialization, at the professional Librarian level and at the support levels.

Compared to libraries in municipalities with fewer than 6,000 people, those serving populations of 10,000+ offer greater opportunity for library workers to have a full-time or near full-time position. In the part of this report that discusses wages, it will also be evident that the libraries in larger communities also offer greater pay. The gap in total work opportunity and pay rate between larger and smaller municipalities in Vermont likely renders recruitment and retention in smaller libraries challenging.

Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Avg Weekly Hours
Adult Services Librarian	3	3	40
Assistant Library Director	2	2	40
Bookkeeper/Finance Person	2	2	36
Cataloger	1	1	40
Circulation Supervisor	3	3	37
Custodian or Facilities Person	2	2	30
Library Assistant or Library Clerk	3	14	32
Library Director	3	3	40
Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	7	16
Youth Services Librarian	3	3	40

Staff Wages

In this section, we present a synthesis of staff wages in Vermont libraries for 14 types of positions.[3] The survey collected data on wages for these specific types of paid staff positions, and respondents also provided data for paid positions that fall outside of these types. Data about unpaid volunteer labor provided help to draw a more complete picture by showing how volunteerism and unpaid labor also sustains public services.

It is absolutely clear that many Vermont libraries depend heavily on unpaid volunteer labor to sustain basic operations, such as public programming and the shelving of materials. At the same time, there are few cases in which there are educational requirements for unpaid volunteer labor. This suggests that professional standards for service are modified when libraries must use unpaid volunteer labor to sustain services.

We use population bands to present each of the staff positions. For each type, we've included the highest and lowest hourly rates of pay, along with the average hourly rate.

As a point of reference, we have included both the 2022 Vermont livable wage rate and the 2022 Vermont rate for a single person in a rural area to meet basic needs.[4]

Analysis of pay rates for the individual jobs represented in this survey show that 1 out of 4 Vermont library workers do not make enough per hour to meet basic needs in a rural area (27%). Upon closer inspection, all of these workers are part-time and as such are unlikely to access health benefits through their employer since just 5% of libraries in Vermont offer health benefits to part time employees. Indeed, the average number of paid weekly hours for all public library workers in municipalities under 10,000 that are represented in this survey fall short of full time 40 hours per week work.
This means 76% of the library workforce in Vermont might be considered part-time and not likely to experience the safety net that people often have when employed in a fully benefited position.

In principle, this data can be used to benchmark wages for these positions in different types of libraries. A cautious approach to benchmarking is advised since there are

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[3] There are four positions for which there was a minimum amount of data because they are not common to Vermont libraries. These are discussed in aggregate form for all Vermont libraries, near the end of this section of the report.
[4] Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office. 2022 Vermont Basic Needs Budget and Livable Wage Report. 2023.

positions that do not make what would be considered a wage that supports basic needs. Benchmarking is often thought of as part of an overall compensation strategy to recruit and retain employees, one that might by default be considered affirmative or aspirational. This outlook about benchmarking does not apply in those instances where staff position types are not paying a livable wage or a wage that would meet basic needs for a single person, let alone someone who is supporting other family members.

Another caution about benchmarking relates to qualifications for job roles. Many libraries do not have articulated qualifications for individual positions, so it can be difficult to make comparisons. Qualifications for each position are included in the analysis. It will be noticeable that often fewer than half of the reporting libraries noted any qualification by looking at this analytic component.

Note:
Readers will notice what might initially appear to be gaps in the data for some position types, in some population bands. For instance, libraries in a municipality with a population of 1 – 1,000 reported there to be no Circulation Supervisors on their staffs so this position doesn't appear in the data for that population band. In other words, the absence of a position for a population band means the position does not exist in libraries in that band.

Library Assistant / Library Clerk

A Library Assistant or Library Clerk works under supervision, performing clerical or support functions which may include checking materials in and out, answering the phone, and answering simple reference questions.

The Library Assistant / Clerk is the second most prevalent position in Vermont libraries, with just over 1 out of 4 workers represented in this study in this role (28%).

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	16%
High school or GED	31%
College Degree	10%

Only 2% of the staff members holding this job earn a wage sufficient to meet basic needs; they are all employed in libraries that serve populations larger than 20,000. This means that the second most common position in Vermont libraries is unlikely to support a single person's basic needs. It is also, if we consider staffing patterns, not likely to be a full-time position except in the larger municipalities.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.00	$13.25	$15.37	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.50	$13.18	$15.46	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$18.90	$13.18	$15.67	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$23.00	$13.65	$17.52	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.63	$14.50	$17.90	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.36	$14.50	$18.17	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$27.00	$16.00	$20.83	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$23.00	$13.18	$16.31	$15.33	$18.80

Library Technical Assistant / Library Technician

A Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician may supervise other staff in a limited capacity. The person in this role administers library programs and assists the librarian with all aspects of running a library and the person in this role may answer reference questions.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	2%
High school or GED	8%
College Degree	10%

This position is distinct from the Library Assistant/Clerk position in that its duties are more complex and broader in scope. 7% of Vermont library workers represented in the study have this job title.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$18.25	$18.25	$18.25	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$20.00	$15.00	$16.92	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$19.00	$18.75	$23.88	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$24.04	$14.53	$20.06	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$28.00	$19.00	$22.57	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Technical Assistant / Technician	$28.00	$13.18	$13.37	$15.33	$18.80

Circulation Supervisor

A Circulation Supervisor is primarily focused on the hiring, training, and scheduling of both staff and volunteers, along with the management of daily operations within the circulation department. The Circulation Supervisor may also be responsible for aspects of collection maintenance and may answer reference questions.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	3%
High school or GED	1%
College Degree	6%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	4%
Master's Degree in Library Science	1%

This position is not common, being held by just 3% of the Vermont library workforce represented in the study.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
2,001-4,000	Circulation Supervisor	$23.12	$18.41	$17.47	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Circulation Supervisor	$20.82	$19.00	$19.72	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Circulation Supervisor	$27.00	$25.60	$26.65	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Circulation Supervisor	$30.15	$22.10	$25.91	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$25.68	$29.90	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$18.11	$20.95	$15.33	$18.80

Cataloger

A Cataloger keeps accurate records of all items in the library database by performing original cataloging, copy cataloging, and database management.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	1%
High school or GED	<1%
College Degree	6%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	4%
Master's Degree in Library Science	1%

This position is not common, being held by just 4% of the Vermont library workforce represented in the study.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1,001-2,000	Cataloger	$25.00	$25.00	$25.00	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Cataloger	$21.73	$16.77	$19.93	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Cataloger	$22.00	$19.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Cataloger	$22.00	$19.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Cataloger	$27.46	$16.00	$20.90	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Cataloger	$32.00	$32.00	$32.00	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Cataloger	$32.00	$16.00	$21.94	$15.33	$18.80

Youth Services Librarian

A Youth Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for children and teens, including library outreach to youth-focused schools and organizations. The person in this role supervises the children's and teen areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for children and teens.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	1%
High school or GED	5%
College Degree	17%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	7%
Master's Degree in Library Science	9%

This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the children's and teen collections. This position is distinct from *Teen Services Librarian* because it is focused either on services to all children under the age of 18 or on children younger than thirteen.

Youth Librarians make up 10% of the library workforce represented in the study. The chart showing rates by population is on the following page.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Youth Services Librarian	$17.86	$15.00	$16.43	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Youth Services Librarian	$24.00	$15.00	$18.99	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Youth Services Librarian	$29.22	$13.49	$19.41	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Youth Services Librarian	$30.00	$14.00	$21.12	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.87	$18.00	$24.09	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.48	$24.00	$30.59	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$23.36	$28.45	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$13.49	$21.73	$15.33	$18.80

Adult Services Librarian

An Adult Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for adults, including library outreach to community organizations. The person in this role supervises the adult areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for adults.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	1%
High school or GED	6%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	6%
Master's Degree in Library Science	4%

This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the adult collections.

Adult Services Librarians tend to be seen in libraries in larger municipalities; they make up 5% of the library workforce represented in the study.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1,001-2,000	Adult Services Librarian	$22.00	$17.00	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Adult Services Librarian	$27.60	$27.60	$27.60	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Adult Services Librarian	$31.00	$17.50	$24.49	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Adult Services Librarian	$34.87	$17.00	$23.22	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$18.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Adult Services Librarian	$38.00	$21.00	$28.36	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$15.00	$24.68	$15.33	$18.80

Bookkeeper / Finance Person

A Bookkeeper or Finance Person typically works under the supervision of the Library Director and is responsible for maintaining financial records.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	4%
High school or GED	5%
College Degree	6%

Specific responsibilities include handling purchase orders, accounts payable, bank reconciliations, payroll, preparation of financial reports, and maintenance of financial records. The person in this position may also have secondary duties, such as maintaining office supplies.

This position is not common, being held by just 4% of the Vermont library workforce represented in the study. It appears from notes written by study respondents that many Library Directors also handle the bookkeeping.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$22.72	$20.70	$21.71	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$35.00	$17.70	$23.74	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$34.00	$23.06	$27.04	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$19.00	$14.00	$16.50	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$22.60	$18.00	$20.54	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$30.49	$18.89	$24.80	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$23.00	$21.00	$22.00	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Bookkeeper/ Finance	$35.00	$14.00	$22.19	$15.33	$18.80

Assistant Library Director

An Assistant Library Director works under the general direction of the Library Director, supervising and managing staff and overall library operations. The individual in this role supports the creation of annual goals and budgets, and they assist in the development of policies and procedures.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	<1%
High school or GED	4%
College Degree	6%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	4%
Master's Degree in Library Science	4%

In the absence of the Library Director, the Assistant Library Director serves as the acting Director.

Assistant Library Directors compose 5% of the library workforce represented in the study.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Assistant Library Director	$14.50	$14.00	$14.25	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Assistant Library Director	$21.00	$14.00	$18.08	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Assistant Library Director	$29.22	$13.10	$20.71	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Assistant Library Director	$35.00	$14.00	$25.23	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Assistant Library Director	$39.28	$15.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$30.00	$36.50	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$13.10	$22.50	$15.33	$18.80

Library Director

A Library Director is responsible for the administration and operation of the library, including the management of all library activities, the library budget, and the hiring and supervision of library staff. The person in this position advises the Library Board of Trustees in matters of planning, policy, and budget, carries out policies as adopted by the Board, and may work with municipal administration.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	4%
High school or GED	6%
College Degree	22%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	28%
Master's Degree in Library Science	26%
Master's Degree in any Field	4%

The Library Director position is the most common position seen in public libraries. 92% of libraries who participated in this study report having this position. In terms of the workforce, 1 out of 4 library jobs in Vermont are the Director role (24%).

The average hourly compensation for this position is $25.90, which is 27% above a basic needs wage for a single person. The public library industry nationally considers this role to be one calling for a Masters' degree, and in Vermont, about 1 out of 3 Directors have this qualification (30%). A challenge in recruiting and retaining candidates may be the fact that the pay in Vermont is not far above a wage to meet basic needs for a single person.

The Library Director position is the only one for which the Vermont Library Association (VLA) makes a salary recommendation. It has been 14 years since VLA has made such a recommendation. In 2009 they recommended an hourly wage of $19.38 for a Library Director. Considering inflation, the base recommendation for 2023 should be $28.06.[5]

This means that Library Directors in municipalities under 4,000 people are not making a professional minimum. Those working in locations in the 4,001—6,000 band are making barely above that minimum, at just $29.00 per hour. This leaves Library Directors in just 14% of the Vermont libraries represented in this study making a wage that is meaningfully in excess of the minimum to meet basic needs for a single person.

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[5] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. CPI Inflation Calculator

Library Director, continued

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Library Director	$30.00	$12.00	$20.00	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Director	$42.00	$15.00	$22.51	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Director	$43.95	$17.00	$24.92	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Director	$50.00	$19.00	$29.00	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Director	$40.03	$22.00	$33.12	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Director	$44.85	$23.00	$39.25	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Director	$54.00	$42.00	$44.70	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Director	$54.00	$12.00	$25.90	$15.33	$18.80

Custodian / Facilities Person

A Custodian or Facilities Person is responsible for the regular maintenance of the building and grounds of a library, including various types of cleaning to keep the inside and outside areas clean, neat, and safe.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	24%
High school or GED	9%
College Degree	<1%

The person in this role may also perform minor repairs and interface with outside vendors hired for larger repair and maintenance projects. The individual in this position may also assist with configuring spaces for programs.

This position places as the fourth most common in Vermont libraries, with 9% of the workforce having this role. Typically custodial staff work 10 hours per week, so the role is almost always part time. On average, it pays $20.70 per hour. This means that custodial workers in Vermont libraries on average make 20% less than Library Directors.

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Average Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.72	$18.00	$20.50	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$15.00	$17.43	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$25.00	$13.18	$19.98	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$15.45	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$20.63	$17.00	$18.53	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.00	$15.00	$19.07	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$20.00	$21.50	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$13.18	$20.70	$15.33	$18.80

Library Page or Shelver

A Library Page or Shelver works under supervision to return items to their proper places on the shelves and keep all items in the correct order. Shelvers may also retrieve items from the shelves. 71% of Vermont libraries rely on unpaid, volunteer labor to do this work.

10% of responding libraries report having a library page or shelver as a paid position. When reviewing the notes on volunteerism in Vermont, it is clear that materials are most often shelved with unpaid labor.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	9%
High school or GED	2%

- The wage range is $13.18 – $17.24
- The average wage is $14.63
- The average number of hours weekly for this position is 10

Paid Student Worker

A paid Student Worker or Intern performs varied tasks related to providing library service to patrons under the supervision of library staff. This position is distinct from Shelver or Library Assistant because it is by definition a position held by a student.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	4%
High school or GED	4%
College Degree	1%

9% of responding libraries report having a paid student worker/intern position, totaling 19 positions. Nearly half of these positions are distributed among two libraries whose population is each about 10,000.
- The wage range is $11.46 – $19.00
- The average wage is $14.70
- The average number of hours weekly for this position is 10

Teen Services Librarian

A Teen Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for teens, including library outreach to teen-focused schools and organizations. The person in this role supervises the teen

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	<1%
College Degree	4%
Master's Degree in Library Science	1%

areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for teens. This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the children's and teen collections. This position is distinct from *Children's or Youth Services Librarian* because it is focused specifically on services to youth ages 13 and older.

7% of responding libraries report having a teen librarian on staff. These positions are only in libraries in municipalities with populations of 4,000 or more, with half of the positions being libraries that serve communities of 16,000 or more people.

- The wage range is $18.00 – $31.00
- The average wage is $23.89
- The average number of hours weekly for this position is 30

Supervising Librarian

A Supervising Librarian works under the general direction of the Library Director. The person in this role is responsible for management and workflow of a specific department within the library.

Qualification	Libraries with this qualification in place
No educational requirements	<1%
High school or GED	<1%
College Degree	<1%
VT Certificate of Public Librarianship	1%

This includes training and evaluating staff, assisting with the development of goals and budgets as they pertain to a specific department, along with serving as a member of the management team.

8% of responding libraries report having a supervising librarian on staff. This job role appears to be little used across libraries in the state, with one third of the supervising librarians in the state being in a single reporting library with a population of about 20,000.
- The wage range is $14.00 – $29.21
- The average wage is $21.55
- The average number of hours weekly for this position is 36

Other Positions

Survey respondents provide details about a cross-section of staff members that do not neatly fit into the 15 types provided in the survey. About 1 out of 3 responding libraries reported on having other staff.

By and large, "other staff" denotes a pool of substitutes who help to deliver public service, usually as part of the circulation department.

Staff Position Type	Number of libraries with this position
Substitute for staff at service desks and/or provide circulation support (e.g., interlibrary loan)	20
Ad hoc youth programming support	6
Technology services & support	5
Programming & outreach for all	4
Fundraising, development, communications	4
Outreach & publicity for all	3
Historical archives curation / digitization	3
Grounds maintenance (incl. snow removal)	3
Administrative assistant	1

The table here demonstrates a diversity of staff positions that exist in libraries to help sustain programs and services to the public.

Unpaid Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern Positions

Unpaid labor is widely deployed across all types and sizes of Vermont and it is rare that there is an educational requirement. Just 6% require High school/GED, and 1% require a college degree.

This chart summarizes the types of unpaid labor used in libraries and its occurrence in responding libraries.

Type of unpaid labor	Percentage of libraries who use this labor
Shelving	71%
Programming & Outreach	42%
Facilities & Custodial work	20%
IT Support	14%
Cataloging	12%
Reference	11%
Grant writing	5%
Development	4%
Marketing	1%
Legal	<1%

Geographic Analysis

The population bands used for analysis capture well information about salaries and wages based on the scale of the population served by a library. Analysis shows that this proves to be an excellent way to group similar libraries together.

While we have the county data for the libraries that are represented in the survey, a county-by-county would be at odds with keeping confidential the information provided by respondents. We provide here a regional approach, to lend insight into differences in wages that may exist in relation to geographic factors.

North Counties	Central Counties	South Counties
Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans	Addison, Chittenden, Orange, Washington	Bennington, Rutland, Windham, Windsor

In the chart below are the average hourly rates for the three most common positions found in public libraries in Vermont. **There is a clear trend: central counties pay the highest wages overall.** On average:

- Library Directors in central Vermont earn 19% more than their counterparts in the north and 2% more than their peers in the south.
- Library Assistants in central Vermont earn 10% more than their counterparts in the north and 32% more than their peers in the south.
- Youth Services Librarians in central Vermont earn 30% more than their counterparts in the north and 16% more than their peers in the south.

Average hourly rates by region

	North Counties	Central Counties	South Counties
Library Director	$22.92	$27.32	$26.66
Library Assistant / Clerk	$15.88	$17.50	$13.21
Youth Services Librarian	$18.27	$23.81	$21.25

This regional pattern bears out when looking at health benefits as well. Using health benefits as an indicator of overall benefit levels, central Vermont library workers have the greatest access to health benefits (56%), followed by counterparts in the north (50%) and peers in the south (37%). It is evident from these statistics that overall, compensation does vary by region in Vermont.

Benefits

In the previous section of this analysis, we looked at wages as a form of compensation. In this section we will examine the data for a range of benefits that may be typical to employment. These are:

- Paid health benefits
- Paid dental benefits
- Personal time off
- Retirement benefits

- Paid family leave
- Unemployment insurance
- Disability insurance

The overall trend we see in the providing of benefits is that libraries located in municipalities with larger populations are more likely to offer benefits, and predominantly these are accessible to full-time employees. Some highlights about Vermont library workers are:

- 45% have access to paid health benefits.
- 30% have access to paid dental benefits.
- 36% are enrolled in *VMERS*, the Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System.
- 10% are enrolled in a pre-tax savings plan in lieu of *VMERS* membership.
- 5% are eligible for paid family leave; even fewer are eligible for unpaid family leave.
- 15% are covered by library-provided short- and/or long-term disability insurance.

Over half of the Vermont library workforce has access to no benefits outside of personal time off.

In this section, we review the range of benefit types for employees, organizing this information in population bands. This organization supports benchmarking across libraries, using the population of the municipality in which the library is located as a mechanism for comparison.

Paid Health Benefits

Vermont libraries in municipalities with larger populations are more likely to offer health benefits to employees. Very few offer paid health benefits to part time staff, with just 5% of responding libraries indicating that this is part of the part-time employee benefits package.

For paid health benefits there are several wide swings in the percentage of the benefit paid by the employer. Considering this, we have calculated the median employer payment since this reflects what might be understood as typical for libraries.

Population Band	Libraries in this band who offer paid health benefits	Range of employer payment toward premium	Median employer payment toward premium
1-1,000	13%	15—100%	100%
1,001-2,000	29%	80—100%	100%
2,001-4,000	24%	0—100%	90%
4,001-6,000	82%	0—100%	80%
6,001-10,000	100%	50—99%	90%
10,001-20,000	100%	90—100%	90%
20,000+	100%	80—93%	89%
All reporting libraries	45%	0—100%	90%

Paid Dental Benefits

About 1 out of 3 employees in responding libraries receive paid dental benefits as part of their compensation (30%). Typically, the employer pays the entire cost of this benefit, which is enjoyed primarily by full time staff members. Just 4% of part time employees have access to dental benefits.

Population Band	Libraries in this band who offer paid dental benefits	Range of employer payment toward premium	Median employer payment toward premium
1-1,000	4%	100%	100%
1,001-2,000	6%	50—100%	75%
2,001-4,000	31%	50—100%	90%
4,001-6,000	71%	50—100%	100%
6,001-10,000	57%	50—100%	100%
10,001-20,000	33%	85—100%	100%
20,000+	100%	100%	100%
All reporting libraries	30%	50—100%	100%

Personal Time Off (PTO)

3 out of 4 Vermont libraries offer paid personal time off as a benefit (76%). Those libraries that do not offer this benefit are typically serving in municipalities with populations under 2,000. This can be seen in the chart below.

When sharing details about eligibility for personal time off, major trends surfaced.

These are:

- 69% of libraries report providing PTO to full-time employees.
- 60% of libraries indicate providing PTO to part-time employees.
- 17% of libraries shared that they provide PTO as a benefit to specific positions. When this benefit is linked to a specific position, 79% of the time it is the Library Director. Otherwise, the recipient of this benefit is either the Youth Services Librarian or, in the case of the smallest libraries, the Library Assistant.

Population Band	Libraries who offer PTO
1-1,000	67%
1,001-2,000	73%
2,001-4,000	89%
4,001-6,000	100%
6,001-10,000	100%
10,001-20,000	100%
20,000+	100%
All reporting libraries	76%

For full-time staff members, annual leave ranges from 20—580 hours, with the average being 170 hours per year, or about 21 days per annum presuming an 8-hour workday. The wide spread is not grossly different from the median number of leave hours. The median number is 150 hours yearly, or about 19 days per annum presuming an 8-hour workday.

For part-time staff members, PTO is generally prorated based on the number of hours per week an individual employee typically works, though some libraries do seem to provide a fixed number of hours. Annual leave ranges from 2—380 hours, with the average being 80 hours per year, or about 10 days per annum presuming an 8-hour workday. The wide spread is not very different from the median number of leave hours. The median number is 70 hours yearly, nearly 9 days per annum presuming an 8-hour workday.

Retirement Benefits

The survey collected data on the retirement benefits offered to library employees. Overall, under half of public workers have any access to retirement benefits. Responses indicate that about 1 out of 3 library employees are enrolled in the *VMERS*, the Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System (36%).

Another format of providing retirement benefits is to offer a pre-tax savings plan, a benefit which may be offered in lieu of or in addition to enrolling employees in VMERS. 1 out of 10 of responding libraries shared that in lieu of VMERS participation, they offer a pre-tax savings plan (e.g., 401k plan). 1 out of 4 libraries offer employees a pre-tax savings plan in addition to VMERS enrollment (24%).

Eligibility for benefits varies considerably. As with many other forms of non-wage compensation, libraries in municipalities with larger populations tend to offer membership in VMERS. The upshot of these statistic does show that fewer than half of Vermont library workers have access to retirement benefits.

Population Band	Libraries in this band who participate in VMERS	Libraries in this band who offers pre-tax savings plan
1-1,000	0%	8%
1,001-2,000	25%	5%
2,001-4,000	37%	29%
4,001-6,000	71%	24%
6,001-10,000	71%	43%
10,001-20,000	44%	6%
20,000+	67%	3%
All reporting libraries	36%	24%

Paid Family Leave

Vermont's Parental Leave Law covers employers with 10 or more employees who work an average of 30 hours per week over the course of a year. The State's Family Leave Law covers employers with 15 or more employees working 30 hours or more weekly per annum.[6]

The survey data shows that about 2% of Vermont public libraries have more than 10 staff members, meaning that most employees are ineligible for protection and benefits that are accrued under the State Parental and Family Leave Laws.

We asked survey respondents to indicate if their Library has a separate policy for paid family leave. Just 5% of libraries provide paid family leave, which indicates that the majority of the workforce in Vermont libraries have access to either paid or unpaid family leave.

Unemployment Insurance

Vermont employers who pay at least $1,500 in gross wages during any calendar quarter in the current or preceding year, regardless of the number of employees, are obliged to pay into the State's unemployment trust fund.[7] Considering the data on wages and average number of hours worked, all Libraries represented in the survey are under obligation to pay into the trust.

When asked if their Library paid into Vermont's unemployment trust fund, one third of responding libraries indicated that their Library does (36%). However, nearly half indicated that they do not know if their Library pays into the trust (44%), and 20% indicated that their Library does not pay into the trust.

While the data might suggest that 1 out of 5 libraries are not paying into the trust, the data also shows that many respondents are not familiar with this aspect of payroll. There is an opportunity to educate library leadership about unemployment insurance and how it is funded in the State of Vermont, in order to gauge more completely Library compliance with this employer obligation.

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[6] Vermont Department of Labor Family Medical Leave
[7] Vermont Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance

Disability Insurance

The State of Vermont does not require employers to provide Disability Insurance to employees.[8] The State of Vermont does not have a long-term disability program. Employees seeking long-term disability apply to the Social Security Administration for disability benefits.

The survey collected data on the number of libraries that opt to provide short- and long-term disability insurance. About 1 out of 6 libraries provide this benefit (15%). Those libraries that do provide this benefit are in municipalities of every population band, without a significant clustering in smaller or larger sized municipalities.   In other words, there is no trend in the availability of this benefit and the size of a library's operation of the size of the community the library serves.

For the minority of libraries that pay for short- and long-term disability insurance, the predominant pattern is that the employer to pay for the full cost. The data shows that 8 out of 10 libraries pay the full amount for employees (84%). The balance of libraries share the cost of premiums between the employer and the employee, with the employer paying 66% or more of the cost.

Other Benefits

The survey collected information on benefits other than those discussed above, such as tuition remission, support for professional development, and fringe-type benefits. These are summarized below.

Fewer than 2% of libraries offer access to books at a discount, vision insurance, and access to an employee assistance program.

Type of unpaid labor	Percentage of libraries who offer this benefit
Financial support for conference/workshop attendance	67%
Travel reimbursement	51%
Access to technology for personal use	13%
Tuition assistance or reimbursement	9%
Ease of Access to Insurance	7%
Free beverages and snacks	6%
Textbook reimbursement	4%
Health & wellness incentives	4%
Professional dues paid by employer	3%
Paid life insurance	3%

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[8] Atticus Frequently Asked Questions about benefits in Vermont

Benefits – Incorporated & Municipal Libraries

The analysis of benefits for Vermont library workers shows that there are many who simply do not have access to benefits beyond personal time off, especially those who work in libraries that serve smaller populations.

As Vermont has both incorporated and municipal libraries, and we reviewed benefits data to detect what benefits are available to staff members based on the way in which their library is structured. The chart below shows the percentages of libraries that have any employee who is eligible for the specified benefit type.

Benefit type	Incorporated libraries	Municipal libraries
Health benefits	37%	52%
Dental benefits	21%	34%
Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System (VMERS)	4%	47%
Pre-tax savings plan in lieu of VMERS participation	33%	3%
Personal time off (PTO)	88%	79%

This chart reinforces the fact that less than half of Vermont library workers have access to health, dental, and retirement benefits.

Incorporated and municipal libraries may both be eligible for retirement benefits through VMERS. However, the eligibility requirements may constrain a library's ability to participate, especially in smaller-population municipalities where there is a predominance of part-time library workers.

There is not a major difference in the granting of personal time off to staff members when considering library structure, suggesting that leave as a benefit varies much more closely to the population size served by a library.

Appendix A: Public Library Compensation & Staffing Survey

Introduction
In May 2021 the Vermont State Legislature created the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont. The Working Group will submit a report by November 1, 2023 to the House and Senate Committees on Education in late 2023. Your participation in this survey is an important part of the research that will inform this report.

The Working Group is partnering with Constructive Disruption on survey development and deployment. Constructive Disruption will provide the Vermont library community support in survey completion and data analysis.

Your participation in this survey is confidential. Thank you for taking the time to support this effort.

Before you Begin
Because the survey platform will not allow you to save the survey and return to it, you must complete the survey in one session, moving through it in a forward direction and without pausing for more than 10 minutes.
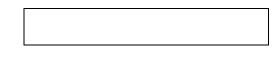
We recommend reviewing the complete set of questions in the Word Document or PDF posted on the Working Group's webpage and gathering information to inform your responses prior to beginning the survey.
https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont

Section A: Public Library Overview
All fields in this section are required. We are collecting specific details about your library to help ensure that the diversity of libraries in our state is represented in the data collected. This information will not be shared.
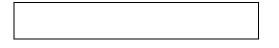
1. Public Library Name

2. Full Name of Library Director or Trustee completing the survey

3. Email address of Library Director or Trustee completing the survey
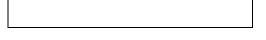
[ ]

4. Alternate email address (if applicable):

[ ]

5. Telephone number of Library Director or Trustee completing the survey

[ ]

6. County

[ ]

7. Is your library incorporated or municipal? (incorporated/municipal)

[ ]

If yes, what is the name of your municipality?

[ ]

8. Is your library a part of another, larger governing organization? E.g, is your library connected to another school or library administratively through an inter-local agreement? Or, is it one of multiple libraries within a larger organization such as a library federation.

For this question, we do not consider resource-sharing cooperatives such as GMLC or Catamount Libraries to be larger governing organizations.

___Yes

___No

If no, skip to next question.

If yes, what is the name of the larger organization?

[ ]

Library Open Hours
All fields are required in this section.

1. Which days each week is your library open to the public?

    ___Sunday
    ___Monday
    ___Tuesday
    ___Wednesday
    ___Thursday
    ___Friday
    ___Saturday

2. How many total hours each week is your library open to the public?

3. How many hours each week is your library open to the public on weekdays after 5pm?

4. How many hours each week is your library open on the weekend?

5. How many weeks is your library open to the public each year?

6. Does your library have a "seasonal schedule" or change its open days or hours during the year?

    ___Yes
    ___No

    If no, skip to next question.

    If yes, please describe.

Section B: Staffing Levels and Compensation

In this section of the survey, we ask you to input details about your staff. Please choose the staff classification category that best fits the duties assigned to each staff member, even if not an exact match. Feel free to note any major differences between our description of staff positions and the duties assigned to those positions at your library in the available comments fields.

Each staff member directly employed by your library should be entered into the survey just one time, in whichever staff classification category is the best fit. For example, if the Assistant Director is also the Children's Librarian, they should be listed in the Assistant Director area but the additional comments should reflect that they also serve as the Children's Librarian.

To complete this section, you'll need to have a list of staff positions handy, plus the following details:

- o Educational requirements
- o Number of people in the position
- o Average or typical number of hours worked weekly
- o Average or typical hourly rate of pay
- o Average or typical number of years staff members have worked in this position

Not all fields are required in this section. Please complete the questions for the positions that align with your staff positions and skip those that do not apply.

1. **Library Page or Shelver**

    A Library Page or Shelver works under supervision to return items to their proper places on the shelves and keep all items in the correct order. Shelvers may also retrieve items from the shelves.

    1a. Educational requirements of Library Page or Shelver position:

    ___no educational requirements

    ___high school or GED

    ___college degree

    ___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

    ___VT School Media License

    ___Master's Degree (any field)

    ___Master's Degree in Library Science

    1b. Number of Library Page or Shelver positions (use a whole number)

    1c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Library Page or Shelver positions

    1d. Average hourly rate of pay of Library Page or Shelver positions

    1e. Average number of years in position

    1f. Additional Duties:

2. Library Assistant or Library Clerk
A Library Assistant or Library Clerk works under supervision, performing clerical or support functions which may include checking materials in and out, answering the phone, and answering simple reference questions.

2a. Educational requirements of Library Assistant or Library Clerk position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

2b. Number of Library Assistant or Library Clerk positions (use a whole number)

2c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Library Assistant or Library Clerk positions

2d. Average hourly rate of pay of Library Assistant or Library Clerk positions

2e. Average number of years in position

2f. Additional Duties:

3. Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician

A Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician may supervise other staff in a limited capacity. The person in this role administers library programs and assists the librarian with all aspects of running a library and the person in this role may answer reference questions. This position is distinct from the Library Assistant/Clerk position in that its duties are more complex and broader in scope.

3a. Educational requirements of Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician position:

_____no educational requirements

_____high school or GED

_____college degree

_____VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

_____VT School Media License

_____Master's Degree (any field)

_____Master's Degree in Library Science

3b. Number of Technical Assistant or Library Technician positions (use a whole number)

3c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Technical Assistant or Library Technician positions

3d. Average hourly rate of pay of Technical Assistant or Library Technician positions

3e. Average number of years in position

3f. Additional Duties:

4. Circulation Supervisor

A Circulation Supervisor is primarily focused on the hiring, training, and scheduling of both staff and volunteers, along with the management of daily operations within the circulation department. The Circulation Supervisor may also be responsible for aspects of collection maintenance and may answer reference questions.

4a. Educational requirements of Circulation Supervisor position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

4b. Number of Circulation Supervisor positions (use a whole number)

4c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Circulation Supervisor positions

4d. Average hourly rate of pay of Circulation Supervisor positions

4e. Average number of years in position

4f. Additional Duties:

5. Cataloger

A Cataloger keeps accurate records of all items in the library database by performing original cataloging, copy cataloging, and database management.

5a. Educational requirements of Cataloger position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

5b. Number of Cataloger positions (use a whole number)

5c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Cataloger positions

5d. Average hourly rate of pay of Cataloger positions

5e. Average number of years in position

5f. Additional Duties:

6. Children's or Youth Services Librarian

A Children's or Youth Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for children and teens, including library outreach to youth-focused schools and organizations. The person in this role supervises the children's and teen areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for children and teens. This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the children's and teen collections. This position is distinct from *Teen Services Librarian* because it is focused either on services to all children under the age of 18 or on children younger than thirteen.

6a. Educational requirements of Children's or Youth Services Librarian position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

6b. Number of Children's or Youth Services Librarian positions
(use a whole number)

6c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Children's or Youth Services Librarian positions

6d. Average hourly rate of pay of Children's or Youth Services Librarian positions

6e. Average number of years in position

6f. Additional Duties:

7. Teen Services Librarian

A Teen Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for teens, including library outreach to teen-focused schools and organizations. The person in this role supervises the teen areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for teens. This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the children's and teen collections. This position is distinct from *Children's or Youth Services Librarian* because it is focused specifically on services youth ages 13 and older.

7a. Educational requirements of Teen Services Librarian position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

7b. Number of Teen Services Librarian positions
(use a whole number)

7c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Teen Services Librarian
Librarian positions

7d. Average hourly rate of pay of Teen Services Librarian positions

7e. Average number of years in position

7f. Additional Duties:

8. Adult Services Librarian

An Adult Services Librarian is responsible for all aspects of programming for adults, including library outreach to community organizations. The person in this role supervises the adult areas of the library, and they serve as the lead in providing reference and reader's advisory services for adults. This individual is also responsible for selection, development, and maintenance of the adult collections.

8a. Educational requirements of Adult Services Librarian position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

8b. Number of Adult Services Librarian positions (use a whole number)

8c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Adult Services Librarian Librarian positions

8d. Average hourly rate of pay of Adult Services Librarian positions

8e. Average number of years in position

8f. Additional Duties:

9. Supervising Librarian

A Supervising Librarian works under the general direction of the Library Director. The person in this role is responsible for management and workflow of a specific department within the library. This includes training and evaluating staff, assisting with the development of goals and budgets as they pertain to a specific department, along with serving as a member of the management team.

9a. Educational requirements of Supervising Librarian position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

9b. Number of Supervising Librarian positions
(use a whole number)

9c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Supervising Librarian
Librarian positions

9d. Average hourly rate of pay of Supervising Librarian positions

9e. Average number of years in position

9f. Additional Duties:

10. Bookkeeper or Finance Person

A Bookkeeper or Finance Person typically works under the supervision of the Library Director and is responsible for maintaining financial records. Specific responsibilities include handling purchase orders, accounts payable, bank reconciliations, payroll, preparation of financial reports, and maintenance of financial records. The person in this position may also have secondary duties, such as maintaining office supplies.

10a. Educational requirements of Bookkeeper or Finance Person position:

      ___no educational requirements

      ___high school or GED

      ___college degree

      ___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

      ___VT School Media License

      ___Master's Degree (any field)

      ___Master's Degree in Library Science

10b. Number of Bookkeeper or Finance Person positions (use a whole number)

10c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Bookkeeper or Finance Person positions

10d. Average hourly rate of pay of Bookkeeper or Finance Person positions

10e. Average number of years in position

10f. Additional Duties:

10g. Is the Library's Bookkeeper or Finance Person position part of another municipal department?

      ___Yes

      ___No

11. Assistant Library Director
An Assistant Library Director works under the general direction of the Library Director, supervising and managing staff and overall library operations. The individual in this role supports the creation of annual goals and budgets, and they assist in the development of policies and procedures. In the absence of the Library Director, the Assistant Library Director serves as the acting Director.

11a. Educational requirements of Assistant Library Director position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

11b. Number of Assistant Library Director positions
    (use a whole number)

11c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Assistant Library Director positions

11d. Average hourly rate of pay of Assistant Library Director positions

11e. Average number of years in position

11f. Additional Duties:

12. Library Director

A Library Director is responsible for the administration and operation of the library, including the management of all library activities, the library budget, and the hiring and supervision of library staff. The person in this position advises the Library Board of Trustees in matters of planning, policy, and budget, carries out policies as adopted by the Board, and may work with municipal administration.

12a. Educational requirements of Library Director position:

      ___no educational requirements

      ___high school or GED

      ___college degree

      ___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

      ___VT School Media License

      ___Master's Degree (any field)

      ___Master's Degree in Library Science

12b. Number of Library Director positions (use a whole number)

12c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Library Director positions

12d. Average hourly rate of pay of Library Director positions

12e. Average number of years in position

12f. Additional Duties:

13. Student Worker or Intern (paid)

A paid Student Worker or Intern performs varied tasks related to providing library service to patrons under the supervision of library staff. This position is distinct from *Shelver* or *Library Assistant* because it is by definition a position held by a student.

13a. Educational requirements of Student Worker or Intern position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

13b. Number of Student Worker or Intern positions
    (use a whole number)

13c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Student Worker or Intern positions

13d. Average hourly rate of pay of Student Worker or Intern positions

13e. Average number of years in position

13f. Additional Duties:

14. Custodian or Facilities Person

A Custodian or Facilities Person is responsible for the regular maintenance of the building and grounds of a library, including various types of cleaning to keep the inside and outside areas clean, neat, and safe. The person in this role may also perform minor repairs and interface with outside vendors hired for larger repair and maintenance projects. The individual in this position may also assist with configuring spaces for programs.

14a. Educational requirements of Custodian or Facilities Person position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

14b. Number of Custodian or Facilities Person positions
(use a whole number)

14c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Custodian or Facilities Person positions

14d. Average hourly rate of pay of Custodian or Facilities Person positions

14e. Average number of years in position

14f. Additional Duties:

14g. Is the Library's Custodian or Facilities Person position part of another municipal department?

___Yes

___No

15. Other paid staff

Please use this space to input details about other paid staff that do not fit within any of the previously listed position classifications.

15a. Other staff position titles:

15b. Other staff position description(s):

15c. Educational requirements of Other paid staff position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

15d. Number Other paid staff positions (use a whole number)

15e. Total number of hours worked weekly by Other paid staff positions

15f. Average hourly rate of pay of Other paid staff positions

15g. Average number of years in position

15h. Duties performed by other staff (check box)

___Shelving

___Cataloging

___Reference

___Children's programming

___Teen programming

___Adult programming

___Outreach and community engagement

___IT support to the public

___IT support to the library (e.g., ILS or network support)

___Legal counsel

___Human resources

___Marketing

___Webmaster

___Recycling

___Custodial

___Facilities

___Grant writing

___Development

___Other

15i. Please provide any information about other paid staff you feel is relevant (e.g. other paid staff are seasonally employed, one other paid staff position is paid for by another organization, etc.)

16. Unpaid Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern

An unpaid Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern may support the library by performing a variety of duties such as sorting books for shelf preparation, assisting with delivery and returns, processing customer requests, assisting staff with various programs, or directing visitors to the appropriate library staff. Please do **not** include Library Trustees or Board members in this section.

16a. Educational requirements of Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern position:

___no educational requirements

___high school or GED

___college degree

___VT Certificate of Public Librarianship

___VT School Media License

___Master's Degree (any field)

___Master's Degree in Library Science

16b. Number of Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern positions (use a whole number)

16c. Total number of hours worked weekly by Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern positions

16d. Average number of years in position

16e. Duties performed by Volunteer, Student Worker, or Intern:

___Shelving

___Cataloging

___Reference

___Children's programming

___Teen programming

___Adult programming

___Outreach and community
   engagement

___IT support to the public

___IT support to the library
   (e.g., ILS or network
   support)

___Legal counsel

___Human resources

___Marketing

___Webmaster

___Recycling

___Custodial

___Facilities

___Grant writing

___Development

___Other

16f. Please provide any information about other Unpaid Volunteer, Student Worker or Intern
    positions you feel is relevant (e.g. unpaid staff are seasonally employed, one unpaid
    staff position is paid for by another organization, etc.)

Section C: Benefits

To complete this section, you'll need to have on hand information about all the benefits paid to your employees, including costs and eligibility requirements. This part of the survey will involve:

- Health & dental benefits
- Leave (paid time off)
- Retirement plans
- Paid family leave
- Short- and long-term disability
- Unemployment insurance

1. **Employer-paid health benefits**

   1a. Are any staff eligible for employer-paid health benefits?

   __Yes

   __No

   If no skip to question 2.

   1b. How is eligibility for employer-paid health benefits determined?
   (Select all that apply)
   ___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid health benefits
   ___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid health benefits
   ___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid health benefits.
   Please list positions in text box.

   ___Other.
   Please explain.

   1d. How many full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid health benefits?

   1e. What is the average percentage of employer-paid health benefits full-time staff receive?

   1f. How many part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid health benefits?

   1g. What is the average percentage of employer-paid health benefits part-time staff receive?

2. Employer-paid dental benefits

2a. Are any staff eligible for employer-paid dental benefits?

__Yes

__No

If no skip to question 3.

2b. How is eligibility for employer-paid dental benefits determined?
Select all that apply.
___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid dental benefits
___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid dental benefits
___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid dental benefits.
Please list positions in text box.

___Other.
Please explain.

2c. How many full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid dental benefits?

2d. What is the average percentage of employer-paid dental benefits full-time staff receive?

2e. How many part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid dental benefits?

2f. What is the average percentage of employer-paid dental benefits of part-time staff receive?

3. Employer-paid leave benefits

3a. Are any staff eligible for paid leave?
Paid leave is all paid time off (PTO) including sick pay, vacation pay,
personal days, paid holiday, etc.?

___Yes

___No

If no skip to question 4.

3b. How is eligibility for paid leave determined?
Select all that apply.
___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid leave benefits
___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid leave benefits
___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid leave benefits.
Please list positions in text box.

___Other.
Please explain.

3c. How many full-time staff are eligible for paid leave (sick pay, vacation pay,
paid holiday, etc.)?

3e. What is the average number of annual paid leave hours full-time staff members
receive?

3f. How many part-time staff are eligible for paid leave (sick pay, vacation pay,
paid holiday, etc.)?

3g. What is the average number of annual paid leave hours part-time staff members
receive?

4. Employer-paid retirement benefits

4a. Does your library participate in VMERS, the Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement system.

    __Yes

    __No

      If no skip to question 4e.

4b. How many full-time staff participate in VMERS?

4c. How many part-time staff participate in VMERS?

4d. Does your library offer a 401k / 403(b) or comparable pre-tax savings plan for employees?
- o Yes
- o No

4e. How is eligibility for this option determined?
Select all that apply.
     ___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid retirement benefits
     ___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid retirement benefits
     ___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid retirement.
     Please list positions in text box.

     ___Other.
     Please explain.

4f. What percentage of retirement benefits for full-time staff are paid by the employer?

4g. What percentage of retirement benefits for part-time staff are paid by the employer?

5. Employer-paid family leave

Vermont workers have rights to unpaid family and parental leave, depending on a range of eligibility requirements. This question is for libraries where a local policy provides a level of benefit <u>higher</u> than that available under State statute.

5a. Does your Library have its own separate policy on employer-paid family leave?

    __Yes

    __No

       If no skip to question 6.

5b. How is eligibility for employer-paid family leave benefits determined?
    Select all that apply.
       ___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid family leave benefits
       ___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid family leave benefits
       ___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid family leave benefits
       Please list positions in text box.

       ___Other.
       Please explain.

5c. How many full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid family leave benefits?

5d. What percentage of family leave benefits for full-time staff are paid by the employer?

5e. How many part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid family leave benefits?

5f. What percentage of family leave benefits for part-time staff are paid by the employer?

6. Employer-paid short-term disability

6a. Are any staff eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits?

__Yes

__No

If no skip to question 7.

6b. How is eligibility for employer-paid short-term disability benefits determined?
Select all that apply.

___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits
___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits
___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits
Please list positions in text box.

___Other.
Please explain.

6c. How many full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits?

6d. What percentage of short-term disability benefits for full-time staff are paid by the employer?

6e. How many part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid short-term disability benefits?

6f. What percentage of short-term disability benefits for part-time staff are paid by the employer?

7. Employer-paid long-term disability

7a. Are any staff eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits?

__Yes

__No

If no skip to question 8.

7b. How is eligibility for employer-paid long-term disability benefits determined?
Select all that apply.

___Full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits
___Part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits
___Specific positions are eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits
Please list positions in text box.

___Other.
Please explain.

7c. How many full-time staff are eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits?

7d. What percentage of long-term disability benefits for full-time staff are paid by the employer?

7e. How many part-time staff are eligible for employer-paid long-term disability benefits?

7f. What percentage of long-term disability benefits for part-time staff are paid by the employer?

8. **Employer-paid unemployment insurance**
Does the Library and/or its municipality pay into Vermont's unemployment trust fund?

        __Yes

        __No

        __I don't know

9. **Other paid benefits or stipends**
What other types of benefits may be available to Library staff.
Select all that apply.
        ___Tuition remission
        ___Textbook reimbursement
        ___Financial support for conference/workshop attendance
        ___Eased access to life, pet, or disability insurance
        ___Access to technology for personal use
        ___Technology stipend (for hardware, software, or bandwidth)
        ___Free beverages and snacks
        ___Other.
          Please describe.

| |
| |

Appendix B: Staffing Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Population Band	Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Weekly Hours
1-1,000	Assistant Library Director	2	2	9
1-1,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	2	2	1
1-1,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	5	6	8
1-1,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	10	11	11
1-1,000	Library Director	18	18	20
1-1,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	1	2	5
1-1,000	Youth Services Librarian	2	2	20
1,001-2,000	Adult Services Librarian	3	3	18
1,001-2,000	Assistant Library Director	3	3	15
1,001-2,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	5	5	2
1,001-2,000	Cataloger	1	1	5
1,001-2,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	10	10	2
1,001-2,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	19	22	7
1,001-2,000	Library Director	39	39	24
1,001-2,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	5	5	7
1,001-2,000	Youth Services Librarian	8	8	21
2,001-4,000	Adult Services Librarian	1	1	24
2,001-4,000	Assistant Library Director	12	13	26
2,001-4,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	5	5	25
2,001-4,000	Cataloger	3	3	15
2,001-4,000	Circulation Supervisor	4	4	25
2,001-4,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	11	11	5
2,001-4,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	19	32	17
2,001-4,000	Library Director	35	35	32
2,001-4,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	4	18
2,001-4,000	Youth Services Librarian	15	15	22

Staffing Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Population Band	Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Weekly Hours
4,001-6,000	Adult Services Librarian	6	8	31
4,001-6,000	Assistant Library Director	4	4	27
4,001-6,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	2	2	19
4,001-6,000	Cataloger	4	5	30
4,001-6,000	Circulation Supervisor	3	3	27
4,001-6,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	6	6	17
4,001-6,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	11	22	26
4,001-6,000	Library Director	17	17	37
4,001-6,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	4	26
4,001-6,000	Youth Services Librarian	14	14	32
6,001-10,000	Adult Services Librarian	5	8	31
6,001-10,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	3	3	19
6,001-10,000	Cataloger	5	5	27
6,001-10,000	Circulation Supervisor	2	2	40
6,001-10,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	5	5	20
6,001-10,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	6	16	17
6,001-10,000	Library Director	7	7	40
6,001-10,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	2	2	36
6,001-10,000	Youth Services Librarian	7	7	39
10,001-20,000	Adult Services Librarian	5	5	35
10,001-20,000	Assistant Library Director	3	3	31
10,001-20,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	4	4	25
10,001-20,000	Cataloger	5	5	32.4
10,001-20,000	Circulation Supervisor	5	5	38
10,001-20,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	6	7	13
10,001-20,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	8	28	18
10,001-20,000	Library Director	9	9	37
10,001-20,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	5	15	23
10,001-20,000	Youth Services Librarian	5	6	39

Staffing Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Population Band	Job Title	Number of Libraries with this Position	Number of Positions	Weekly Hours
20,000+	Adult Services Librarian	3	3	40
20,000+	Assistant Library Director	2	2	40
20,000+	Bookkeeper/Finance	2	2	36
20,000+	Cataloger	1	1	40
20,000+	Circulation Supervisor	3	3	37
20,000+	Custodian or Facilities Person	2	2	30
20,000+	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	3	14	32
20,000+	Library Director	3	3	40
20,000+	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	3	7	16
20,000+	Youth Services Librarian	3	3	40
All reporting libraries	Adult Services Librarian	23	28	31
All reporting libraries	Assistant Library Director	26	27	26
All reporting libraries	Bookkeeper/Finance	20	20	18
All reporting libraries	Cataloger	19	20	28
All reporting libraries	Circulation Supervisor	17	17	30
All reporting libraries	Custodian or Facilities Person	45	47	10
All reporting libraries	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	76	145	23
All reporting libraries	Library Director	128	128	30
All reporting libraries	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	22	39	18
All reporting libraries	Youth Services Librarian	54	55	27

Appendix C: Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Population Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Liveable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Assistant Library Director	$14.50	$14.00	$14.25	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$22.72	$20.70	$21.71	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.72	$18.00	$20.50	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.00	$13.25	$15.37	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Library Director	$30.00	$12.00	$20.00	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$18.25	$18.25	$18.25	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Youth Services Librarian	$17.86	$15.00	$16.43	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Adult Services Librarian	$22.00	$17.00	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Assistant Library Director	$21.00	$14.00	$18.08	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$35.00	$17.70	$23.74	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Cataloger	$25.00	$25.00	$25.00	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$15.00	$17.43	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.50	$13.18	$15.46	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Director	$42.00	$15.00	$22.51	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$20.00	$15.00	$16.92	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Youth Services Librarian	$24.00	$15.00	$18.99	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Adult Services Librarian	$27.60	$27.60	$27.60	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Assistant Library Director	$29.22	$13.10	$20.71	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$34.00	$23.06	$27.04	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Cataloger	$21.73	$16.77	$19.93	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Circulation Supervisor	$23.12	$18.41	$17.47	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$25.00	$13.18	$19.98	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$13.18	$18.90	$15.67	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Director	$43.95	$17.00	$24.92	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Youth Services Librarian	$29.22	$13.49	$19.41	$15.33	$18.80

Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Population Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Liveable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
4,001-6,000	Adult Services Librarian	$31.00	$17.50	$24.49	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Assistant Library Director	$35.00	$14.00	$25.23	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$19.00	$14.00	$16.50	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Cataloger	$19.00	$22.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Circulation Supervisor	$20.82	$19.00	$19.72	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$15.45	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$23.00	$13.65	$17.52	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Director	$50.00	$19.00	$29.00	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Youth Services Librarian	$30.00	$14.00	$21.12	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Adult Services Librarian	$34.87	$17.00	$23.22	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$22.60	$18.00	$20.54	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Cataloger	$22.00	$19.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Circulation Supervisor	$27.00	$25.60	$26.65	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$20.63	$17.00	$18.53	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.63	$14.50	$17.90	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Director	$40.03	$22.00	$33.12	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$19.00	$18.75	$23.88	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.87	$18.00	$24.09	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$18.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Assistant Library Director	$39.28	$15.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$30.49	$18.89	$24.80	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Cataloger	$27.46	$16.00	$20.90	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Circulation Supervisor	$30.15	$22.10	$25.91	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.00	$15.00	$19.07	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.36	$14.50	$18.17	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Director	$44.85	$23.00	$39.25	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.04	$14.53	$20.06	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.48	$24.00	$30.59	$15.33	$18.80

Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Population Band

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Liveable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
20,000+	Adult Services Librarian	$38.00	$21.00	$28.36	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$30.00	$36.50	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Bookkeeper/Finance	$23.00	$21.00	$22.00	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Cataloger	$32.00	$32.00	$32.00	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$25.68	$29.90	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$20.00	$21.50	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$27.00	$16.00	$20.83	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Director	$54.00	$42.00	$44.70	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$28.00	$19.00	$22.57	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$23.36	$28.45	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$17.00	$24.68	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$13.10	$22.50	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Bookkeeper/Finance	$30.49	$14.00	$22.19	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Cataloger	$32.00	$16.00	$21.94	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$18.41	$20.95	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$13.18	$20.70	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$27.00	$13.18	$16.31	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Director	$54.00	$15.00	$25.90	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$28.00	$13.18	$13.37	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$13.49	$21.73	$15.33	$18.80

Appendix D: Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Position Type

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1,001-2,000	Adult Services Librarian	$22.00	$17.00	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Adult Services Librarian	$27.60	$27.60	$27.60	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Adult Services Librarian	$31.00	$17.50	$24.49	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Adult Services Librarian	$34.87	$17.00	$23.22	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$18.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Adult Services Librarian	$38.00	$21.00	$28.36	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Adult Services Librarian	$38.10	$17.00	$24.68	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Assistant Library Director	$14.50	$14.00	$14.25	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Assistant Library Director	$21.00	$14.00	$18.08	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Assistant Library Director	$29.22	$13.10	$20.71	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Assistant Library Director	$35.00	$14.00	$25.23	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Assistant Library Director	$39.28	$15.50	$26.60	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$30.00	$36.50	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Assistant Library Director	$43.00	$13.10	$22.50	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$22.72	$20.70	$21.71	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$35.00	$17.70	$23.74	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$34.00	$23.06	$27.04	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$19.00	$14.00	$16.50	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$22.60	$18.00	$20.54	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Bookkeeper/Finance	$30.49	$18.89	$24.80	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Bookkeeper/Finance	$23.00	$21.00	$22.00	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Bookkeeper/Finance	$35.00	$14.00	$22.19	$15.33	$18.80

Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Position Type

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Liveable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1,001-2,000	Cataloger	$25.00	$25.00	$25.00	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Cataloger	$21.73	$16.77	$19.93	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Cataloger	$22.00	$19.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Cataloger	$22.00	$19.00	$20.29	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Cataloger	$27.46	$16.00	$20.90	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Cataloger	$32.00	$32.00	$32.00	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Cataloger	$32.00	$16.00	$21.94	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Circulation Supervisor	$23.12	$18.41	$17.47	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Circulation Supervisor	$20.82	$19.00	$19.72	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Circulation Supervisor	$27.00	$25.60	$26.65	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Circulation Supervisor	$30.15	$22.10	$25.91	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$25.68	$29.90	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Circulation Supervisor	$35.00	$18.41	$20.95	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.72	$18.00	$20.50	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$15.00	$17.43	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$25.00	$13.18	$19.98	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$15.45	$19.67	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$20.63	$17.00	$18.53	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Custodian or Facilities Person	$22.00	$15.00	$19.07	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Custodian or Facilities Person	$23.00	$20.00	$21.50	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Custodian or Facilities Person	$26.00	$13.18	$20.70	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.00	$13.25	$15.37	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$20.50	$13.18	$15.46	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$18.90	$13.18	$15.67	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$23.00	$13.65	$17.52	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.63	$14.50	$17.90	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$21.36	$14.50	$18.17	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$27.00	$16.00	$20.83	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Assistant or Library Clerk	$27.00	$13.18	$16.31	$15.33	$18.80

Compensation Profiles – Sorted by Position Type

Pop Band	Job Title	Highest Hourly Rate	Lowest Hourly Rate	Mean Hourly Rate	2022 VT Livable Wage	2022 VT Rural Basic Needs Wage
1-1,000	Library Director	$30.00	$12.00	$20.00	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Director	$42.00	$15.00	$22.51	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Director	$43.95	$17.00	$24.92	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Director	$50.00	$19.00	$29.00	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Director	$40.03	$22.00	$33.12	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Director	$44.85	$23.00	$39.25	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Director	$54.00	$42.00	$44.70	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Director	$54.00	$15.00	$25.90	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$18.25	$18.25	$18.25	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$20.00	$15.00	$16.92	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.00	$13.18	$19.23	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$19.00	$18.75	$23.88	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$24.04	$14.53	$20.06	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$28.00	$19.00	$22.57	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician	$28.00	$13.18	$13.37	$15.33	$18.80
1-1,000	Youth Services Librarian	$17.86	$15.00	$16.43	$15.33	$18.80
1,001-2,000	Youth Services Librarian	$24.00	$15.00	$18.99	$15.33	$18.80
2,001-4,000	Youth Services Librarian	$29.22	$13.49	$19.41	$15.33	$18.80
4,001-6,000	Youth Services Librarian	$30.00	$14.00	$21.12	$15.33	$18.80
6,001-10,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.87	$18.00	$24.09	$15.33	$18.80
10,001-20,000	Youth Services Librarian	$34.48	$24.00	$30.59	$15.33	$18.80
20,000+	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$23.36	$28.45	$15.33	$18.80
All reporting libraries	Youth Services Librarian	$36.00	$13.49	$21.73	$15.33	$18.80

Appendix E: Survey Respondent Tools

Survey respondents had access to several different types of documentation to help them complete the survey.

- Get Ready Guide
- FAQs

- Detailed Guide to Section B
- Detailed Guide to Section C

Copies of these documents follow.

Vermont Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey: Get Ready

This summer, in partnership with the [Constructive Disruption](#) consultancy, the Vermont Department of Libraries and the [Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont](#) are undertaking a Public Library Compensation & Staffing Survey and Analysis. The compensation and staffing survey is part of the Working Group's charge, and will ultimately be included in the Group's report, scheduled to be delivered to House and Senate Committees on Education in November 2023.

Hearing from each of our 185 public libraries in this study is important to ensure the findings are representative and useful as both a picture of the current state of staffing and compensation as well as for advocating in the future. The survey intends to study staffing levels at Vermont libraries, whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet community needs, whether library staff compensation and benefits are sufficient, and how libraries rely on volunteers.

We've created this **Get Ready** guide to help you complete the survey. In addition to this guide, we are also offering the following resources to support you in completing the survey:

- A live help session on Wednesday, July 19 at 9am where Constructive Disruption will walk through the survey, offering suggestions and tips for completion and answering questions. You can register at https://vtlib.libcal.com/event/10897289 for the live help session; a recording will be posted following the session.
- A compilation of [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)](#).
- Detailed guides for questions in [Section B: Staffing Levels and Compensation](#) and [Section C: Benefits](#).

You will need the following to successfully complete the survey:

- Collect your data ahead of time. We recommend you print out or review a [PDF copy of the survey](#); you may even want to write down your answers on the PDF copy of the survey to make it quicker to fill out online.
- At least one uninterrupted hour to fill your information into the survey — the state's survey platform does not allow the option for you to return to a partially completed survey. *Be sure to set aside time to work through the survey where you will not be interrupted by library patrons or library responsibilities.*

- You will most likely find it easiest to complete the survey on a desktop computer or laptop, rather than a smaller device, such as a phone or tablet.

Overall, we estimate it may take two to three hours to complete the survey, with much of this time dedicated to collecting the information needed in the survey.

The link to the survey will be included in the emails sent to each library director. Need the link to the survey re-sent? Please contact Constructive Disruption directly at stephanie@constructivedisruption.info or judah@constructivedisruption.info.

Data you'll need for the survey

Some of what you will be asked for will be familiar to you, as you are asked for the information as part of the annual public library survey. For example:
- Hours open per week and weeks open per year
- A list of staff positions in your library
- The job descriptions, including educational requirements; average weekly hours worked; average hourly rate; and average time in the position for each of those staff positions (see the FAQ for more detailed information)
- Detailed information about your volunteers, including the number of volunteers you have.

You'll also need information that you will likely have to obtain from whomever fulfills your human resources functions. That may be you, or a Board member, a Human Resources department, or a municipality. We understand some libraries have very limited support in this area, and encourage small library directors to talk with their trustees and town treasurers if they need information to complete the survey.

In particular, you will need relatively detailed information about the funding or coverage provided by the library/town/city as the employer:

- Health & dental benefits
- Leave (paid time off)
- Retirement plans
- Paid family leave
- Short- and long-term disability
- Unemployment insurance.

You'll need this information for both full- and part-time staff.

Vermont Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey: Frequently Asked Questions

- [Who is putting out the Public Library Compensation & Staffing Survey?](#)
- [What will happen with the results of the survey?](#)
- [What is the survey hoping to accomplish?](#)
- [Who should complete the Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey?](#)
- [Is the survey confidential?](#)
- [What do I need to be ready to take the survey?](#)
- [What if I need help on specific questions in the survey?](#)
- [What if I am not sure my survey went through, or I want to review my answers?](#)
- [What else can I do to help with the Compensation and Staffing Survey?](#)
- [Who is Constructive Disruption?](#)

Who is putting out the Public Library Compensation & Staffing Survey?

The Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey is being organized and released by the [Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont](#). The compensation and staffing survey is part of the Working Group's charge to study "staffing levels at Vermont libraries, whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet community needs, whether library staff compensation and benefits are sufficient, how libraries rely on volunteers, and what resources are available for workforce development and training of library staff." The survey is being released in partnership with the [Constructive Disruption](#) consultancy, who are responsible for facilitating the survey and analyzing the resulting data, and the Vermont Department of Libraries, which is providing access to its survey platform and administrative support for this project.

The survey questions were initially developed by the Working Group and revised in consultation with Constructive Disruption.

What will happen with the results of the survey?

The information each public library submits to the survey will be analyzed by Constructive Disruption and presented to the Working Group Chair and the full Working Group at its meeting in September 2023. The results will ultimately be included in the Working Group's report, scheduled to be delivered to House and Senate Committees on Education in late 2023.

What is the survey hoping to accomplish?

The Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey is intended to be a comprehensive survey of compensation and staffing levels in municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont. The survey will benchmark current staffing and compensation levels at public libraries in Vermont to meet information needs identified by the Working Group.

The primary purpose of the survey and the resulting analysis and report is to inform recommendations from the Working Group to the State of Vermont legislature. The information from the survey and the Working Group's report may be used to aid public library boards in determining staffing levels and compensation in Vermont's public libraries.

The Working Group engaged an independent consultant in order to obtain reliable and statistically relevant data upon which the Working Group can base recommendations to the Vermont legislature related to:

- Current staffing levels at municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont.
- Current staffing compensation levels and benefits for the positions of interest at municipal and incorporated public libraries in Vermont.

Who should complete the Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey?

The survey should be completed by the library director.

If you work together as a staff to collect information for the survey, the library director should be the one filling out the survey.

If a library does not answer the survey within the open survey period, Constructive Disruption may reach out to the library's Board of Trustees to complete the survey. Each library should only respond to the survey once.

Is the survey confidential?

Yes! While we are collecting specific details about your library to help ensure the diversity of libraries in our state are represented in the data collected, this information will not be shared.

The survey is in compliance with the salary survey "safety zone" guidelines established by the US Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission in 1996. Under these guidelines, information collected must be aggregated in such a way that an individual participant's answers can not be determined, so that data cannot be attributed in a way that reveals the original source of information.

What do I need to be ready to take the survey?

You may want to review our Get Ready guide, which goes over information you need to fill out the survey.

In brief:
- We recommend you print out or review a PDF copy of the survey and collect the data for your answers ahead of time. You may even want to write down your answers on the PDF copy of the survey to make it quicker to fill out online.
- Some questions in the survey require detailed information you may not have immediately available in your financial documents.
- If you're completing the survey in real time, remember:
  - You'll want to set aside at least an hour of uninterrupted time in order to fill in the survey.
  - If you leave the survey unfinished — for example, if you take a break of more than 10 minutes in the middle of filling it out — your survey will time out and you will have to start over.
  - You must fully complete the survey in one go and submit in order for your answers to be recorded.

We do not recommend simultaneously gathering information and filling out the survey, as many questions might require research and you will risk the survey timing out.

How long will it take to complete the survey?

Much of the time you will need to complete the survey is in gathering the information you'll need to input. We suggest setting aside two to three hours to gather the information, with that time spread over multiple days well ahead of when you plan to fill out the survey, as you may need to leave time to hear back from others with information you need.

We recommend setting aside one hour for the actual survey, so you have plenty of time to input the data and are able to fill out the survey without interruption.

What if I need help on specific questions in the survey?

We have guides for that! Please see:
- Detailed Guide to Section B: Staffing Levels and Compensation [link]
- Detailed Guide to Section C: Benefits [link]

What if I am not sure my survey went through, or I want to review my answers?

Once you complete and submit your answers to the survey, the person who submitted it will receive a copy of their submission via the survey platform. You may want to save this report, as it will be an excellent resource for questions you may have in the future about your staffing and benefits.

What else can I do to help with the Compensation and Staffing Survey?

After you fill out your library's survey, why not reach out to one or more colleagues to see if they have completed their survey? Hearing from each of our 185 public libraries in this study is important to ensure the findings are representative and useful as both a picture of the current state of staffing and compensation as well as for advocating in the future. The Working Group hopes to have an 80% response rate, so your help in supporting colleagues in other libraries to complete the survey is essential.

Who is Constructive Disruption?

[Constructive Disruption](#) is a woman-owned consultancy firm based in Portland, Oregon, which focuses on strategic planning, community engagement, needs assessment, evaluation efforts, organizational development, and change management.

The Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey project is led for Constructive Disruption by Stephanie Chase and Judah Hamer. Longtime Vermont library staff may recognize these names — Stephanie and Judah were two of the founders of the [Green Mountain Library Consortium](#) , along with Lucinda Walker of Norwich Public Library.

Vermont Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey

Detailed Guide to Section B: Staffing Levels and Compensation

In this section, you are asked about each *type* of position in your library, rather than each staff person. You're entering each staff member into the survey just once, in whichever staff classification category is the best fit. The "best fit" will be the area where they spend the majority of their work hours.

- What you'll need
- What if I have multiple people working in the same classification?
- What if I am not sure how long each staff person has worked at the library?
- If I, or one of my staff, fulfills multiple roles (such as the survey example of an Assistant Director who is also the Children's Librarian), am I including their hourly wage in the average for both positions?
- What if I have a staff person who fills two positions?
- What if I have a position that is filled by an independent contractor? For example, I pay my bookkeeper separately, but they are not considered a staff person?
- Do I list my Board of Trustees members in question 16?

What you'll need
You'll need to have a list of staff positions handy, plus the following details:
- Educational requirements (you should be able to find these in a job description or a recent job posting, if you do not have a job description)
- Number of people in the position
- Average or typical number of hours worked weekly
- Average or typical hourly rate of pay
- Average or typical number of years people who have this position have been in it.

The survey asks for information about your bookkeeper or finance person as well as your custodian or facilities person; you may need to connect with your town or city for information on their education requirements.

What if I have multiple people working in the same classification?

You'll need to combine information if you have multiple people with positions in the same classification. For example, if you have three (3) Library Assistants/Library Clerks, you will want to:

- Check the education requirements for the position — not what level of education each staff person has;
- Add the number of hours each assistant/clerk works per week together into one large number and then divide that number by the number of assistant/clerk staff you have (in this example, 3);
- Add the hourly pay for each assistant/clerk and find the average by dividing by 3, the number of staff in the example;
- Add the number of years each assistant/clerk has been in the job and find the average by dividing by 3, the number of staff in the example.

For example, if Assistant/Clerk 1 works 15 hours a week, Assistant/Clerk 2 works 10, and Assistant/Clerk 3 works 7, you would add 15+10+7 for a total of 32, and then divide that by 3 to get an average of 10.6 hours a week. Round any number above .5 up to the next whole number, and .4 or below down to the next whole number. In this example, you would report 11 in the survey.

Next, if Assistant/Clerk 1 works is paid $13.25 an hour, Assistant/Clerk 2 is paid $14 an hour, and Assistant/Clerk 3 is paid $15.50, you would add 11.25+13+12.50 for a total of $42.75, and then divide that by 3 to get an average of $14.25 per hour. Do not round this figure; report it as is.

Complete the same process for the next question, adding up the number of years each staff member has been at the library and dividing by the number of staff. You should round the number up if it is over .5 (for example, enter 12 into the survey if your answer is 11.5 or higher) and round your number down if it is below (for example, enter 11 into the survey if your answer is 11.4 or less).

<u>You will use your own figures to answer this question</u>, adding up your typical hours, pay, and years and dividing by your number of staff in that classification.

What if I am not sure how long each staff person has worked at the library?

You may have this noted in your own staff personnel files, but if not, you'll want to reach out to whomever supports your payroll. That could be:

- a library or town Human Resources staff person or department
- whichever town department or staff person is responsible for employment records and payroll (start with your town treasurer and/or town clerk), or
- a Board designee.

If you're not sure, please ask your staff person — which you will want to do *before* you start to fill out the survey.

If I, or one of my staff, fulfills multiple roles (such as the survey example of an Assistant Director who is also the Children's Librarian), am I including their hourly wage in the average for both positions?

No. If you have a staff person whose duties are found across multiple classifications, choose the classification where they spend the <u>majority</u> of their time working.

For example:

- If the Assistant Director is also the Children's Librarian, they should be listed in the Assistant Director area if they spend the majority of their work hours on Assistant Director duties, but the additional comments should also include their duties as a Children's Librarian.
- If the staff person in this example spends the majority of their time doing work related to their Children's Librarian duties, the data should be listed in that classification, <u>even if their title is Assistant Director</u>.

What if I have a staff person who fills two positions?

If you have a single person who is <u>truly</u> filling two separate positions — positions you would post and fill separately if the current staff person left — you can list them separately in the survey.

What if I have a position that is filled by an independent contractor? For example, I pay my bookkeeper separately, but they are not considered a staff person?

Do not include independent contractors in the survey. There is wide variability about what may be independently contracted, ranging from specific programs to bookkeeping to custodial services. If independently contracted, these individuals are external partners, not staff of employees.

Do I list my Board of Trustees members in question 16?

No. You would not list the number of trustees or the hours they contribute.

Vermont Public Library Compensation and Staffing Survey

Detailed Guide to Section C: Benefits

In this section, you are asked about the various benefits your library (or your town or city) offers library staff. You will answer questions about both full- and part-time staff, and various kinds of benefits, including health, dental, leave (paid time off), retirement, and more.

You may need to work with whomever fulfills your human resources functions, whether that is you, a Board designee, your town treasurer, etc to answer the questions in this section. If you are unsure who to reach out to for this information, your Board chair, town clerk, or town treasurer may be a good starting point. For many, this section may be the most time consuming, because you are asked not only about benefits, but which staff are eligible.

- [What you'll need](#)
- [Reporting eligible staff](#)
- [Reporting benefits coverage](#)
- [Question 9, other paid benefits or stipends](#)

What you'll need
You'll need to have information, including costs and eligibility, on the following benefits:
- Health & dental benefits
- Leave (paid time off)
- Retirement plans
- Paid family leave
- Short- and long-term disability
- Unemployment insurance.

Reporting eligible staff
Questions 1d, 1f, 2c, 2e, 3c, 3f, 4b, 4c, 5c, 5e, 6c, 6e, 7c, and 7e ask how many full- and part-time staff are eligible for each benefit. Please be sure to reply with a

number — for example, if you have 3 full-time staff eligible, and the total number of full-time staff in your library is 3, please enter 3 rather than "all" or "everyone."

Reporting benefits coverage

For each type of benefit in this section, you are asked to report what portion is paid by the employer. Most individual libraries will not have this information on hand, so you will need to set aside time to connect with your local resources.

For <u>health and dental benefits</u>, you are asked to report the average percent of coverage paid by the employer for both full- and part-time staff (if applicable).

For <u>paid leave/paid time off</u>, you are asked to report the average number of paid leave hours for both full- and part-time staff (if applicable). Like the questions in section B, you will need to add up the leave for each eligible staff member and take the average.

For example, if you have two full-time staff who are eligible for paid leave, one with 2 weeks a year and one with 5, you would need to add those numbers together (7), multiply by the number of hours in a full-time week (which might be 32, 35, 37.5, or 40, depending on your organization and/or municipality), and then divide that resulting number by 2 to get the average number of annual paid leave hours. In this example, if full-time was 35 hours a week, the total number of paid leave hours would be 245, which would be divided by 2, the number of staff. The answer, 122.55, would be rounded up and reported as 123 hours.

For <u>employer-paid retirement benefits</u>, you are asked to report on both participation in VMERS (Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement system) and in a 401(k) or 403(b) for both full- and part-time staff (if applicable). You will need to know what percentage your organization or municipality is contributing to answer these questions.

For question 5, <u>employer-paid family leave</u>, you only need to complete the question if your organization or municipality has a local policy that provides a level of benefit higher than that available under State statutes.

For employer-paid short-term and long-term disability, you are asked to report the average percent of coverage paid by the employer for both full- and part-time staff (if applicable).

For employer-paid unemployment insurance, you simply need to know if the library and/or its municipality pay into Vermont's unemployment trust fund.

Question 9, other paid benefits or stipends
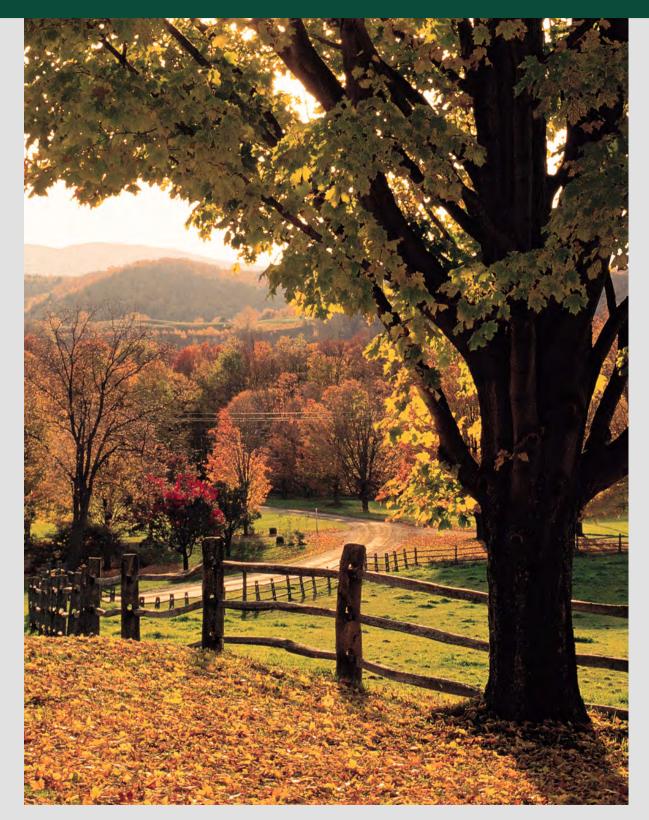
For the items in question 9, you need only to know if these benefits are available. You do not need to report who is covered by them or what level of coverage is supported.

Tuition remission means staff can have their own personal tuition for higher education or professional certifications for job-related courses, education, or certification paid or reimbursed by the employer.

Access to technology for personal use means the employer might pay for a mobile phone, mobile phone plan, tablet, laptop, wireless hotspot, etc that can be used for both personal and work-related needs. Technology stipend means you receive some kind of reimbursement or payment for such items, but it is your responsibility to purchase and/or maintain the technology.

Free beverages and snacks means these are available to you on a relatively ongoing or consistent basis, rather than by chance, at holidays, or for staff birthdays or celebrations. Do not check yes if the only option available to you consistently is a water cooler or bubbler or coffee in the break room.

VT Public Library Compensation and Benefit Survey Analysis

Hello!

We are Stephanie Chase and Judah Hamer of
Constructive Disruption —
and both former Vermont library directors!

Outreach and response

Goal of an 80% response rate from the 188 public libraries — achieved 77%

- More than 75% of the 44 libraries who did not respond to the survey for whatever reason received at least one personalized email, phone call, or both from either Constructive Disruption or a Working Group member

- Multiple rounds of both general and segmented emails about the survey
- Recorded webinar
- FAQ and detailed guides
- Delay of one week due to the floods; survey open an additional week
- Personal engagement: 285 follow up email and 22 follow up phone engagements from Constructive Disruption + Working Group, VLA, GMLC, and colleague reach outs

Statewide coverage in the data set

- With the exception of Essex and Rutland counties, counties had at least a 65% response rate

- All counties, with the exception of Essex and Washington, had at least 60% of the population of the county represented by responding libraries

- We tracked the response level of populations served by responding library

Population Band	Percentage of survey data
1-1,000	18%
1,001-2,000	30%
2,001-4,000	25%
4,001-6,000	13%
6,001-10,000	5%
10,001-20,000	7%
20,000+	2%

Population Band	Average number of hours open to public	Average number of hours worked by paid staff each week	Average number of paid staff positions
1-1,000	17	33	1.8
1,001-2,000	24	41	2.6
2,001-4,000	32	99	3.6
4,001-6,000	40	163	5.3
6,001-10,000	43	268	8
10,001-20,000	47	283	8.5
20,000+	56	351	10.7

Public hours for Vermont public libraries <u>in all population bands</u> overall are part-time.

Basically, 3 out of 4 libraries are staffed to support fewer than 40 open public hours each week (73%).

This yields an unequal level of public access to libraries that is directly correlative to the size of a municipality served by a library, not the actual needs of the people living in that place.

Population Band	Average number of types of paid staff positions
1-1,000	1.8
1,001-2,000	2.6
2,001-4,000	3.6
4,001-6,000	5.3
6,001-10,000	8
10,001-20,000	8.5
20,000+	10.7

Number of staff members	Percentage of libraries in this range
1-2	36%
3-5	45%
6-10	14%
10+	5%

There is a 158% difference in staffing levels between libraries serving 1–2,000 people and those serving 10,000 or more people.

For library workers, this means full-time work is more likely to be found in larger municipalities, which offer more hours and need more staffing. This means that libraries in smaller municipalities are likely to experience greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

1 out of 3 libraries that responded to the survey have a staff profile in which one or two team members are responsible for sustaining all aspects of institutional management and delivery of service (36%).

Almost all of these libraries are in municipalities of fewer than 2,000 people (89%).

Analysis of pay rates in the survey shows

1 out of 4 Vermont library workers do not make enough per hour to meet basic needs in a rural area (27%).

Upon closer inspection, all of these workers are part-time and as such are unlikely to access health benefits through their employer since just 5% of libraries in Vermont offer health benefits to part time employees.

76% of the library workforce in Vermont can be considered part-time and are not likely to experience the safety net that people often have when employed in a fully benefited position.

Library Assistant / Clerk is the second most prevalent position in Vermont libraries, with just over 1 out of 4 workers represented in the study in this role (28%).

Only 2% of Library Assistants earn a wage sufficient to meet basic needs; they are all employed in libraries that serve populations larger than 20,000.

This means that the second most common position in Vermont libraries is unlikely to support a single person's basic needs.

It is also, if we consider staffing patterns, not likely to be a full-time position except in the larger municipalities.

The Library Director position is the most common position seen in public libraries. 92% of libraries who participated in this study report having this position.

1 out of 4 library jobs in Vermont are Directors (24%). The average hourly compensation for this position is $25.90, which is 27% above a basic needs wage for a single person.

The public library industry nationally considers a Library Director to be a position calling for a Masters' degree, and in Vermont, about 1 out of 3 Directors must have this qualification (30%).

A challenge in recruiting and retaining candidates for Director roles may be the fact that the pay in Vermont is not far above a wage to meet basic needs for a single person.

In 2009 VLA recommended an hourly wage of $19.38/hr for a Library Director. Considering inflation, the base recommendation for 2023 should be $28.06/hr.

This means that Library Directors in municipalities under 4,000 people are not making a professional minimum.

Those working in locations in the 4,001—6,000 band are making barely above that minimum, at just $29.00 per hour.

Just 14% of the Library Directors in Vermont libraries represented in this study are making a wage that is meaningfully in excess of the minimum to meet basic needs for a single person.

A Geographic View

Central counties pay the highest wages overall.

On average:

● Library Directors in central Vermont earn 19% more than their counterparts in the north and 2% more than their peers in the south.

● Library Assistants in central Vermont earn 10% more than their counterparts in the north and 32% more than their peers in the south.

● Youth Services Librarians in central Vermont earn 30% more than their counter

Average hourly rates by region

	North Counties	Central Counties	South Counties
Library Director	$22.92	$27.32	$26.66

A Geographic View

North Counties	Central Counties	South Counties
Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans	Addison, Chittenden, Orange, Washington	Bennington, Rutland, Windham, Windsor

Average hourly rates by region

	North Counties	Central Counties	South Counties
Library Director	$22.92	$27.32	$26.66
Library Assistant / Clerk	$15.88	$17.50	$13.21
Youth Services Librarian	$18.27	$23.81	$21.25

Benefits

- 45% of Vermont library workers have access to paid health benefits.
- 30% have access to paid dental benefits.
- 36% are enrolled in VMERS, the Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System.
- 10% are enrolled in a pre-tax savings plan in lieu of VMERS membership.

- 5% are eligible for paid family leave; even fewer are eligible for unpaid family leave.
- 15% are covered by library-provided short- and/or long-term disability insurance.
- Over half of the Vermont library workforce has access to no benefits outside of personal time off.

Survey data shows that about 2% of Vermont public libraries have more than 10 staff members, meaning that most employees are ineligible for protection and benefits that are accrued under the State Parental and Family Leave Laws.

All libraries represented in the survey are under obligation to pay into the State's unemployment trust fund.

When asked if their Library paid into Vermont's unemployment trust fund, one third of responding libraries indicated that their Library does (36%). However, nearly half indicated that they do not know if their Library pays into the trust (44%), and 20% indicated that their Library does not pay into the trust.

Municipal vs Incorporated

Benefit type	Incorporated libraries	Municipal libraries
Health benefits	37%	52%
Dental benefits	21%	34%
Vermont Municipal Employee Retirement System (VMERS)	Ineligible	47%
Pre-tax savings plan in lieu of VMERS participation	33%	3%
Personal time off (PTO)	88%	79%

thank you

Public Library Broadband and Technology Survey Report

October 18, 2023

Background

The Department of Libraries has been called on to support the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont. The State Librarian and the Department's Technology Consultant also serve on the State of Vermont's Digital Equity Core Team. The Department determined that it should survey public libraries about their current broadband speeds and public access to technology and provide both bodies with a report on the findings.

The American Library Association's report titled **Digital Equity and America's Libraries** explains the importance of public libraries to communities as they:

(1) provide internet access both at and beyond the library;

(2) spur home adoption by increasing awareness of and confidence in using online resources and services; and

(3) support digital learning opportunities that boost K-16 education, workforce skills, entrepreneurship, telehealth, and other areas. (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/telecom/Digital_Equity_012623.pdf)

The **Digital Equity and America's Libraries** report points out that, "Inadequate broad-band capacity impacts the number of devices that can be supported at libraries. Streaming media, virtual classrooms, and telehealth services demand faster and higher-quality internet speeds. In rural communities where broadband prices are higher, the library may be the only provider of these resources." (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/telecom/Digital_Equity_012623.pdf)

This Public Library Broadband and Technology Survey Report aims to benchmark:

- internet speeds;
- types of internet service; and
- services provided to the public in Vermont's public libraries.

Survey Methodology

The online survey was shared with all public libraries in Vermont. It consisted of 25 questions about internet vendors and costs, public computer services, technical support, and a broadband speed test.

The survey period began on May 17, 2023. After a limited response, the Department made another push for survey participation in August 2023, sending reminders via email and following up with public libraries by phone. The survey period ended on September 19, 2023.

The survey instructed library staff to measure internet speed at a time when the library was closed to the public so that the library's total bandwidth was measured without any impact from others using the internet at the same time. This survey was not longitudinal and was not conducted at multiple points in the day.

It is important to note that during a public library's public service hours, the number of users on the library's internet network influences the internet speed. For that reason, internet speeds during its public service hours would very likely be slower than reported in this survey. Internet speed at a public library can also vary based on factors *outside* of an individual library building. For example, depending on the type of connection, internet usage by other households or businesses in the area could negatively impact internet speeds at a library that also uses the same service. Another example of this phenomenon can often be observed with internet speeds among buildings on shared municipal or state networks. For example, a municipal library that is connected to the internet along with other municipal buildings might observe higher speeds when the municipal offices are closed. Some libraries conducted their survey test via a Wi-Fi connection, which may have led to slower reported speeds.
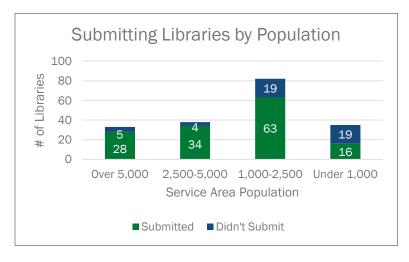
For any of these reasons, it is possible that any given library would report different speed test results on another day or at another time in the day. Additionally, a few of the reported speeds could be anomalously high or low if there was a temporary connectivity slowdown, a networking bottleneck, or a misunderstanding by the person conducting the speed test.

Survey Response

Public libraries from all 14 Vermont counties responded to the survey. The Department received survey responses from 141 of Vermont's public libraries or 75% of the 188 independent public libraries in Vermont. Additionally, one public library *branch* responded to the survey. Because that branch is a stand-alone facility with distinct operating hours and a specific service population, the Department has included it separately from its main library. Therefore, the survey analysis includes 142 public library locations.

Response rates were highest among libraries that serve more than 2,500 and somewhat lower among libraries that serve between 1,000 to 2,500 people. Response rates were notably lower among public libraries that serve fewer than 1,000 people. Libraries that

responded serve urban, suburban, and rural communities, though responding libraries skew heavily towards rural settings due to the largely rural nature of Vermont.
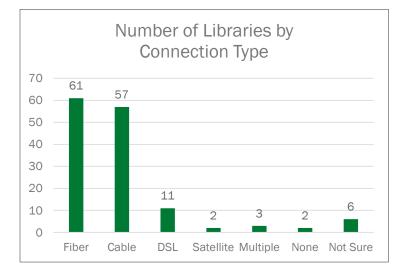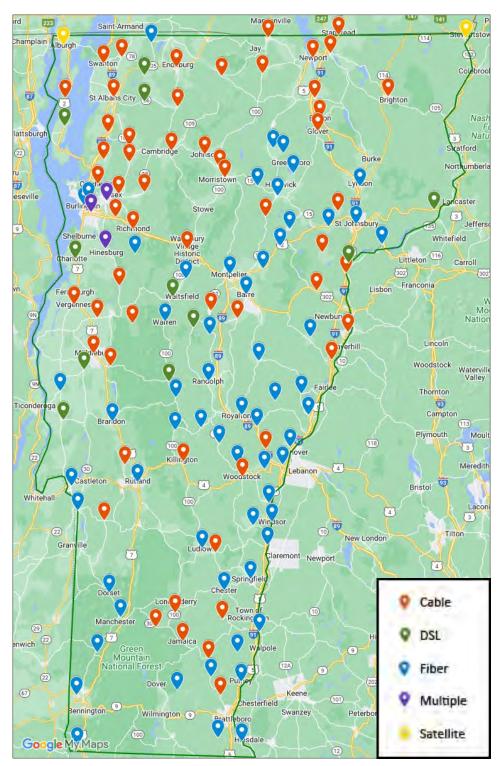
Submitting Libraries by Population

Service Area Population	Submitted	Didn't Submit
Over 5,000	28	5
2,500-5,000	34	4
1,000-2,500	63	19
Under 1,000	16	19

Type of Internet Connection

The largest numbers of responding public libraries have fiber (61) and cable (57) internet connections. Eleven public libraries reported having DSL connections, two reported having a satellite connection. Six libraries reported that they had internet access but that they were not sure what type of internet connection they had. Three public libraires reported having multiple connections (e.g., fiber and cable). Two public libraries that completed the survey reported that they do not have internet service at all.

Connectivity choices at each public library are typically determined by factors, including:

- the availability of local internet service providers (ISP) and technologies;
- the relative costs of service from each locally available ISP;
- the public library's budget; and
- the public library's speed and bandwidth needs.

Number of Libraries by Connection Type

Connection Type	Number
Fiber	61
Cable	57
DSL	11
Satellite	2
Multiple	3
None	2
Not Sure	6
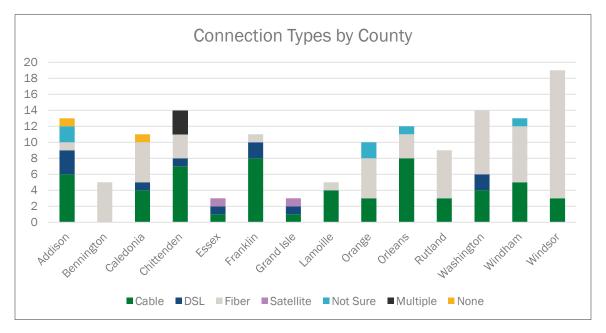
Type of Internet Connection at Public Libraries

Legend:
- Cable
- DSL
- Fiber
- Multiple
- Satellite

Cost
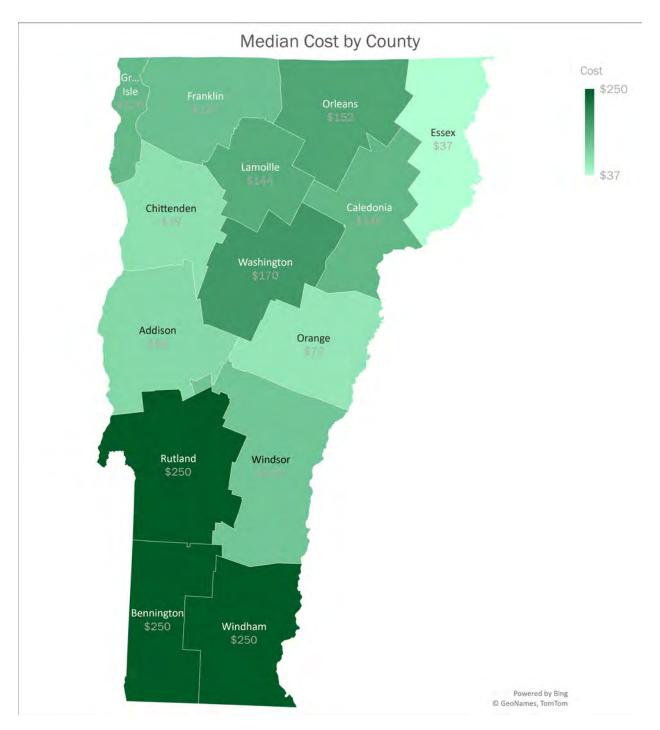
At least twenty-eight of the reporting libraries receive free access from a provider, predominantly cable with a smattering of other services. This is most common in Orleans County (seven libraries), followed by Addison, Chittenden, Lamoille, and Windham (three libraries each), and Rutland, Washington, and Windsor (two each). The remaining counties have one or fewer libraries with free service.

Twenty-nine responding libraries were unable to report costs, either because internet service is managed entirely by the municipality or another organization (and is either free or lumped in with other building charges), or because the information wasn't currently available to the library director.

When the responses of the 109 public libraries that were able to report the cost of their internet service were mapped by county, significant differences emerged. The cost to public libraries for internet service ranged from a low of $37 per month in Essex County to $250 per month in Bennington County (not counting libraries that receive free internet service). However, differences in cost are more likely due to the connection types that are most common within a county, rather than showing a geographic price differential within a given technology.

Connection Types by County
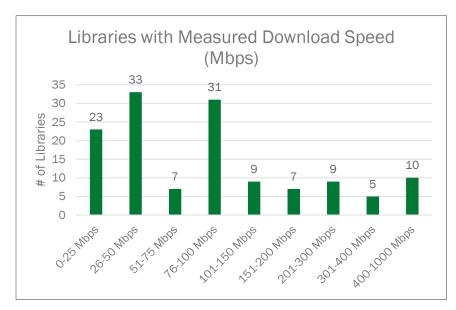
Many libraries (42%) receive phone service as part of their internet package. A very small number of libraries receive television (1%), security/fire alarm (1%), or managed Wi-Fi (1%) services through their ISP.

Median Cost by County
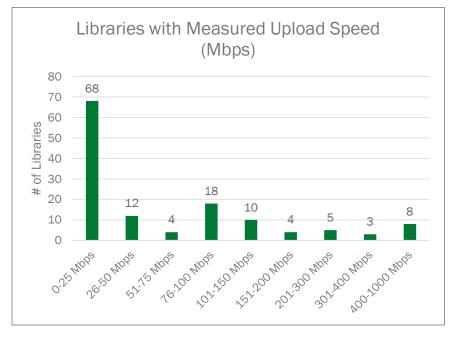
The median cost of internet cost by county, is reflected in the chart above. Median cost by county ranges from $37 per month in Essex County to $250 per month in Bennington, Rutland, and Windham Counties. (The monthly costs for internet service of the 28 public libraries that receive free service were excluded from this calculation and the chart above.)

Internet Connectivity Speed

Of the 142 survey respondents, 134 completed tests of download speed and 132 completed tests of upload speed in their library building. The speed test results show a significant variation in the download and upload speeds ranging from five Megabits per second (Mbps) to nearly 1,000 Mbps/1 Gigabit per second (Gbps).

Libraries with Measured Download Speed (Mbps)

Speed Range	# of Libraries
0-25 Mbps	23
26-50 Mbps	33
51-75 Mbps	7
76-100 Mbps	31
101-150 Mbps	9
151-200 Mbps	7
201-300 Mbps	9
301-400 Mbps	5
400-1000 Mbps	10

One hundred thirty-four libraries conducted tests of their download speed. They reported download speeds ranging from 0-25 Mbps to almost 1 Gigabit per second. Most of these libraries (70%) reported download speeds below 101 Mbps. Download speeds below 51 Mbps were reported by 42% of these libraries and download speeds below 26 Mbps were reported by 17% of these libraries.

Libraries with Measured Upload Speed (Mbps)

Speed Range	# of Libraries
0-25 Mbps	68
26-50 Mbps	12
51-75 Mbps	4
76-100 Mbps	18
101-150 Mbps	10
151-200 Mbps	4
201-300 Mbps	5
301-400 Mbps	3
400-1000 Mbps	8

One hundred thirty-two public libraries conducted tests of their upload speeds. These 132 libraries reported upload speeds that ranged from 0-25 Mbps to more than 900 Mbps. Most of these libraries (77%) reported upload speeds below 101 Mbps. Upload speeds at or below 51 Mbps were reported by 61% of these libraries, and upload speeds below 26 Mbps were reported by 51% of these libraries.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) included bandwidth targets for schools (and school libraries) and for public libraries in its 2016 **E-Rate Modernization Order**. According to the FCC, "With respect to libraries, the Order adopts as a bandwidth target the American Library Association's recommendation that all libraries that serve fewer than 50,000 people have broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps and all libraries that serve 50,000 people or more have broadband speeds of at least 1 Gbps." (https://www.fcc.gov/general/summary-e-rate-modernization-order)

Only 46 of the public libraries (34%) that conducted download speed tests reported download speeds that met or exceeded the FCC's established goal of 100 Mbps for smaller libraries.

An in-depth national survey conducted by the American Library Association (ALA) in 2020 found that across the nation "roughly 17% of public library locations still lacked the 25 Mbps/3 Mbps download and upload speeds recommended for consumer households. (https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/telecom/Digital_Equity_012623.pdf)

FCC Household Broadband Guide

	Light Use (Basic functions: email, browsing, basic video, VoIP, Internet radio)	**Moderate Use** (Basic functions plus *one* high-demand application: streaming HD video, multiparty video conferencing, online gaming, telecommuting)	**High Use** (Basic functions plus *more than one* high-demand application running at the same time)
1 user on 1 device	Basic	Basic	Medium
2 users or devices at a time	Basic	Medium	Medium/Advanced
3 users or devices at a time	Medium	Medium	Advanced
4 users or devices at a time	Medium	Advanced	Advanced

Basic Service = 3 to 8 Mbps*

Medium Service = 12 to 25 Mbps

Source: https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/household_broadband_guide.pdf

Twenty-three libraries, or 17% of those that conducted the internet connectivity speed test, reported download speeds below 25 Mbps. The results of this survey show that Vermont is on par with the national data collected by the ALA. The internet speeds at these libraries fall within the FCC's definitions of "Basic Service" or "Medium Service" for one household. With speeds of less than 25 Mbps, these libraries could likely only provide simultaneous internet access for "moderate" use (basic functions plus one high-demand application) for two or three community or staff members at once.

None of the responding public libraries in Vermont reported internet speed of 1 Gbps or faster, which the FCC recommends for libraries that serve more than 50,000 people. As there are no communities in Vermont with 50,000 people or more, it would have been unexpected for Vermont's libraries to have that level of internet connectivity.
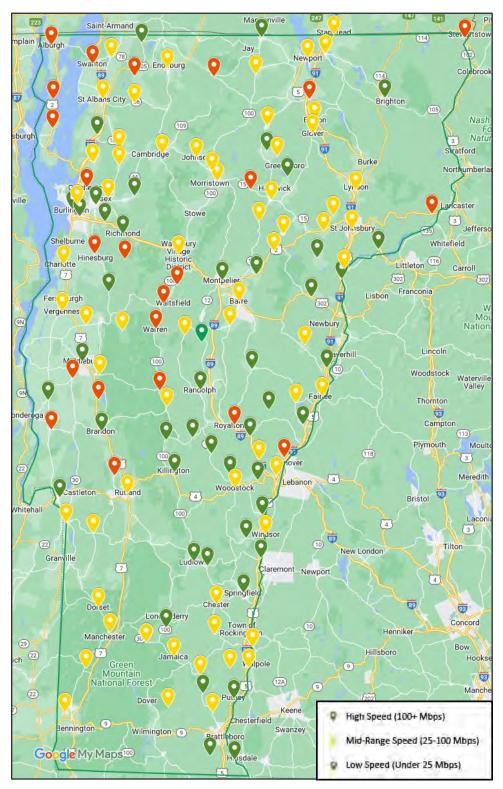
The impact of low internet speeds at public libraries is significant for Vermonters. If public libraries have low internet speeds, their patrons may be unable to complete necessary tasks at their library. Because public libraries are the only place some Vermonters can use the internet, low bandwidth can impact whether some people can use online service at all. Lower-income rural residents may be some of the hardest hit by lack of sufficient online connectivity deployment in their communities, lack of access to affordable computer equipment, or unaffordable internet service rates.

A Forbes article entitled **Your Guide to Understanding Internet Speed** dated December 31, 2022, summarizes information provided by the FCC about consumer internet services. The article shares that the internet speed needs for a variety of activities are as follows:

- Web browsing, social media and email: 1 Mbps
- File downloads: 10 Mbps
- Student: 25 Mbps
- Remote employee: 25 Mbps
- Video streaming: 3 to 4 Mbps for standard, 5 to 8 Mbps for HD, 5 to 8 Mbps for 4K
- HD video conferencing: 6 Mbps
- Gaming: 3 Mbps for console, 4 Mbps for online multiplayer
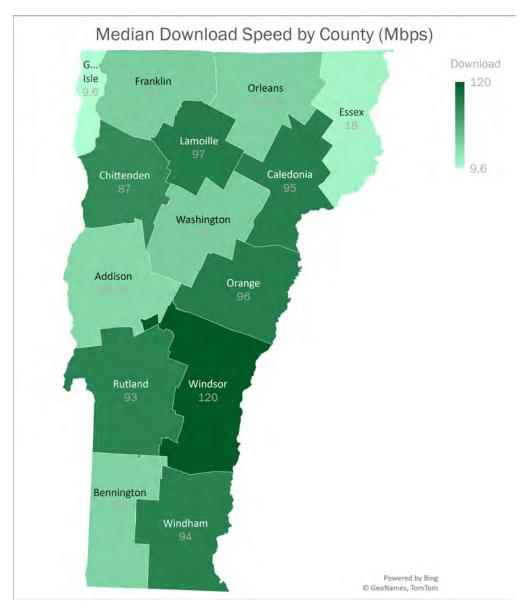
(https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/home/all-about-internet-speed/)

It is important to note that the speeds described in the Forbes article are for a direct consumer audience and related to the needs of individual households. In a public library setting, internet connectivity needs are very different. In a public library setting, multiple community members may be working remotely while others videoconference with their health care provider while others browse the internet or game. While the public uses the internet, the staff of the library also rely on the same connection to check out library materials, answer reference questions, and perform back-of-house tasks. Public libraries must have robust bandwidth if they are to provide their communities with reliable, fast access to the internet.

Speed of Reported Connections at Public Libraries

Legend:
- High Speed (100+ Mbps)
- Mid-Range Speed (25-100 Mbps)
- Low Speed (Under 25 Mbps)

The data collected in this survey shows that average internet speeds at public libraries varies significantly by county. The lowest average download speed, 9.6 Mbps, was reported in Grand Isle County and the highest average download speed was reported was in Windsor County, at 120 Mbps. Reports of lower internet speeds were more common in Grand Isle County and along the Green Mountains. Reports of higher speeds were more common in Chittenden County, in or near Windsor County.

Median Download Speed by County (Mbps)

The median observed download speed by county as reported to the Department ranged from 9.6 Mbps in Grand Isle County to 120 in Windsor County.

The data also reflects that the public libraries with fiber connectivity reported the fastest average download speeds (98 Mbps), followed by cable (42 Mbps), then DSL (14 Mbps) and satellite (14 Mbps).

Library Staff Familiarity with Internet Service

The engagement of public library staff with the Department about this survey suggests variation in the level of familiarity library staff in Vermont have with this topic and with their confidence in reporting on their institutions' internet service and connectivity speeds. The Department had anticipated that this would be a relatively simple and quick survey for library staff around the state to complete. However, the Department observed that the completion rate was initially very low and heard from the community that the survey was difficult for them to answer quickly. Six of the responding public libraries that have internet service were ultimately unable to tell the Department what type of internet service they had. While all but six of the libraries that reported having internet access completed the speed test, several respondents reached out for help conducting the speed test or to clarify their understanding of their library's internet connectivity.

The hesitance and uncertainty demonstrated by some library staff when responding to the survey may reflect that some library staff lack sufficient technical knowledge to evaluate whether their current internet service is the optimal solution to meet the needs of their community. However, this hesitance could also be a result of the fact that for some municipal public libraries, internet access is provided by the municipality and others in the municipality may be responsible for evaluating the overall needs and then selecting the ISP for the public library.

Connection Type	Cost Range	Median Download Speed (Mbps)	Download Speed Range (Mbps)
Cable	$0-540	42.50	6-420
DSL	$37-170	14.00	7-95
Fiber	$0-$499	97.50	5-910
Satellite	N/A	13.80	10-18

Multiple ISPs

Three public libraries in Chittenden County reported having more than one ISP. These libraries simultaneously use a pay-service (like Fiber or DSL) with a free cable service. These libraries are large or medium-sized and either consolidate the bandwidth or separate it for different functions (such as staff and public). While there are typically additional costs associated with the practice of having redundant internet service, one benefit to the public is that if service from one ISP goes down the other may still function. Another benefit to the public is that repairs can potentially be made to one set of equipment without impacting the public's ability to get connected to the internet.

The survey results show only mild correlation between

- service area population and internet speed;
- location and speed; and

- internet speed and cost.

This is likely because public libraries receive internet service from many different service providers in areas of the state with very different internet infrastructures in place. Public libraries operate independently from one another and do not negotiate rates of internet service together. For this reason, each public library would be unaware of faster bandwidth or lower costs of service offered to other institutions.

There is also likely a "set it and forget it" mentality related to internet service among public libraries. Once a public library has selected an ISP and paid the set-up costs involved in transitioning to a new ISP, that institution is not likely to shop for deals and change ISPs for many years. Given the limited staffing capacity in Vermont's public libraries, library staff and trustees have reported to the Department that they typically select their ISP and procure equipment and then simply continue paying for service. Over time, faster or less expensive options for internet service may become available in a municipality, but library staff are not always aware of the evolving marketplace or well-positioned to procure new equipment and change ISPs.

Public Computing and Technical Support

Of the 142 survey respondents, 139 libraries provide Wi-Fi for the public, at least 138 provide access to Wi-Fi outside of the library building, and 98% report that Wi-Fi is available 24 hours a day.

Public computing is offered by 96% of respondents, and 60 (42%) of those responding use software that refreshes the public computer between users. Only ten libraries (7%) use reservation software to manage their public computers and 58 (41%) use antivirus software.

Ninety-three libraries (65%) report that they provide the public with library-owned laptops for use in the building. Thirty-eight libraries (27%) reported that they loan library-owned laptops to patrons for home use and seven libraries (5%) reported that they loan library-owned cellular hotspots to patrons for home use.

Public printing is offered by 137 (96%) of the responding libraries and 109 (77%) reported that they offer color printing. At 80 of the libraries (56%), patrons can print from their own device using Wi-Fi printing. Library patrons can perform scanning at 118 libraries (83%) and faxing at 58 libraries (41%).

The responding libraries report different strategies of obtaining technology support for their networks and library-owned devices. Fifty-five libraries (39%) reported that they pay a company or individual for technical support services. Twenty-eight libraries (20%) reported that unpaid volunteers provide them with technical support, while seven (5%) reported that another municipal employee provides them with technical support. Twenty-five of the responding libraries (18%) reported using a combination of types of technical support.

Twenty-four of the responding libraries (17%) reported that they have no external technical support.

Do You Use External Tech Support?	# of Libraries	% of Libraries
Employee of the town	7	5%
Paid company or individual	55	39%
Unpaid volunteer	28	20%
Employee of the town & paid company	3	2%
Employee of the town & unpaid volunteer	1	1%
Paid company & unpaid volunteer	19	13%
Employee of the town, paid company, & unpaid volunteer	2	1%
No tech support	24	17%

Conclusion

Just as the speed of internet access at public libraries in Vermont varies widely, the costs public libraries pay their internet service providers also varies widely.

However, the data reported to the Department shows that public libraries that pay more for internet service do not necessarily have quicker internet speeds. The data also shows that public libraries in communities with larger populations do not necessarily have faster internet access at their public libraries.

The date shows that on average, fiber connectivity at public libraries has high speeds at higher cost, while cable and DSL connectivity provide significantly lower speeds at lower cost.

Public libraries with fiber connectivity reported the fastest median download speed tests results - up to 910 Mbps. Those with cable reported speeds of up to 420 Mbps, followed by DSL (up to 95 Mbps) and satellite (up to 18 Mbps). That said, public libraries reported a wide range of download speeds for all four types of internet service.

Almost all reporting public libraries in Vermont provide internet access and Wi-Fi access to the public. Almost all these libraries provide the public with access to the internet through Wi-Fi even during closed hours. Nearly all responding public libraries provide printing and scanning services of some type.

However, the internet speeds reported by 66% of Vermont's public libraries raise significant concerns about the access Vermonters have to the internet to access information and to

access the internet to perform essential activities of daily life including work, education, and telehealth. These concerns are particularly relevant in Vermont's small, rural communities, whose public libraries reported lower speeds than more populated areas of the state.

The FCC currently recommends that libraries serving fewer than 50,000 people have 100Mbps download speeds. The Department encourages public libraries to aim to meet that standard.

Appendix

Public Library Broadband and Technology Survey Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your library?
4. Does your library have internet access?
5. Who is your library's Internet Service Provider (ISP)?
6. What type of internet connection does the library have?
7. Looking at your bill, what is the base monthly cost for internet service, before any taxes, fees, modem charge, phone service cost, or any additional expenses?
8. Looking at your bill, what is your total monthly cost for services, including all taxes, fees, modem charge, phone service costs, and any additional services?
9. Does your bill include any additional services?
10. Do you also receive internet service from another provider, either in addition or as a backup option?
11. Is the computer you used for the test on a wired connection?
12. Download speed (in Mbps)?
13. Upload speed (in Mbps)?
14. Do you offer Wi-Fi access to the public?
15. Is there a usable Wi-Fi signal outside the building?
16. What part of the day is Wi-Fi available?
17. Does the library offer computers with internet access for use by the public?
18. Does the library use software that refreshes your public computers between users or when the computer restarts? If so, which product?
19. Does the library use public computer reservation/management software? If so, which product?
20. Does the library use antivirus software besides Windows Defender on the public computers? If so, which product?
21. Does the library offer library-owned laptops for use inside the building?
22. Does the library offer library-owned laptops for checkout and home use?

23. Does the library offer library-owned cellular hotspots for checkout and home use?

24. Do you offer:

25. Printing?

26. Color printing?

27. Wi-Fi printing?

28. Scanning

29. Faxing

30. Do you work with people outside the library for your tech support needs?

Library Public Service Offerings Results

Do you offer public WiFi?

Yes = 139 (98%)

No = 3 (2%)

Not Sure = 0 (0%)

Is the WiFi usable outside the building?

Yes = 138 (97%)

No = 0 (0%)

Not Sure = 1 (1%)

N/A = 3 (2%)

When is the WiFi available?

24 hours a day = 135 (95%)

6 am-5 pm = 1 (1%)

When the library is open = 1 (1%)

Not sure = 2 (1%)

N/A = 3 (2%)

Do you offer public computers?

Yes = 137 (96%)

No = 5 (4%)

Not sure = 0

Do you use software that refreshes the public computers?

Yes = 60 (48 %)

CCleaner = 1

DeepFreeze = 45

Fortres CleanSlate = 1

Reboot RestoreRX = 12

SmartShield = 1

Mac guest account = 1

Use Chromebooks = 3

Not sure = 5 (4 %)

No = 61 (48 %)

Do you use reservation/management software?

Yes = 10 (8 %)

Cassie = 1

Catamount = 1

Envisionware = 2

Fortres Time Limit Manager = 2

Libki = 1

PC Reservation = 2

Sam/Comprise Technologies = 1

No = 108 (90 %)

Not Sure = 2 (2%)

Do you use antivirus software?

Yes = 58 (48 %)

Avast = 6

AVG = 5

Barracuda = 1

Bit Defender = 3

Deep Freeze = 1

ESET = 2

Kaspersky = 1

LibData = 1

Malwarebytes = 6

McAfee = 3

We have chromebooks = 2

Norton = 12

SentinelOne = 2

Sophos = 2

Trend = 1

Vipre = 1

Webroot = 2

Yes, but note sure which brand = 7

Not sure if we have antivirus software= 6 (5 %)

No = 58 (48 %)

Do you offer library-owned laptops for use in the building?

Yes = 93 (65%)

No = 45 (32%)

Not sure = 1 (1%)

Do you offer library-owned laptops for checkout and home use?

Yes = 38 (27%)

No = 97 (68%)

Not sure = 4 (3%)

Does the library offer cellular hotspots for checkout?

Yes = 7 (5%)

No = 131 (92%)

Not sure = 1 (1%)

Does the library offer printing?

Yes = 137 (96%)

No = 5 (4%)

Not sure = 0

Does the library offer color printing?

Yes = 109 (77%)

No = 31 (22%)

Not sure = 2 (1%)

Does the library offer Wi-Fi printing?

Yes = 80 (56%)

No = 53 (37%)

Not sure = 9 (6%)

Does the library offer scanning?

Yes = 118 (83%)

No = 23 (16%)

Not sure = 1 (1%)

Does the library offer faxing?

Yes = 58 (41%)

No = 79 (56%)

Not sure = 5 (4%)

Do you work with people outside the library for tech support?

Employee of the town = 7 (5%)

Paid company or individual = 55 (40%)

Unpaid volunteer = 28 (20%)

Employee of the town & paid company = 3 (2%)

Employee of the town & unpaid volunteer = 1 (1%)

Paid company & unpaid volunteer = 19 (14%)

Employee of the town, paid company, & unpaid volunteer = 2 (1%)

No = 24 (17%)

October 10, 1986

TO: Eileen Lamberton, Secretary of State's Office

FROM: Patricia E. Klinck, State Librarian

RE: Attached Addopted Rule

Attached is the Adopted Rule for

  Revised Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries.

Thanks.

PEK:bgg
Attach.

Vermont Department of Libraries ● **c/o State Office Building Post Office**
Montpelier, VT 05602 ● **(802) 828-3265**

LOCATION: 111 State Street, Montpelier

ADOPTED RULE: COVER SHEET

Note: File this form with the Secretary of State and the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. You must file an adopting page and the text of the adopted rule with this cover sheet.

Please complete the following.

1. Title or subject of adopted rule: Revised Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

2. Agency: Vermont Department of Libraries

3. This filing ___ has X has not changed since the filing of the final proposal. If it has changed, please attach a letter to this filing explaining in detail what changes were made, citing chapter and section of those changes where applicable, including changes in economic impact.

4. The Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules X did not object ___ objected to the final proposal.

5. Procedural history of adoption:

This rule ___ was prefiled ___ was not prefiled. If prefiled, please give the date of prefiling: _____.

This rule was filed in proposed form with the secretary of state on the following date: ___3-14-86___.

This rule was published in newspapers of record on _____ and Secretary of State has record of all newspaper ads.

This rule was the subject of public hearings held as follows (give date, time, and place):
March 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 1985 - May 22, 1985

The deadline for public comment for this rule was ___4-24-86___.

This rule was filed in its final proposed form with the secretary of state and with the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on ___8-27-86___.

This rule was considered by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on ___9-24-86___.

This rule is filed in its adopted form on ___10-10-86___.

The effective date of this rule will be ___11-1-86___ (must be no sooner than 15 days following the filing of the adopted rule).

(PLEASE COMPLETE THE BACK OF THIS COVER SHEET)

CERTIFICATION: AS THE ADOPTING AUTHORITY (see 3 V.S.A. § 801(b)(11) for a definition) OF THIS RULE, I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE 3, CHAPTER 25 HAVE BEEN MET. I ALSO APPROVE THE CONTENTS OF THIS FILING.

Date: Oct 8, 1986

Patricia E. Klinck
(Sign here)

Patricia E. Klinck
(Type name here please)

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A RATIONALE

The following standards outline elements essential to the provision of community-oriented public library service in Vermont. Librarians, trustees, government officials and the public may use these standards as aids in evaluating and improving library service.

Vermont and its libraries and library system are unique, and its residents deserve responsive library service that is tailored to their needs. In many Vermont public libraries of all sizes, careful, continuous planning and self-evaluation have combined with the creativity, concern and commitment of librarians, trustees and citizens to provide excellent service.

Vermont's standards in their present form were developed in 1971. Subsequent revisions have continued to emphasize four essentials: public service, public access, interlibrary cooperation, and commumity involvement. In order to be flexible and useful to the diverse libraries in the state, the standards have stressed philosophical approaches to service.

Minimum standards offer criteria and direction for assessing and upgrading local library service. The standards provide a base from which libraries in even the smallest Vermont communities can proceed to improve service. Over the years, many Vermont libraries of varied sizes have developed innovative methods of meeting standards.

Meeting standards does not in itself guarantee adequacy of service. Some Vermont libraries, regardless of size or location, will consistently meet standards, yet will find that they need to do much more self-assessment and planning to remain responsive to their communities.

Meeting standards is purely voluntary. The Department of Libraries provides services to all public libraries, whether they meet standards or not. It may, however,

offer additional services to those public libraries which meet standards. The Department is eager to assist libraries in meeting standards and, once they are met, in continuing self-evaluation.

This document was developed by a committee of state library board members, Department of Libraries staff, and representatives of the Vermont Library Association and the Vermont Library Trustees Association. The committee considered written recommendation from the Vermont library community and held public hearings during its year-long revision process. State and federal regulations were included where applicable.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARIES*

The public should have access to library services.

The library

1. is open for service to all ages throughout the year at least 14 hours a week, including at least 4 hours after 5 pm or on weekends.

2. has a sign with the library's name clearly visible from the street and has hours of service posted in a location accessible to the public at all times.

3. has a telephone listed under the library's name.

4. is willing to serve all Vermonters. Basic library services are provided free of charge to all residents of the town or designated service area. Nonresident support not to exceed local per capita tax support may be charged. (Fines or deposits may be levied. Privileges may be denied irresponsible borrowers.)

5. serves the handicapped.

6. has cataloged its collection to allow public access.

A public library draws support from its community and should spend its money responsibly.

The library

7. receives and expends total local support of at least $3.00 per capita, of which at least some is local tax support. Documented in-kind contributions may be included.

8. has separately designated budget items for adult and children's library materials (books, periodicals, tapes, sound recordings, films, etc., not including supplies).

9. expends for library materials either (a) at least 15% of the total library operating expenditures or (b) at least $1.00 per capita.

10. budgets funds to reimburse staff for attendance at workshops or professional meetings, as well as travel to the regional library to select supplementary collections.

* Approved by the Vermont Legislative Administrative Rules Committee, September 25, 1986

Public libraries should cooperate with other libraries to broaden their services.

The library

11. contributes catalog cards at least annually to the Vermont Union Catalog.

12. supplies all statistical data required by the Department of Libraries.

13. communicates and cooperates with its local school library and other area libraries.

14. communicates and cooperates with its regional library, including sending a representative to the regional library, as needed, to select supplementary collections of books.

15. is willing to loan and borrow materials through the statewide interlibrary loan network according to the Vermont Interlibrary Loan Code.

A public library must have a librarian responsible for its overall operation.

The librarian

16. is responsible for carrying out the policies of the board of trustees and takes an active role in policy development, planning and budgeting.

17. is not a trustee of the library, but attends board meetings.

18. and staff (except volunteers) receive at least the federal or state minimum hourly wage (whichever is higher) and are covered by Social Security, according to federal law. The library may be staffed entirely by volunteers.

19. possesses either a library science degree or a Vermont certificate of library training; or has actively worked toward one of these in the past twelve months.

20. is responsible for collection development, including materials selection and weeding.

The board of trustees represents the community and is responsible for policymaking.

The board

21. is responsible for assessing community needs, developing responsive plans of

service, and evaluating library performance.

    22. has adopted and annually reviews a written policy including:

        a. a statement of purpose,

        b. affirmation of principles of intellectual freedom,

        c. confidentiality of library records,

        d. collection development guidelines.

A copy of the current policy must be filed with the Department of Libraries.

    23. has a written job description for the librarian and evaluates the librarian's performance at least annually.

    24. includes the librarian in all meetings with the exception of executive sessions.

    25. meets at least every three months in meetings warned and open to the public, according to the Vermont Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. 312-317).

    26. makes an annual financial and statistical report to municipal authorities and the public, which is included in the town, city or village report.

    27. has at least one member appointed by municipal authorities or one member publicly elected at a duly warned town, city, or village election.

A "community" library (a combined school-public library) or a public library located in a school or other multi-purpose building (town clerk's office, senior center, etc.) must make special effort to meet the needs of the general public.

    Such a library

    28. provides ready public access by being in a location convenient to all users, by having an entrance directly accessible by the public, and by having its own telephone listed under the library's name.

    29. provides materials and reading space for all ages.

    30. conducts public relations and/or sponsors programs specifically aimed at those who might not readily come to the facility (In a school setting, this would include preschoolers and adults; in a senior center, this would include children; etc.)

31. is administered year-round by a librarian who is responsible for serving the total community.

32. has a board which represents the community served (In a school setting, no more than half of the board members may come from the school sector) and addresses the unique division of responsibility resulting from the shared situation.

MEMORANDUM   OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

TO: Patricia E. Klinck, State Librarian

FROM: Catherine Simpson, Director of APA *CS*

RE: Revised Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

DATE: October 22, 1986

We received the above rule on October 14, 1986. It has been assigned the adopted rule number 86-71 and will become effective on November 1, 1986.

However, the Adopted Rule cover sheet is not completely filled out, and you neglected to file the Adopting page. We need these in order for the filing to be correct.

The first item under #5 on the Cover Sheet has not been completed. According to 3 V.S.A. § 837 and Executive Order #19 (copy enclosed), the Department of Libraries is not required to prefile.

The third item under #5 was also not filled out. Our records indicate that the proposed rule was published in newspapers of record on 4/3/86 and 4/10/86. We'll be glad to look up this information for you if you will give us a call.

I'm enclosing copies of both the Adopted Rule Cover Sheet and the Adopting Page for your use.

October 24, 1986

TO: Catherine Simpson, Director of APA, Secretary of State's Office

FROM: Patricia E. Klinck, State Librarian

RE: Revised Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

Enclosed is the Adopted Rule cover sheet and the Adopting page per your memo of October 22, 1986. I trust all is in order.

Encl.

ADOPTED RULE: COVER SHEET

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Date: _____10-24-86_____

Patricia E. Klinck
(Sign here)

PATRICIA E KLINCK
(Type name here please)

ADOPTING PAGE

Note: This form must be filed three times during the rulemaking process, viz., with the Proposed Rule Cover Sheet, Final Proposal Cover Sheet, and Adopted Rule Cover Sheet.

Please complete the following:

1. Title or subject of rule: Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

2. Agency: Department of Libraries

3. Agency's reference number, if any:

4. This is ___ a new rule   X   an amendment of an existing rule   (revision)

    ___ a repeal of an existing rule

    Except for new rules, please give the name of the existing rule and the date on which it was last amended or adopted:

    79 P24 - Adopted September 12, 1979

    Note: To satisfy the requirement for an annotated text, an agency must submit the entire rule in annotated form with the filings of proposed rules and final proposals. Filing a paragraph or page of a larger rule is not sufficient. Similarly, if the rules of the agency have been published as part of the Vermont Administrative Code (VAC), the agency shall file the annotated text, if possible, using the appropriate page or pages of the VAC as a basis for the annotated version. New rules need not be accompanied by an annotated text. Rules which have been comprehensively revised are also exempted from the requirement for an annotated text, although a copy of the former rule is required.

Selected Expert Presentations to the Working Group

Matthew Bollerman, Sustainable Libraries Initiative

John Chrastka, EveryLibrary Institute Testimony to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

John Chrastka, Framework for a Vermont "Libraries for All" Act

Charles Dabritz, VSBA Recommended Policy D22 Selection of Library Materials

Xusana Davis, Equity in Library Services

Dana Kaplan, Outright Vermont Presentation

Joyce McIntosh, Armed with Intellectual Freedom: Current Challenges and Next Steps

Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Matthew Bollerman | March 24, 2023

<u>Our Mission</u>

Empowering library leaders to advance environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices to intentionally address climate change and co-create thriving communities.

Sustainability = Core Value

American Library Association

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Triple Bottom Line Definition:

- Environmentally Sound

- Socially Equitable

- Economically Feasible

Sustainable Libraries

✔ **Strong & Authentic Institutions**

✔ Catalyst for **Social Cohesion & Civic Participation** in Communities

✔ Working on **Climate Mitigation** (reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GhG)

✔ Active Participants in **Climate Adaptation** (strengthening community resilience)

How to create systemic change?

Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative

Sustainable Library Certification Program
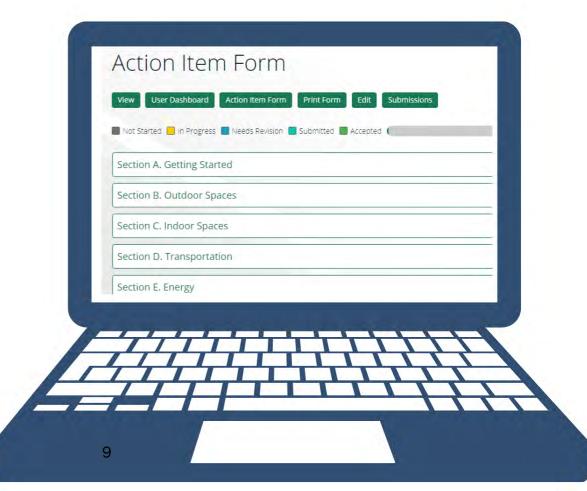
https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/

Sustainable Library Certification Program

- Step-by-Step Format
- Guidance from a Mentor
- Built-in Resources
- Community of Practice

Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Sustainable Library Certification Program

Public & Academic Libraries
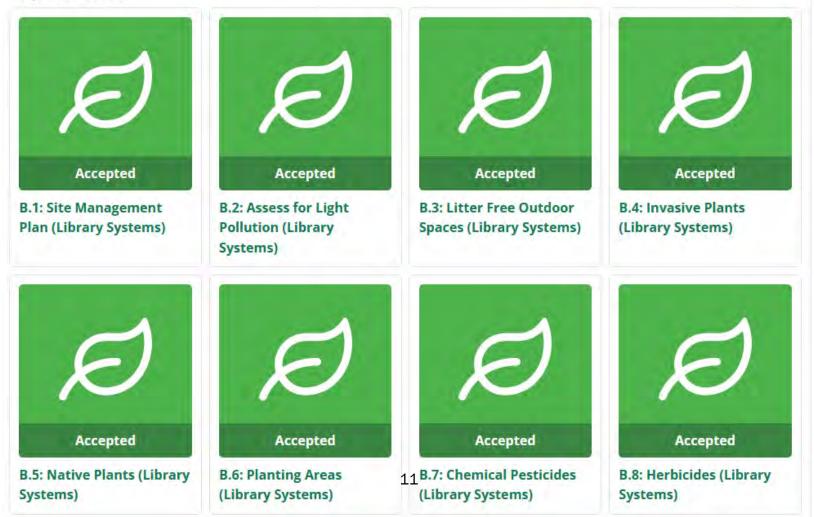
- Organizational Commitment
- Energy, Water, and Waste Management
- Materials and Recycling
- Partnerships
- Community Involvement
- Social Equity
- Community Resiliency
- Financial Sustainability
- Collections

School Librarians

- Partnerships & Community Involvement
- Leading Beyond the Library
- Social Equity & Resilience
- Standards & Curriculum
- Collections

Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Required Actions

B.1: Site Management Plan (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.2: Assess for Light Pollution (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.3: Litter Free Outdoor Spaces (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.4: Invasive Plants (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.5: Native Plants (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.6: Planting Areas (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.7: Chemical Pesticides (Library Systems) — Accepted

B.8: Herbicides (Library Systems) — Accepted

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Benefits of Certification

- A Path Forward

- Reflective Process

- Step-by-Step Transformation

- Community of Practice

- Professional Development and Engagement

- Partnerships for Collective Impact

- Raise the Profile of the Library as a Recognized

  Leader on the topic of Climate Action and

  Community Resilience

Certified Sustainable

Sustainable Libraries Initiative

It's a journey, not a destination.

Charlotte LIBRARY

AGE WELL
CONFIDENT AGING STARTS HERE.

CHARLIE CART PROJECT

Vermont Harvest of the Month

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Sustainable Libraries Initiative

https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org

Free

- Newsletter
- Mobile App
- Webinars
- Resources
- Facebook Page & Instagram

Become a Member

- Curated Resources
- Access to On Demand Training
- Vendor List
- American Library Association - SLI eCourse

Sustainable Library Certification Program

- Online Dashboard to Track Action Items
- Example policies, program ideas, and more
- Assigned Mentor
- Meet Ups with Others in the Program

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Matthew Bollerman, MLS

matthew@hauppaugelibrary.org | @bollermn

Chief Executive Officer, Hauppauge Public Library

Co-Founder & Board Vice President, Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Thank You

EveryLibrary Institute Testimony to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

April 21, 2023 Special Meeting
Intellectual Freedom

John Chrastka, Executive Director, EveryLibrary Institute

About the EveryLibrary Institute

The EveryLibrary Institute NFP is a non-profit (501c3) public policy, tax policy, and education policy research and training organization dedicated to supporting the future of public, academic, and school libraries and the profession of librarianship in the United States and abroad.

Recent I.F. and access-related activities:

- Extensive legislative monitoring and commentary across dozens of states.
- Ongoing support for open access to Dr. Magnusson's database of censorship activities
- Fielded a national voter-facing polling on book bans, censorship, and anti-access legislation in September 2022.
- Training programs on relevant topics for Delaware Division of Libraries, Idaho Library Commission, Washington State Library.
- Assistance to state library associations writing legislative testimony on anti-access, materials, and criminalization bills.
- Developed model legislation with George Washington University IPiP Clinic to safeguard state library contracts for school library databases.
- Produced unique policy papers and technical assistance on state obscenity statutes for libraries, education, and museums.
- Publishing new issue of The Political Librarian focused on access, censorship, and policy.

Observations from the Field

Legitimate Materials Challenges

The right to challenge materials in libraries is rooted in the Constitutional framework of the Right to Petition guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Any petition or challenge process must afford the petitioner must respect the legitimacy of the petitioner's intent and respect their due process rights.

Unfortunately, in our experience we are seeing many challenges and petitions originate from less than sincere intents.

When a petitioner neither respects the outcome of the challenge nor participates in the policy framework which is designed to protect minority opinions and due process, the petition is a political action.

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Five Vectors Aligning Around Book Bans, Censorship, and Anti-Access

- Base-Building Political Movements
- Anti-People (LGBTQ , BiPOC)
- Anti-Tax and Anti-Government
- Anti-Public Education and Anti-Union
- Spiritual Warfare or Moral Panic

Dr. Magnusson's Book Ban Database:
https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/book_censorship_database_magnusson

Also Focused Through Legislation

- State legislation that regulates procurement by libraries or state agencies.

- Legislation allowing for civil and criminal penalties against librarians, educators, board members, and publsihers.

- Legislative limits or bans on discussing or teaching certain topics.

- Legislation that pre-empts challenge policies.

- Efforts to reduce or eliminate state aid or budgets for state library agencies.

- Legislation which redefines obscene or harmful; moves definitions from criminal code to administrative code.

- State-based ratings systems.

The Five Freedoms are in Conflict

Five Freedoms of the First Amendment

- Freedom of Speech

- Freedom of Religion

- Freedom of the Press

- Freedom of Assembly

- Right to Petition the Government for Redress

Vermont's state Constitutional free speech guarantees are coexistent and may be more operative than the First Amendment for libraries in the state.

How do we resolve the conflicts within the First Amendment?

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State Attempts to Broaden the Right to Read

- Illinois – HB2789 (2023) "Provides that, in order to be eligible for State grants, a public library or library system shall develop a written policy prohibiting the practice of banning books within the public library or library system."

- Connecticut – SB2 (2023) "Allows a municipality to designate its principal public library as a "sanctuary public library" and makes these libraries eligible to receive certain state library grants."

- Rhode Island – H6066 (2023) Amends the state penal code to bring it into closer alignment with the Miller Test, which is Supreme Court approved First Amendment doctrine. Vermont state statute is already in compliance with the Miller Test.

The First Amendment and Collection Development

The First Amendment is not a collection development rubric. The First Amendment validates is a collection retention rubric. The question "is an item obscene" is material to collection development. However, if the only reason to collect an item is because it is not illegal, then we have Constitutionalized collection development to an absurd point.

Miller Test guidelines for a jury or judge, a finder of fact, to determine if an item is obscene:

(1) whether the average person applying contemporary community standards would find the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest;

(2) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and

(3) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

Vermont's obscenity laws are substantially similar to the Miller Test (13 VSA § 2802)

Why Do We Bring the Book Into the Library in the First Place?

Lessons from *In Loco Parentis*

There are only three reasons to bring a book into a **school** setting: relevance to the standards, relevance to the curriculum, or relevance to the unique role of a school library (e.g. heath and sex ed, AP and IB classes, art, history and social studies).

Define the Relevance of a title as a universal within the standards, curriculum, or school library frameworks?

Define "Appropriate" and "Inappropriate" as particular to a family's choice.

Is there a model for collection development policies that points to an affirmative rights framework in Public Libraries?

Equal Protection Under the 14th Amendment

Is there a rights-affirmative pathway to collection development?

- Title II of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, and national origin in places of public accommodation.

- Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin by programs that receive federal financial assistance.

- Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, and religion by state and local government employers.

- Likewise, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.

Population-Focused Collection Development

Vermont Statutes about Civil Rights and Anti-Discrimination

9 VSA § 4502. Public accommodations

An owner or operator of a place of public accommodation or an agent or employee of such owner or operator shall not, because of the race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person, refuse, withhold from, or deny to that person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of the place of public accommodation.

21 VSA § 495. Unlawful employment practice

(a) It shall be unlawful employment practice, except where a bona fide occupational qualification requires persons of a particular race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, place of birth, age, crime victim status, or physical or mental condition.

For Consideration - Institutional Focus

Vermont could add a "Legislative Finding" to 13 VSA § 2802:

(1) Libraries and educational institutions carry out the essential purpose of making available to all citizens, a current, balanced collection of books, reference materials, periodicals, sound recordings and audiovisual materials that reflect the cultural diversity and pluralistic nature of American society.

(2) It is in the interest of the state to protect the financial resources of libraries and educational institutions from being expended in litigation and to permit these resources to be used to the greatest extent possible for fulfilling the essential purpose of libraries and educational institutions.

- As proposed in Rhode Island's 2023 HB6066; inspired by Wisconsin at WSA § 944.21 8(a).

Questions from the Panel

John Chrastka, Executive Director
EveryLibrary and the EveryLibrary Institute

Thank You

John Chrastka
Executive Director
EveryLibrary and the EveryLibrary Institute
312-574-0316
john.chrastka@everylibrary.org

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About John Chrastka

John Chrastka is the executive director of EveryLibrary, the first nationwide political action committee for libraries, and the EveryLibrary Institute, a nonprofit research and training organization focused on the future of library funding. Mr. Chrastka is a former president of the Board of Trustees for the Berwyn (IL) Public Library (2006 – 2015) and was the first president of RAILS, the Reaching Across Illinois Libraries System, a multi-type library system (2011). He is the co-author of Winning Elections and Influencing Politicians for Library Funding and Before the Ballot: Building Political Support for Library Funding with Patrick "PC" Sweeney (ALA / Neal Schuman). He has contributed chapters to Planning our future libraries: Blueprints for 2025 (2014), and Re-envisioning the MLS: Perspectives on the Future of Library and Information Science Education (2018). In 2015, he delivered the McKusker Memorial Lecture, "The Accidental Candidate: Updating Voter Nostalgia about Librarians and Libraries on the Campaign Trail" for Dominican University and has written for numerous trade publications and journals including Library Journal and Library Quarterly. In 2018 he delivered the keynote "Advocacy and Activism" for CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, in Brighton, England, and in 2020 he was invited by EKZ Group in Hamburg, Germany to present a colloquy on advocacy for their members and the profession. He is a frequent keynoter and speaker at state and national library conferences in the United States and abroad, is a sought-after trainer for state libraries, and is a regular guest lecturer for MLS / MLIS programs where he speaks on the topic of "political literacy". In 2014 he was named a Mover & Shaker by Library Journal for his work with EveryLibrary.

About EveryLibrary

EveryLibrary is the national 501c4 political action committee for libraries. Since 2012, EveryLibrary supports local library funding measures like bonds, referenda, levies, warrants, and parcel taxes along with funding for school libraries. It partners with state library associations to advance their legislative priorities. Since late 2021, our portfolio has included direct supports to organizers and campaigners confronting issues of censorship, access, and free expression in libraries.

Recent activities:

- Provided technical assistance and pro-bono consulting to dozens of local library "Alliances" focused on anti-access and anti-censorship issues

- Launched Fight for the First campaign organizing platform (with ELI)

- Supported public engagement and constituent outreach for a dozen state library associations on key issues

- Provided expert commentary in national and regional media about key topics

Framework for a Vermont "Libraries for All" Act

30 August 2023
EveryLibrary Institute

SUBSTANTIVE REQUIREMENTS for a BILL

SECTION: SHORT TITLE
"Vermont Libraries for All Act"

SECTION: FINDINGS.

The General Assembly hereby finds:

(a) Public libraries serve as a cornerstone of our democracy, providing free access to information and resources for all citizens.

(b) The State of Vermont values its diverse citizenry and believes that all citizens should have equal access to public library resources and services, without discrimination or basis.

(c) Public libraries play a vital role in fostering a culture of intellectual freedom and inquiry, allowing individuals to explore a wide range of subjects without fear of reprisal, ridicule, or discrimination.

(d) In upholding the principles of the First Amendment, public libraries serve as guardians of citizens' rights to receive and express diverse ideas and information, unencumbered by censorship, discrimination, or bias.

(e) Title II, Title VI, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Vermont anti-discrimination statutes mandate the provision of equal access to public accommodations, prohibition of discrimination, and protection against harassment in workplaces.

(f) As places of public accommodation, public libraries are obligated to ensure their services, facilities, and resources are accessible and inclusive to all, without favor or discrimination.

(g) Public library policies should further these goals by creating environments that are inclusive, welcoming, and representative of the diversity of our state

1

(h) Therefore, to ensure that Vermont libraries protect and promote the principles of free speech, inquiry, and discovery, it is necessary that library boards adopt policies that are in substantive compliance with the First Amendment and civil rights, anti-discrimination, and harassment-free workplaces, in accordance with federal and state laws.

SECTION: DRAFT LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE.

1) Amend public accommodation statutes at 9 § 4501. Definitions to include "free public library" as follows:

> (1) "Place of public accommodation" means any school, free public library, restaurant, store, establishment, or other facility at which services, facilities, goods, privileges, advantages, benefits, or accommodations are offered to the general public.

2) Amend 22 § 67 "Free Public Library Service: Public libraries; statement of policy; use of facilities and resources" as follows:

> (a) The General Assembly declares it to be the policy of the State of Vermont that free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every citizen of the State of Vermont should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits of a free public library.
>
> (b) To ensure that Vermont libraries protect and promote the principles of free speech, inquiry, discovery, and public accommodation, it is necessary that free public library boards adopt bylaws, rules, and policies that are in substantive compliance with the First Amendment and state and federal civil rights, anti-discrimination, and harassment-free workplaces statutes.
>
> (b̶c) The trustees, managers, or directors of a public library may use library resources as a community center. Community centers may serve as forums and exhibition areas for the exchange of ideas that encourage the growth of artistic, educational, literary, and scientific knowledge as well as the intercultural understanding of the Vermont citizenry. Public libraries may cooperate with community groups to provide these services.

3) Insert into 22 § 606 Other duties and functions (of the State Library) and renumber as follows:

> (6) May develop and promulgate model policies for free public libraries concerning collection development, display, meeting room use, patron behavior, internet use, materials reconsideration, harassment-free workplace, and other relevant topics to

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ensure substantive compliance with the First Amendment to the Constitution and Vermont equal accommodation statutes.

(6Z) May receive and administer gifts of real and personal property accepted by the Governor on behalf of the State under 29 V.S.A. § 101.

(78) May dispose of by sale or exchange, or may discard, material which is obsolete or has ceased to be useful, because of its physical condition or otherwise. Any proceeds from the sale or disposition of materials shall be credited to a special fund established and managed pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, and shall be available to the Department for the purchase of library materials.

(89) Shall be the primary access point for State information, and provide advice on State information technology policy.

###

Administrative Topic: Minimum Standards Rubrics

Free public libraries should be required to develop and adopt policies within a non-discrimination framework that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, sex, disability, religion, and other protected characteristics, applicable to all library services and activities, that ensure:

  (1) Collection Development: Inclusivity and diversity in library collections, considering a range of viewpoints, cultures, languages, and experiences, and accessibility for patrons.

  (2) Materials Access: Equal access to all library materials and resources for all patrons.

  (3) Display and Exhibits: Representation of diverse cultures, experiences, and viewpoints in all library displays and exhibits.

  (4) Facilities Use: Provide that patrons have equal access to library facilities with clear, objective, and uniformly applied policies, including behavior.

  (5) Workplace Environment: Maintenance of a harassment-free workplace, with comprehensive definitions and examples of harassment, clear procedures for reporting and investigating complaints, and preventative measures against harassment.

  (6) Internet Access and Digital Services: Equal access to internet and digital services for all patrons, with assistance available for patrons unfamiliar with digital resources and accommodations for patrons with disabilities.

(7) Privacy Policies: Clear privacy policies compliant with relevant laws, protecting all patrons' rights to privacy regardless of their protected characteristics.

(8) Material Challenge and Review Policies: Transparent, fair policies for challenging library materials, ensuring the due process rights of petitioners while neither favoring or disfavoring any group based on protected characteristics.

(9) Staff Training and HR Policies: Individual libraries should conduct regular training for library staff on non-discrimination laws and library non-discrimination policies, with HR policies reflecting the library's commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and non-discrimination.

4

CODE D22
(Recommended)

SELECTION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Policy

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. The school library plays an important role in helping students to inquire, to study and evaluate information, and to gain new understandings and knowledge. Therefore, library materials provided by the _____ School District (District), regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all students.

This policy exists to ensure that the District provides access to a diverse library collection, that supports students in the curriculum, their personal research, and recreational reading, and that sustains students' First Amendment Rights to access information and to read freely.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:
1. ***Library Materials*** include all materials considered part of the library collection, including but not limited to print, digital, and media production resources. Library materials may be found in both physical and virtual library spaces.
2. ***Educational Technology*** means instruction and/or preparation in the appropriate use of current technology to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to communicate, solve problems, and to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information.[1]
3. ***Diverse library collection*** means that the library collection intentionally contains content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences, including those from traditionally marginalized and underrepresented communities.

---

[1] SBE Rule 2114 (Definition of Educational Technology)

Access to Instructional Materials [2]

Each school shall:
   a. provide a learning environment with sufficient supplies and infrastructure to allow for learning;
   b. develop, maintain, and expand as needed a library collection of print, digital and technology resources, administered by a certified library media specialist;
   c. ensure that the curriculum is supported by necessary digital and print resources;
   d. ensure that students, educators, administrators, and staff have access to an organized collection of digital and print materials sufficient and appropriate to support all students in meeting or exceeding the current state and national standards at no cost to the student;
   e. provide students access to the library on a regular basis to use materials for reading, research, and for instruction in the skills needed to select and use information effectively;
   f. provide access to a variety of up-to-date information, assistive, and other technology to support students in meeting or exceeding the standards;
   g. provide broadband internet service for students and educators to access educational resources;
   h. adopt and implement written policies on electronic resources, acceptable internet usage, and procedures for handling complaints for both staff and students;
   i. support a schedule that provides opportunities for a library media specialist to collaborate with educators as they integrate information research skills into their curriculum; and
   j. ensure that students are afforded the opportunity to learn the skills to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and to present information and ideas within content areas using technology integration.

Administrative Responsibilities

The superintendent or designee will develop and implement procedures that address the selection of library materials and the provision of access to those materials. The superintendent or designee will develop procedures to address:
   a. selection of materials;
   b. deselection of materials;
   c. donations of materials; and
   d. reconsideration of materials.

The superintendent or designee will ensure that the District provides services of a certified library media specialist to students and staff. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy, information and technology standards. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library media specialist on a pro-rata basis.[3]

---

[2] SBE Rule 2122.2 (Access to Instructional Materials)
[3] SBE Rule 2121.2 (Staff)

Use of School Library Materials and Resources

The library media specialist may consult with faculty, the student body, community members and organizations to develop library collections that are diverse, inclusive, and representative of the history, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups.

At the discretion of the building principal, students, staff, and family members of the District may be allowed use of library materials and resources. However, such access shall not interfere with regular school use of those materials and resources.

VSBA Version:	*May 11, 2022*
Date Warned:	
Date Adopted:	
Legal Reference(s):	*16 V.S.A. §563(14) (Powers of school boards)* *State Board of Education Rules 2121.2 (Staff)* *State Board of Education Rules 2114 (Definition of Technology Integration)* *State Board of Education Rules 2122.2 (Access to Instructional Materials)*
Cross Reference:	*District Equity Policy (C29)* *Selection of Instructional Materials (D32)*

Equity in Library Services

January 27, 2023

Xusana R. Davis, Esq.
Executive Director of Racial Equity
State of Vermont

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01 Language Access

Access to print and online materials; Access to information about library and government services

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Encouraging inclusive services and accessibility; best practices & areas for improvement

03 Justice & Barriers

Removal of systemic structural barriers to use of public services including libraries

44

01

Language Access

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is really a large matter—it's the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."
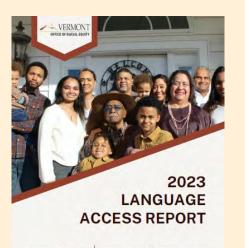
MARK TWAIN

LANGUAGE ACCESS

2023 Language Access Report

A report of the State of Vermont Office of Racial Equity detailing community-driven findings and recommendations for expanding language access across all branches of State government

Read it at racialequity.vermont.gov
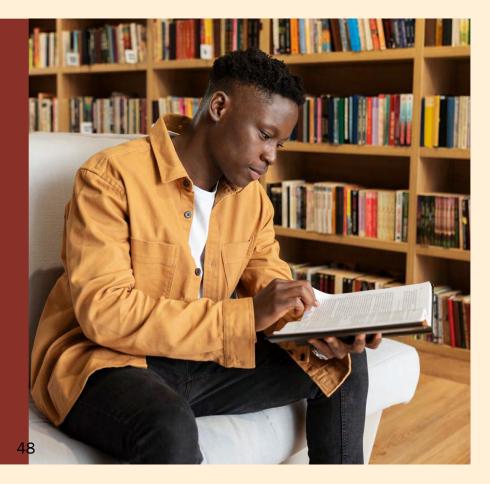
34+ languages spoken in VT

Recommended languages for translation are (alphabetically)

- Arabic
- Bosnian
- Burmese
- Dari
- French
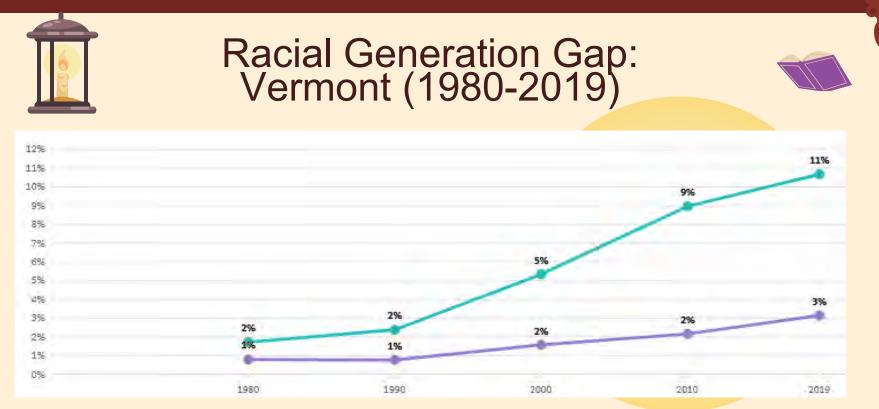
- Kirundi
- Simplified Chinese
- Nepali
- Pashto
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese

48

Millenial & Gen Z are most racially & ethnically diverse age cohorts in VT history. More likely to be multicultural and multilingual

49

Racial Generation Gap: Vermont (1980-2019)

DANGERS OF NOT TRANSLATING

In Flint, MI
residents and visitors who didn't speak English were exposed to toxic water for **weeks** longer than English-speakers because the city's notices were issued only in English.

51

DANGERS OF NOT TRANSLATING

In Vermont in 2020

The State partnered with community groups that helped undocumented residents complete applications for recovery funds, and often had to meet them in **public places like laundromats and gas stations**.

52

02

Outreach

Libraries play a new role in today's U.S.

Libraries have become places where students can go for after-school programming, where people can go to prepare for citizenship tests and professional exams, and where people can access non-print—and even non-literary—materials.

54

OUTREACH PROMISING PRACTICES

Meet people where they are (and where they want to be).

Be brave about the content offered to communities.

Accept the current and future need, not historical role.

Empower **and invest in** community leadership.

55

"There go the people.
I must follow them,
for I am their leader."

**ALEXANDRE AUGUSTE LEDRU-ROLLIN?
MAHATMA GANDHI?**

03 Justice & Barriers

BARRIERS TO GOVERNMENT

TRUST

Local, state, & federal gov't in the U.S. has caused great harm, even today.

SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

People don't always feel invested in local institutions, especially if they don't own homes/land.

STEREOTYPES

Stigma & historical tropes around academic, reading, leisure time, etc make it hard to engage.

MONEY & TIME

Accessing services can be cost-prohibitive or time-consuming.

SENSE OF PLACE

Community identity often excludes people through media, nativism, & customs.
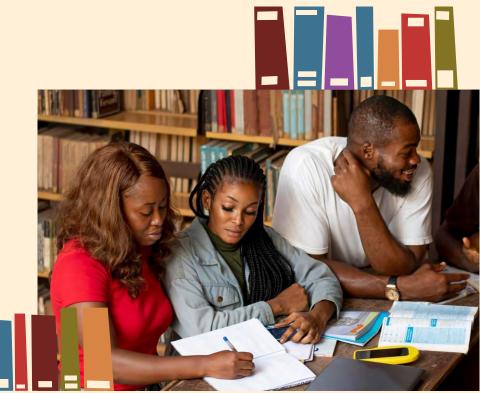
LANGUAGE

Services not in one's languages might as well not exist at all.

Consider format

People of color are more likely to access the internet using mobile phones and tablets. Are your materials and websites mobile-friendly? Accessibility: Do images use alt-text? Are materials written in plain-language? How (and with whom) do you communicate during emergencies?

CONTENT BATTLES

Be A King @BerniceKing

If you don't think representation matters, you're probably well-represented.

5:00 PM · Feb 25, 2022

Dr. Lisa Corrigan @DrLisaCorrigan

Wedge issues like book bans

https://bit.ly/3RbsTZi

Rod Serling's "Twilight Zone" Created After Emmett Till-Based Project Was Censored

Serling originally set out to create a socially conscious series that reflected on American racism.

Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone" was inspired by the murder of Emmett Till. (Nick De Morgoli/ Condé Nast via Getty Images)
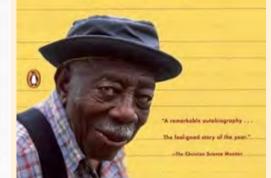
George Dawson and Richard Glaubman

Life Is So Good

One man's extraordinary journey through the 20th century and how he learned to read at age 98

"A remarkable autobiography . . . The feel-good story of the year." —The Christian Science Monitor

60

¡Gracias!

GOODBYE ▪ 再见 ▪ ADIÓS ▪ TẠM BIỆT
拜拜 ▪ AU REVOIR ▪ फ़िर मिलेंगे
PHIR MILENGE ▪ လာဟွီယ ▪ သွားတော့မယ်

NABAD GALYO ▪ अलविदा
TOKOMONANA ▪ KWAHERI
N'AGASAGA ▪ وداعا ▪

19% of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide in the last 12 months, compared to 4% of their peers. Put a different way: LGBTQ+ youth were five times as likely to have attempted suicide in that year than their cisgender/heterosexual peers.

The Current Environment
<u>We must keep in mind, that data is from before the pandemic, which only served to amplify the isolation LGBTQ+ youth experience daily.</u>

Today, we find ourselves at the intersection of decades of systemic harm, amplified by a global pandemic, and overlaid with an unprecedented level of coordinated trans-phobic and homophobic efforts across the nation. These hate campaigns are targeting trans youth, stripping them of their rights to gender affirming health care, participation in school sports, and access to school curriculum, facilities, and systems that reflect the truth of their lived experiences.

In 2023, according to a trans legislation tracker, which track legislation seeking to block trans people from receiving basic healthcare, education, legal recognition, and the right to publicly exist., there have been 483 bills introduced in 46 states.
A majority of this legislation focuses on trans youth.

The surge of legislative activity reflects an increasingly hostile environment for LGBTQ rights across the country. It's a phenomenon we fear will have disastrous consequences for trans youth in particular, and here's why:

A January poll from the Trevor Project, an organization that provides crisis support for the LGBTQ community, found that 85% of trans and nonbinary youth said their mental health was negatively affected by these laws. A subsequent poll found that more than half of trans and nonbinary youth "seriously considered" suicide in the past year.

We must connect the dots to the ways our political climate has real life consequences on youth's daily lives. And one of those connections is to LGBTQ+ youth and their daily experience of - and lack of - safety.

- **Efforts are escalating to undermine intellectual freedom in libraries.**
  - [The American Library Association](#) (ALA) data in March reveals 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022.
    - This is the highest number of attempted book bans the ALA has recorded in more than 20 years.
    - It's nearly double the 729 challenges reported in 2021.
- **Youth, LGBTQ+ folks, and people of color are being targeted directly and bear the brunt of the consequences.**
  - Of the challenged titles, the vast majority were written by or about members of the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color.
  - The majority of 2022 censorship attempts (58%) targeted information that is accessible to youth: books and materials in school libraries, classroom libraries or school curricula.
- **This is not about specific books – this is about freedom of thought and expression.** These are attempts to not just censor the content of a single book, but to erase an entire idea from the public sphere.
  - In 2022, 90% of the overall # of books challenged were part of attempts to censor multiple titles. 40% were in cases involving 100 or more books.
  - Prior to 2021, the vast majority of challenges to library resources only sought to remove or restrict access to a single book.

What we know to be true is that under Vermont law, all youth have the right to learn and exist free from the threat of harm.

- Yet even here in Vermont, there is a continuous barrage of messages that target LGBTQ+ youth, telling them they're not valued, cared for, or allowed to exist. The idea that books where their identities are represented are obscene, pornographic, and inappropriate for school contributes to a culture of shame that puts all youth at risk.

- You know what helps? Affirming schools - schools where youth feel safe and validated being open about their gender and sexual identities. Wherein youth have at least one supportive adult in their lives, social safe havens like Gender and Sexuality Alliance Clubs, and inclusive curriculum and policies, positive health outcomes are possible. In fact, we are talking about significant protective factor against suicide attempts for LGBTQ+ youth. According to 2020 data from the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ youth in schools that were not affirming of their identity were nearly twice as likely to have attempted suicide in the past year compared to those whose schools were affirming.
- But safety isn't guaranteed, and ongoing training and policy guidance is critical. Schools need consistent and actionable guidance from agencies like the Department of Education and VT Dept of Libraries so they can be creating cultures and conditions where all youth thrive. They also need continued resources and support to know how to prevent discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- Just ask any shy 10 year old where they find solace! Libraries are typically a hub for youth who otherwise can't find places of safety and connection. School libraries can continue to be key partners in a myriad of efforts to ensure safety for all..

According to the American Association of School Libraries, "Intellectual Freedom is every learner's right."

- In order to develop essential life skills like empathy and critical thinking, youth need access to a wealth of information and perspectives, and the guidance of trusted advisors.
- It is critical not only for LGBTQ+ youth to see themselves reflected in the materials available to them, but also for youth who are not LGBTQ+ to engage perspectives that are different from their own.

Learning can and should be joyful.

- In a rural state, isolation can run deep, separating youth from each other while making access to information and resources impossible. Inclusive curriculum in the classroom is essential - but libraries are where youth can go to exercise curiosity and pursue learning for its own sake. Libraries should have the resources and support needed to meet youth where they are, with a robust and challenging collection of materials.

- Furthermore, as we can all appreciate, Psychological safety is a prerequisite for any and all learning, full stop. Materials and programs that reflect a wide variety of identities and experiences, most especially those of youth on the margins, like BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth are pivotal for young people to see possibilities for themselves into the future. We all need places where we belong. Programs like Drag Queen Story Hour ensure youth come to know libraries as safe, creative places where their joy and truth are welcome and celebrated.

So this is the moment in which we find ourselves. If we aren't providing safe schools for LGBTQ+ youth, we aren't providing safe schools at all. Anything less than coordinated, intentional and robust efforts to ensure safe and equitable schools for all youth just won't do.

Outright is here to help provide the tools and expertise educators, administrators, and leaders need to make it happen.

On paper, we have the leadership of the State as the background for all of this work to unfold. With the Agency of Education by our side, we authored the trailblazing Best Practices Guide for Supporting Trans Students in Schools. And the legislature added Gender Identity to our anti-discrimination laws.

Today, we must work to hold schools and school boards accountable to these best practices, and ensure that there are resources and guidance that set all students up for success.

I implore you to take every opportunity you have as changemakers - that could in some way, large or small, rectify the very real, lived impact of ignorance, hate, and harassment on a policy level.

And as it should be - we continue to set precedent for other states on what community care, resilience, and equity look like in action. It's 2023 - and we are Vermont. Let's continue to get out in front like the leaders we are. Thank you for your clear, bold action to support policies and provisions that give the people most affected by systemic failures a chance to live.

- This is the Vermont we need to keep working towards, every day.

Armed with Intellectual Freedom: Current Challenges and Next Steps

Prepared by
Joyce McIntosh
April 2023

Freedom to Read Foundation
FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY
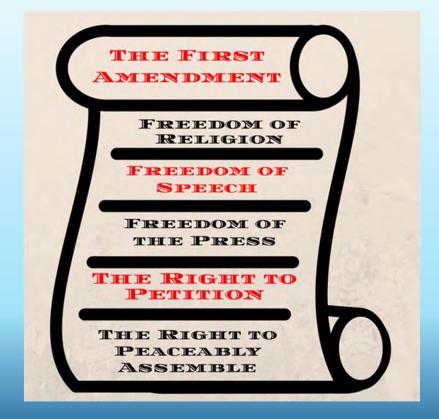
Unite Against Book Bans | ALA American Library Association

WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM?

Intellectual freedom is the right of
unrestricted access
to information and ideas,
protected by the First Amendment.

The First Amendment applies to
government entities, not private entities. The
school board members have to set policies
within government rules and regulations.

CENSORSHIP

is the effort to ban, prohibit, remove, label or restrict library materials, based on the belief that the materials will corrupt children, offend the unwary reader, or undermine moral values.

LIMITED PUBLIC FORUM

Only the public library is a designated or limited public forum, created by the government for the sole purpose of providing access to information.

According to existing court opinion, the First Amendment protects individuals' right to 1) physically access the library; and 2) read and receive information and use the resources made generally available to the public in the library (this includes meeting rooms and display cases, when the library has decided to make those spaces available to the public.)

The library has the right to establish reasonable rules governing library use. A library's power to regulate patron behavior is not limited to cases of "actual disruption," but may be tied to safety, use of resources, and other reasonable concerns directed to fulfilling the library's mission.

Best practice is for a public library to have content-neutral rules that apply objective standards to behavior, safety, or administrative issues that are enforced in a non-discriminatory manner. This includes our collection development policy (why we buy what we buy) and our materials reconsideration policy (protecting your right to say you what you think about an item)

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IS THE ONLY LIMITED PUBLIC FORUM

As with any public forum the 1st Amendment protects people's rights to use the forum without government interference related to the content of what is communicated there. Another words, there's no room for viewpoint discrimination.

As a limited public forum, a public library may impose reasonable "time, place, and manner" restrictions on patron behavior.

WHAT'S GOING ON? THE VIEW FROM 30,000 FEET

- Partisan advocacy groups targeting school and library boards
- Disruptions/challenges at board public comment sessions
- Challenges to diverse content fueled by social media
  - LGBTQIA+, sex education materials
  - Books addressing racism or the experiences of those who are Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Color
- Board Recalls and Elections
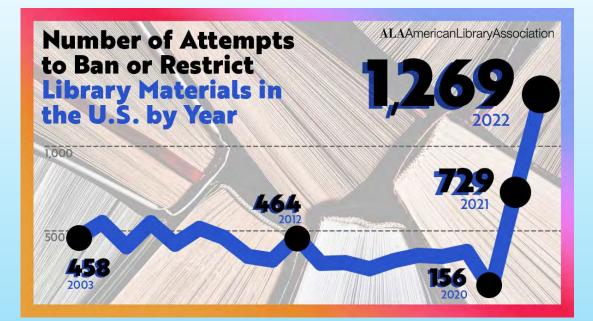- Criminal Complaints targeting library staff, educators, and materials

WHAT'S GOING ON? THE VIEW FROM 30,000 FEET

- Adverse State legislation

  - Bans or limits on discussing or teaching "divisive topics," or "Critical Race Theory"
  - Bans or limits on discussing, teaching or providing information about LGBTQIA+ topics ("Don't Say Gay")
  - Eliminating longstanding legal defenses to obscenity prosecutions for librarians and educators
  - Filtering/regulation of research databases like EBSCO
  - Parental Rights / Private Right of Action / Parent Oversight Boards

WHAT'S GOING ON?

2019: 377 challenges

2020: 156 challenges
(Pandemic Year)

2021: 729 challenges
1597 titles

2022: 1,269
2,571 titles

Number of Attempts to Ban or Restrict Library Materials in the U.S. by Year

ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

1,269 — 2022
729 — 2021
464 — 2012
458 — 2003
156 — 2020

1,000
500

STUDENTS DON'T LOSE THEIR RIGHTS WHEN THEY WALK IN THE SCHOOL DOORS

"[i]n our system, students may not be regarded as closed- circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate." Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).

A school library is still a library, and the library collection development policy and reconsideration policy must be followed.

School Board members and administration must also follow these policies and in the same way that you commit to following the Library Bill of Rights and ALA Code of Ethics, they took an oath of office to set their personal beliefs aside, follow the Constitution of the United States, and follow the school districts policies.

OBSCENITY

<u>Miller v. California</u>, 413 U.S. 15 (1973)

The material must meet <u>all three parts</u> of the legal test established by the Supreme Court in the *Miller v. California* decision to be found obscene by a court of law

- Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and
- Whether the average person, applying "contemporary community standards" would find the work, as a whole, appeals to the "prurient interest," and
- Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.
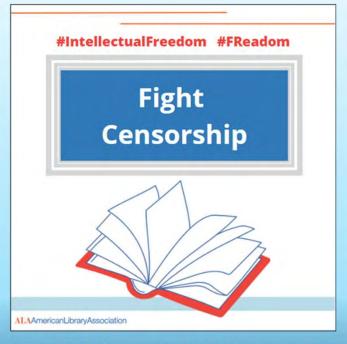
HARMFUL TO MINORS

Ginsberg v. New York, 390 U.S. 629 (1968).

"Harmful to minors" or "obscene as to minors" materials: the test parallels the obscenity test set forth in *Miller*, but the considerations are in the context of offensiveness and serious value for minors.

MATERIALS CHALLENGE FORM

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Format: Book___Periodical___Video / DVD___Music ___   Audio Book___Other___

Author:_____

Title:_____

Have you read / viewed / listened to the entire work? Yes___ No___

If not, which parts have you read / heard / seen? _____

What specifically do you find objectionable in this work? Please explain and cite pages or sections. Please use the back of the form for additional space.

_____

What do you feel may be the result of reading/viewing/listening to this work?

_____

Request initiated by:

Name (please print):_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____

Requestor represents: Self____ Organization (Name)_____

_____

Signature   **Date**

Date received_____ **By**_____

Your completion and signing of this form identifies you with specific library materials. As such, the information you provide in completing this form will be kept confidential.

ALA OFFICE FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

#IntellectualFreedom #FReadom

Fight Censorship

ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship

- Challenge Support (please report report report!)
  - One-on-One confidential Support
  - Where circumstances allow, public statements and letters of support
- Merritt Humanitarian Fund (financial support)
- Freedom to Read Foundation (legal support)
- Confidential reporting and data collection
  - Trend spotting, Advocacy
  - Public awareness: Most Challenged Books, Banned Books Week

THE FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION

FTRF is a non-profit legal and educational organization affiliated with the American Library Association – www.ftrf.org

- **Education** – scholarships, webinars, in-person trainings
- **Litigation** – Since its founding in 1969, FTRF has defended booksellers, librarians, and artists in First Amendment cases, ensuring the literary community's interests are represented in courts.
- **Advocacy**– FTRF Advocates for free speech and freedom of the press – fundamentals of a successful democracy

UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS.ORG

UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS.ORG

https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/toolkit/

The following talking points are from uniteagainstbookbans.org. This toolkit can be a great help for community members, parents, and students.

- We can trust individuals to make their own decisions about what they read and believe.
- Reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms.
- Parents have the right to guide their children's reading, but parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children. Specifically, a small group of parents should not dictate what books other people's children are allowed to read.
- Books are tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues.
- Young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's books.
- Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.
- Please reject any efforts to ban books and allow individuals and parents to make the decision about what they can read and believe.

ALA POLICY CORPS

An initiative of the ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Office, in partnership with ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom.

Policy Corps members work to expand the Association's ability to advocate on key policy issues on behalf of the library community by influencing public opinion and governmental decision making.

https://www.ala.org/advocacy/ala-policy-corps

ThankYou

Feel free to reach out with any questions.
Joyce McIntosh
jmcintosh@ala.org

Freedom to Read Foundation
FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

Unite Against Book Bans | ALA American Library Association

Written Comments: FACILITIES

Amy Young
Berlin Elementary

My library does not have a dedicated quiet room for video and audio recording. This is a problem for our students because there are so many opportunities to do creative work with green screen, podcasting, video making etc. My library does not have walls and it acts as a hallway for the upper grades. It is a generous space but it is never quiet. I would love to see a dedicated Maker Space room in which a green screen and audio/video recording equipment could be permanently set up.

[Cheryl Doubleday](#)
Bradford Elementary School
Submitted via email 3/4/22

Hi Karen,

This is my second year as the librarian at Bradford Elementary School. They did not have a librarian the previous year and were on the verge of scrapping the library all together. Yikes! The current library is crammed into a tiny room (smaller than most classrooms) and was obviously not intended for use as a library. There is a sink and a counter that takes up almost an entire side of one wall and the 2 ft. deep shelves underneath that are definitely not intended for library books. I am pretty sure the space used to be a lab room. The library space is extremely limited, to say the least. It is neither user friendly and **NOT ADA compliant.** The bookshelves are bolted to the floor with the carpet put in around it and cannot be moved. A single class of 15-20 kids has difficulty fitting in the library standing, never mind having a place to sit! It is a challenge just to perform a read aloud and impossible to conduct any real activities or lessons. There isn't enough room for books or students, so forget about tables and chairs. There are boarded up windows that would look into another space. There are four doors, two are unusable, one is permanently locked, and the fourth is the door that is used. All of these challenges are preventing the library from being a safe space where students can learn, read, and explore.

- My school library does not have adequate space or ADA accommodations. This is a problem for our students/staff/community because it limits access as well as the effectiveness and safety of the library.
- The best improvement to our library facility was Significant updates to the collection. It helped our students/staff/community by offering newer, relevant and factually accurate resources to the library.

Thank you!

Peter Langella
Champlain Valley Union HS

Based on research over the last two decades in Australia ([and summarized here by education professors at UNC-Greensboro](#)), all school libraries --and all education spaces, in general -- need a campfire, a watering hole, and a cave. The campfire is a place to gather and hear from an expert, which could be an educator, a guest speaker from the community, or one or more students. The watering hole is an informal space where students can gather and share ideas, letting their most creative selves thrive. Finally, the cave is a place for quiet reflection and introspection; it's where our learners take time to process new inputs and make sense of the many connections their young brains are working through.

Well-resourced schools and skilled educators already try to create some version of this alignment within their library spaces, but it shouldn't be left to chance and zip code. I think all Vermont school library spaces should be equipped with the physical plant, tools, resources, and staffing to make what I think is the optimal configuration real for their learners.

When we rebuilt our library in 2017 we found that one of our biggest cost increases was our electric bill. With the help of several state and local grants we were able to construct a solar powered gazebo just outside our building. Several community volunteers donated wood and their time, and the gazebo was constructed at the Old Stone House in Brownington as part of a timber framing class. The finished frame was raised on our lawn, and solar panels were added to its roof. We found that our electric costs were considerably reduced, and the gazebo is now used for classes, library programs and events, and the use of our WiFi by community members.

I hope this helps. Let me know if you need more information.
Maureen Badger, Dailey Memorial Library, Derby

Vermont Library Facilities
Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont
March 4, 2022

Vermont library buildings are public spaces that need to be maintained because these facilities are the center of communities and are meant for all members of the community. At the Fairfax Community Library in Fairfax, Vermont, the library is a joint Public and PreK to Grade 12 School Library.The library facility is in the school building with direct access from a parking lot as well as access through the school. As the public librarian at this library, I find that one of the strengths of my library facility is that it offers daily opportunities to meet the intergenerational needs of patrons with visits from patrons of all ages from school children to retired townspeople. We often have townspeople who visit during the school day and will comment on how much they enjoy feeling a part of what happens in the local school when they are in the library.

My library needs more room for programming so that we can offer programs in a separate space where presenters and participants can have a higher level of noise or physical activity. Examples of these types of programs in the past have been live music programs and yoga classes. Having a dedicated program space that could be separated from the rest of the library would minimize the impact of programs on other patrons who visit the library. This is a problem because at times there are patrons who visit the library when they are looking for a quiet space to read or work.

The best improvement to our library facility was an outdoor wifi access point that provides a free internet connection when parked in the parking lot. Before this access point was installed, internet access for community members was only available inside the library and was limited by the hours the library is open. It helped our patrons/staff/community by allowing anyone to access the internet at any time from the parking lot. Since many of our patrons do not have reliable internet service at home, this allows them to connect to family members, search for jobs, and access health care on their device in the library parking lot.

I think all Vermont library buildings need to offer a safe and welcoming space that provides a variety of services and materials in the physical environment that support equitable access to information, an inclusive library environment, and a diverse collection. Vermont library buildings are public spaces that need to be maintained because these facilities are the center of communities and are meant for all members of the community. A few examples of the types of services and features that are important would be a collection of books displayed on accessible shelving, ramps and elevators for access to and within the facility, as well as a facility that promotes warmth, health, and security for all users.

Respectfully,
Emily DiGiulio, Public Library Director
Fairfax Community Library
fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com

February 10, 2022

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

Public library buildings are profoundly important. The surface level purpose of a library building is self-evident: to further the library's mission by providing the necessary space to house and support library collections, services, and programs. But library buildings also play a vital role by functioning as community centers. In most cities and towns, there is only one place where people can go and 'just be' for as long as they like, free of charge: the library. Consequently, the library is the place where people from all walks of life mix and mingle, creating a true community space and sense of connection.

Everyone has the need for a 'third space' at one point or another. At Ilsley Public Library, people use library spaces for board meetings, tutoring, and supervised visits. Adults socialize while working on puzzles in the library lobby, while young families play with community toys in the youth room. Teens do their homework in the computer lab after school. Libraries provide neutral spaces where government representatives can meet with their constituents and where local and state government can host informational meetings. Some people come to the library just to be comfortable and warm in the winter, or to cool off with the library's air-conditioning in the summer. These uses of the library are not just appropriate, they are necessary, because there is simply no other community space that could meet these diverse needs.

Sadly, many public library buildings in Vermont are in a state of serious disrepair. The Ilsley Public Library's original building was constructed in 1924, and was expanded with additions in 1977 and 1988. Today, the library building faces significant challenges when it comes to safety, accessibility, and functionality. The library's activities have long outgrown the spaces that were originally designed to contain them, and our mechanical systems are all in desperate need of repair. We have reached a point where our facilities actually limit our ability to further our mission.

How can a library welcome everyone when not everyone can access library spaces? The Ilsley Public Library does not have a handicap accessible entrance on Main Street, forcing many community members to access the library through our side door. This side door opens onto a cramped, split level landing. All patrons see when they enter the library is a staircase and an elevator; no librarian to welcome them, no collections to

peruse. For the many patrons that must take the elevator to get to the main floor, there is the added stress of getting stuck: the library's elevator is over forty years old, and entrapments are a terrifyingly regular occurrence.

Equally problematic is the lack of sightlines throughout the library. How can a library function as a community space when people don't feel safe in the building? Because library staff cannot see the side door (where over 75% of our traffic enters), and because the side door is a few steps away from the single-use public restrooms, there are regular security concerns and misuses of the restrooms. Troublingly, the side door and these restrooms are only a few feet from the children's room. The lack of sightlines in the library's reference room, stacks, computer lab, and children's room means the majority of library spaces are unmonitored. This has led to all manner of concerns, including the consumption of alcohol and other illegal substances in the library.

The library's heating system, which runs on fuel oil, is a source of perennial frustration and expense. When the heat won't turn on, we place costly service calls. When the radiators spew water, we close library spaces. Most troubling of all, the heating system does not allow for any air exchange. The only way to get fresh air in the building is to open a window (not an option during Vermont winters). This has led to mold and poor air quality, especially in the children's room, which is located in the basement. During the pandemic, this lack of ventilation and circulation has limited our ability to continue operations as usual.

Beyond accessibility and safety, there are significant programmatic shortcomings. There are not distinct spaces for elementary, middle, and high school students. The library doesn't have adequate space to hold multiple group meetings or programs at once. The building's design precludes a 24 hour book drop, something that patrons regularly request. Storage and staff workspaces are in woefully short supply. Countless pillars and steel trusses make spaces inflexible and prevent reconfiguring as library services and collections evolve.

For all of these reasons and more, the Middlebury Selectboard is poised to create a new committee, called the Ilsley 100 Project Team, which will be tasked with developing a design for a major library renovation and expansion. The team's name references the upcoming 100 year anniversary of the library's historic 1924 original building, and also acknowledges the need to design a library with the flexibility to serve Middlebury and the surrounding towns for the next century. The library is at a crucial inflection point, and we have an opportunity to create a building that will benefit generations of community members to come.

Cost will be the single greatest barrier to achieving this goal. Given the scope of work, the limited property footprint, and the nature of renovating a historic structure, this is going

to be a major project. There are no quick fixes, and Band-Aids won't cut it. A feasibility study from 2017 produced a ballpark figure of $9.6 million dollars. Middlebury is a large town by Vermont standards, and the library enjoys widespread support in the community. The project team will pursue any and all types of funding available to bring this renovation/expansion to fruition, including seeking grants, private fundraising, and, ultimately, a bond vote. But $9.6 million dollars is a staggering amount of money for a town of 8,000. It is important to be realistic about what these traditional sources of funding can accomplish.

In order for this project to be a success, there needs to be government grant funding. The scope of work and cost of construction will simply be too large to be funded by conventional grants, private fundraising, and municipal bonding. The Ilsley Public Library is not an isolated example--far from it. Many public libraries in Vermont are in need of capital funding to make improvements to their facilities, and the need isn't limited to small rural towns. State funding would make these necessary improvements possible.

Directing state funding to public library facilities is an investment worth making. Libraries have proven themselves time and again to be critical to healthy, thriving communities, as well as indispensable to the mission of local and state governments. Librarians are often called upon to "do more with less," but when it comes to safety and accessibility, there are no workarounds or shortcuts. This is the time to invest in the aging and failing infrastructure of Vermont's public library facilities.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and for the important work you are doing to study and report on the statewide status of Vermont's libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Hart

Dana Hart
Director

My library (Irasburg Village School) does not have enough room to hold classes of students. We occasionally have room to circle up on the rug depending on the size of the class, but there is no table space or presentation room. We share a space with art and music classes. In order to not have classes that overlap, I teach lessons in the classrooms and then schedule a separate time for book checkout. This is a problem for our students because they have limited opportunities to visit the library and when we do have classes in the physical space, our activities are limited. Only 2 out of 8 classes are held in the actual physical library. It can be hard to perform readers advisory or make connections from my lessons to the materials we have in the library. Teachers don't visit as often to collaborate so as not to disturb art/music classes.

My library is also not able to accommodate a wheelchair. This is a problem because our students with different accessibility needs can only access part of the library. It is not equitable or legal.

I think all Vermont school library spaces need to offer paid time to arrange and manage the space. This is important because it is extremely difficult to make large, but necessary, changes while students are using it (especially if part-time and in a multi-use space)
If you want to rearrange a section, add a makerspace, change your layout, etc you need to do it on your own time and with no help.

Thank you,

Bridget

<center>Testimony on Facilities: Jeudevine Memorial Library
Lisa Sammet, Library Director</center>

I became the Library Director at the Jeudevine Library in May 2000. From the start I knew we would need an addition because the library was in accessible. A wheelchair can't get into the building. Our lone bathroom is down a winding staircase in an unheated basement. First, I had to make the library a place that people would use as in 2000 it had its worst statistics in its 106-year history. No one was using this library.

After many years and a few false starts we were ready to go to bid for a wonderful addition. We had raised over the $1.7 million estimate. Then COVIC struck and construction costs went up meteorically. Bids for our project came in at $2.42 million. We have been promised $600,000 through an appropriation on the USDA Rural Development Fund 2022. Yet, we've been stymied once again because the Federal Government hasn't passed it budget. The current continuing resolution is up on Feb 18, and it looks like as of this date, Feb. 9, 2022, that there will be another continuing resolution for them to vote on the entire budge on March 11, 2022.

We have two grants with deadlines on their grants and one large donor ($200,000) who wants the project to be built this year or he will take back his donation.

This addition is very necessary for the library and for the town. Concerning the area which need to be addressed in this testimony, following are our details.

(1) 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.
    As stated above, the Jeudevine Library is not accessible. Children and adults must share a very small space. We have no space for young adults, no place to do programming with seniors. Most programming has to happen in other buildings. We have only 900 square feet of usable space. It is difficult to include any disabled people and seniors have a difficult time using the building, especially the bathroom (as described above).

(2) 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.
    It is very difficult to enlarge on our role in these areas because we don't have enough room. We imagine that once our addition is built that it will have a large positive effect on economic development. It will be a feature which will draw people into the town. We will be able to serve more people and serve them better.

(3) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services;…"
    As stated above, the costs to our project have gone up 50%. We hope that the Federal Budget 2022 will pass, but what will we do if it doesn't? It is a difficult thing to raise that much more money and it is an amazing thing that we have raised as much as we have, especially when the State of Vermont has no programs to support library facilities and the Federal Government also has no programs to aid library facilities.
    We have great WiFi being part of the VT Fiber Network. We can get lots of grants for connectivity but few grants to help us have a building where we can provide services to the people of the town and area.
    Vermont wants to keep its villages vital. Libraries are often one of the core institutions in any Vermont town, yet, many of Vermont library buildings, like the Jeudevine Library, are old and have problems with accessibility, adequate space, funding for facilities, and ongoing maintenance. Libraries

Here's my testimony about facilities for the Working Group on behalf of the John G. McCullough Free Library. If further testimony is desired or required, or if there are questions, please ask! I can be best reached via email or at 401.536.8012.

In recent years, the John G. McCullough Free Library in North Bennington has seen a surge in renewed interest and activity. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, building visits, circulation, program offerings and attendance, and new memberships had dramatically increased over previous years. These exciting increases have put a strain on this historically significant, 100-year-old building, and highlighted an urgent need for a more accessible building with up-to-date electrical, plumbing, and fire safety systems. The COVID-19 pandemic and related public health concerns prompted the need for indoor air quality improvements.

In the past and due to financial constraints, urgent problems like flooding in the basement and a complete replacement of the furnace, hot water heater, and heating fuel storage tanks were dealt with on an emergency basis, rather than through maintenance, planned replacement, or other preventative measures. I am pleased to report that the flooding and heating problems have been solved, that these new features are being maintained and that a building plan has been developed. Sourcing funds for even planned building improvements continues to be a challenge.

The first phase of the McCullough Library's accessibility improvement project is currently underway, with construction expected to be completed in late June or early July of 2022. These extensive improvements include accessible, family-friendly restrooms on both floors, new plumbing throughout, a new water fountain, a complete electrical re-wiring, a fire alarm system, the installation of an HVAC system to improve indoor air quality, a new back door, critical repairs to water damaged areas on the library's front porch, and the conversion of a large closet into a laptop bar/ small meeting space. This project would not have been possible without ARP funds through one of our supporting municipalities, grants, donations, and a generous bequest.

The second, much larger phase, will expand the library building's footprint considerably, with a two-story addition off the back of the building to include an elevator and fire safe staircase, a covered ramp which will lead to the sidewalk, and a small event space. This phase will be necessary for persons with disabilities and mobility challenges to fully engage with the improvements made in the first phase. At this point, funding for this project is uncertain, and so is a timeline for this phase.

The elderly and those with small children in their care are key populations served by this library. Additionally, persons with disabilities have indicated that they cannot take full advantage of the library due to its lack of accessibility features and feel marginalized because of this. In a state with an aging population and in a location where a relatively large number of persons with disabilities live, accessibility improvements will help us better meet our community's needs.

Also, I'm not sure if this fits within the purview of "facilities", but we are also struggling to find funding for new furnishings, especially for the Children's Room. Sturdy, uniform shelving to store children's materials would do much to improve the look, feel, and safety of this popular and essential space. The current furnishings are a motley assortment of castoffs from schools, the military, and homes. Updating these furnishings would undoubtedly encourage children and their caregivers to visit the library more often and to make their time here more pleasant.

Kind regards,
-Jennie

Jennie Rozycki, Director
(she/ her)
John G. McCullough Free Library
2 Main Street/ PO Box 339
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802.447.7121
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Kimball Public Library in Randolph does not have a mechanical ventilation system. This is a serious problem for the community because the 120 year-old building has been closed to the public since November 2021. The advent of cold weather coincided with ever-increasing transmission rates of COVID in the community. We cannot simultaneously provide sufficient ventilation to protect community well-being by keeping windows open, and adequately heat the 4000 square foot space. Library staff have worked extremely hard to maximize low- and no-contact services to the community, and in fact have increased the number of hours we provide services. However, nothing replaces the value of being *in* the library: serendipitous meetings with friends and neighbors that support social well-being; browsing the collection; accessing technology (from the photocopier/scanner to computers to wireless internet in a warm sheltered location); partaking of after-school services; and participating in face-to-face programs, both library- and community-designed.

We are eager to re-open the building in April, as the weather warms just enough for us to both ventilate and heat the building. Looking ahead to next autumn and winter, we absolutely must solve our ventilation problem. Closing Kimball Library to the public was the best choice before us, but it was a terrible one to have to make.

Amy Grasmick, Director
Kimball Public Library
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Latham Memorial Library, located in the center of the Town of Thetford, serves some 2500 Thetford residents. The Latham Library, together with the Thetford Historical Society, occupies the Thetford Bicentennial Building, constructed from 1973 to 1975 with local funds and federal grant money. Most library activities take place on the building main floor, but there is a recently renovated Meeting Room in the basement. Both the basement and building attic are used as a workplace and for storage by the Historical Society and the Latham Library. For almost 50 years the library has served its patrons through a well laid out and charming space.

There have been periodic improvements to infrastructure (new boiler, new roof) but major expenditures are expected for:

- Energy Efficiency - replace windows throughout the building or install additional panes; improve heating control. Energy efficient, effective, bright interior lighting is needed in all the Latham spaces.
- Human Health and Safety – install adequate ventilation (HVAC) throughout the building. The interior spaces in Latham should be more light and cheerful and inviting, so new paint, carpeting, furniture, curtains etc. are needed to make the space more effective and safe.
- Accessibility - For ADA (handicap access) compliance and easier work related traffic a building elevator is needed.
- Flexibility - The Covid 19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for alternative locations such as a covered, open outdoor space that can be used by people accessing the wireless network, as an outdoor program space, a gathering space and a teaching/learning space.
- Drainage/Landscaping – Better drainage around the building is needed to prevent water damage. Related landscaping could utilize native plants and provide recreational opportunities.

All the best,
Emily Zollo
Interim Director
Latham Memorial Library

To the members of the Working Group, appointed and elected officials, public, and my community of librarians and readers: Thank you, humbly, for this opportunity to share some of the characteristics of the Mary L. Blood Memorial Library in West Windsor (in the village of Brownsville) and our growing community at the northern base of Mt. Ascutney.

It is important to note that the Mary L. Blood Memorial Library is a community resource, in a former ski resort town (with one hotel, one grocery store and cafe [the Brownsville Butcher & Pantry]), one K-6 elementary school, a historical society, post office, volunteer fire department, one formal place of worship, abundant trails and a town forest. Across the Brownsville-Hartland Road is our town hall, aptly named "Story Memorial." I write to you from Abenaki land, where settlers, dignitaries, Merino sheep, Morgan horses, sundry cows & chicken, deer, champion skiers, new residents & visitors, a usually sweet parade, and a perhaps unusual number of poets reside. The library has not changed (very much) from its original form, established one hundred and twenty-two years ago.

To this point, I thank you for taking up this consideration. Like many Vermont libraries, the Mary L. Blood Memorial Library is more like a one room schoolhouse. We have historic items lining the high bookshelves--some of which relate to the Civil War. At our entrance, large gray colored plaques list names of those who served in (most) past wars who lived in town. Among these are members of the "54th Mass Colored." This is our only entrance and it's also our only exit. The library is on a small patch of land; we have only narrow shoulder land to the north and south. To the west, a large lawn offers excellent opportunity for children, teens, and any others--for reading and for events--but we use it sparingly, as it is not currently considered the library's property but rather part of the parsonage next door. We have no egress, limited ADA access (thankfully, a ramp was created), and our growing community could really use a larger space. Six different groups meet here (and this is in a pandemic); perhaps we'll have more when we're pandemic-free.

Aging In Place and Youth Services are two of our most identifiable priorities. We see infrastructure as a key to services, particularly as we expand staff, open hours, technology, to meet the requests of our community. Wood crafters and an architect have helped us envision options. We need a new circ desk area, librarian's office and storage, more meeting/reading spaces, more technology. Our basement is very 19th Century but it could suffice for storage and office space (with at least one new stairwell). Our attic is gorgeous, by all accounts of those who have walked in the light of it--lit by three turn of the century windows (and quite possibly with a glimpse of the mountain). Turning the attic into usable space makes sense to us, given the library's small parcel of land...but probably an elevator system will need to be part of the plan.

Our community nurse meets here for clinics, a teacher at the local school holds youth events that amaze me, we have a robust Friends group and a smart and dedicated board of trustees, enthusiastic volunteers, a who's-who of regulars who value this resource more than the eye can say...and yet we're still limited because we're only now trying to catch-up to 21st Century needs. I write this after a long virtual pre-town meeting (perhaps the only time in history "town" and "meeting" have had its attendance be "pre"; last year, 2020, we were all so shocked to be in a state of emergency). I thank you for the opportunity to express the character of our library. The COVID19 pandemic has shown us that people really need a library: For shelter (we did install air conditioning during our closed months, during stay at home orders), for edification, entertainment, multicultural sanctuary and mental health, for community, for technology and communication, for teacher's resources, and for the preservation of a historical building in the center of our village.

Be well, stay safe, and keep reading.

Sincerely,

Peter Money
Librarian
05037

(Forgive me: Due to the fact that I'm still in the library, after "pre-town meeting," I am writing this--and sending--although I have not re-read its contents. I hope you'll understand.)

--
Peter Money, Librarian

Mary L. Blood Library
PO Box 468, 41 Brownsville-Hartland Road
Brownsville, VT 05037

802-484-7205
www.facebook.com/WestWindsorLibrary
As well as on the West Windsor town site (SEE Mary Blood Library under Town Government)

are community centers in our towns. The State of Vermont should invest in them and in helping them thrive. They make our communities better in so many ways, but it is hard to get money to maintain them or improve them.

My library does not have, but desperately needs, a separate space for teens. This is a problem for our patrons/staff/community because the library is the only warm place in town for teens to go.

The best improvement to our library facility was the addition of handicapped accessible front door. It increasing accessibility to all members of the community.

I think all Vermont library buildings need to offer a accesibile space because in many of our small towns the library is the only space for people to go that is free and open to the public.

Thank you,

Kendra

Kendra Aber-Ferri

She/her/hers

Library Director | Morristown Centennial Library

_____

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Building notes, Rutland Free Library, for the state Working Group on Vermont libraries.

February 16, 2022

On priorities: A framing narrative

These notes respond to the initial charge from the framers to the working group in that they discuss ways our building is deficient in "energy efficiency, accessibility, flexibility, human health and safety … and intergenerational needs." Historic preservation is both a massive cost driver if we were to renovate and a handy roadblock to folks trying to keep us from moving.

I am sorry I am not directly addressing your priority topics more, but the answer to virtually all of them is "Yes, we could do more, but only once our basic infrastructure is working." I drive a 2008 bare-bones Honda Element. My wife drives a fully equipped 2018 HRV. Your priorities are like asking how the seat warmers work in my car. I know seat warmers exist; my wife has them. I would like to have seat warmers. On cold mornings I wish I was driving my wife's car. Please make sure Vermont libraries have four wheels and a working engine before we spend a lot of time and money on seat warmers.

The exception: I could write a master's thesis on the challenges raised by the conflict between the economic development value of a "historic downtown library" versus the potential value of a custom-built library on a campus shared by the city recreation center, where we could expand our services.

As for the pandemic, we adapted time after time. We wiped surfaces, then we didn't. We masked, then we didn't, then we did again. We closed when we had to, opened when we could, and did curbside in between. We printed a huge number of government forms when the various state offices (DMV, Health & Human Services, Labor) were closed or remote-only. I'm not sure we were a lot different than a lot of other service occupations. The one function we could not fulfill was provide basic shelter against the elements, which is in high demand in normal times.

Building notes

Rutland Free Library is housed in a city-owned building, where it has been since 1938. The building went up in 1858; it was expanded in 1966 and 1988-89, and is just short of 25,000 square feet, spread out over five floors (basement, main, mezzanine, second, third). Plus there's an attic. We have no lease or formal documentation allowing us to be here; we're essentially squatters. Thank you to the City of Rutland for putting us up.

The original box has significant historic value. It was a post office and courthouse, designed by noted Vermont architect Ammi B. Young, for those of you collecting Vermont Civil War-era architect trading cards. Its sister is the Windsor (VT) Post Office; my understanding is that nothing above the main floor of that building is in usable condition, which speaks to the work over many decades by dedicated library staff & trustees to maintain our facility. RFL is also in the Rutland Courthouse Historic District on the National Registry, which greatly increases renovation complexity and therefore costs.

It is an extremely well-made *building*, which is different than being an extremely good *library*.

About two years ago, we looked at moving across the city to the former College of St. Joseph's campus, which has a modern, well-equipped library sitting empty. As with most ideas these days, public opinion was split. In our case, it was into roughly three camps: Folks who supported the move; folks who opposed the move because they have fond memories of the current building from their

childhood; and folks who think the library performs too large a function driving traffic for the downtown core to consider us moving to a campus location. Many of the latter said the move would be "good for the library, bad for downtown." The regional plan described libraries as important but an afterthought.

Major repairs start with dickering with the City as to who is going to pay how much for what work. And work on the building takes away, dollar by dollar, money we could use very well to do more / better library work instead.

The major problems with the building itself include:

- Can't use the third floor except for long-term storage (no ADA / fire access);
- No line of sight. Fully staffed, we have no idea what's going in in 90% of the building.
- Isolated locations for staff (help desk, meeting rooms, staff offices on the second floor, stacks on the mezzanine) are a safety hazard. Patrons in the stacks and meeting rooms are also at increased risk. This increases as libraries are more often used for delivery of social assistance.
- The children's area is not sufficiently divided from the adult area, and is particularly too popular with people wandering in looking for a chair (normal traffic pattern leads them there, I'm told) and it's too close to adults looking at the internet.
- There's nothing like a solid wall separating the public spaces, so a cell phone call in the mezzanine is clearly heard on the main floor, and excited kids coming out of a program upstairs drive adult patrons looking for a quiet work space out of the building.
- Aging mechanical systems. In the past several years, the ceiling of our main meeting room (Fox Room) collapsed; the boilers died; we replaced the lights with LEDs; rewired the second floor (it's now grounded!); replaced tiles that had failed; replaced the A/C, which burned itself out; renovated the main public restrooms; and had porta-potties on the lawn several weeks while the sewer main was repaired.
- Still outstanding is the rest of the heating system (pipes, valves, controls); the building envelope (the 1858 windows are failing, very little insulation, leaks air everywhere); failing plaster on the third floor outside of the Fox Room; interior repainting (some percentage of the flaking paint is likely lead); historically accurate new railings for two three-story staircases. The brick exterior is starting to need patchwork and there's a 1 ½ inch heave in a floor tile near one corner of the original masonry foundation. We have a 32-year-old, 1,000-gallon underground fuel tank that we don't think is leaking?
- The "new" part of the building was built with the goal of squeezing the most stacks into the smallest space, instead of as a modern library, so it lacks meeting spaces, quiet work areas, room for tech offerings. And the whole building is brick, concrete, cast iron and steel, so renovations are … challenging. And expensive. There's one electrician who knows what conduit goes where. If he's not available, we can add half a day to any wiring project just to run a trace (and drill through 18 inches of rubble-filled masonry floors). Widening a floor drain took the better part of a day's drilling.
- For years / decades / perhaps forever, interior work has been done on the cheap, like not grounding electrical wires serving our meeting room, using household-grade plumbing instead of commercial, etc., etc. Those decisions – penny wise but pound foolish -- continue to haunt us.
- It's on the fringe of the official downtown core and has no off-street or handicap-accessible parking.

In short, it's a grand old building that's terrifically expensive to maintain, which is unfortunately the state of many of Vermont's libraries. We compete for a grant for a façade here or an entrance ramp there, but there's no money or support for addressing when it's the right time to up stakes and move, or renovate from the ground up.

Estimates to do a renovation (pre-Covid pricing) ranged from a partial renovation for $1.4M to a full-building renewal for $7.5M to $11.4M.

Thank you for your time.

-- Randal Smathers, Director, Rutland Free Library

The municipal Starksboro Public Library has been housed in the former Town Hall building, built in 1911, for twenty years. Visitors love our airy space with wonderful natural light (when there is sun). The Trustees are certainly grateful to have this space rent-free. However, there are many ways this town asset and village landmark could be improved. The load-bearing capacity of the first floor needs to be increased in order to have any full-height book shelves away from the external walls. The second floor, a fabulous, column-free, beadboard paneled space, is neither accessible nor fire-safe. The additional of a LULA lift and a new second exit staircase would make this space available again for the plays, dances, meetings, exercise classes that once happened up there. In our dreams, we even see an opportunity for a local co-working facility.

In addition, the only ramp, walkway and entry to the building are only marginally accessible to a person using a wheelchair or walker. And the front door does not have a crash-bar appliance or reliable locking system.

I have photos!

Thank you for listening!
Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library
2827 Route 116, Starksboro, VT 05487
802-453-3732
Library hours: Monday 10-6, Thursday 10-5, Saturdays 9-2.

My library in Tinmouth is too small to have classes. It is too small to accommodate desks and chairs and give effective access to the shelves on the walls. It is too small to have a dynamic and appropriate collection for our learners. It is too small to be shared with other departments and still be accessible as a library. There is no room to store materials. There is no room to have a checkout desk or a permanent computer with a scanner. It is a box 15'x14' with shelves jutting out 1.5 feet from each wall. Add to that a desk for a shared teacher and the square footage is approximately 132 square feet. Fill that with 10-15 children, and me, and there's just no space to move, let alone with even minimal social distancing. This is a problem because there is no place to start projects, there is no place to draw, or write, or engage in activities other than reading and book selection. I have a board but if they all brought chromebooks they would have to be on the floor and that requires too much space. My library will survive but with more space it would surely thrive.

Joe Bertelloni
Tinmouth Elementary School

My library does not have doors that are handicap accessible. This is a problem for our learners as it is a barrier for access to our resources and our support. It is something I've requested from our school for 3 years, and while they have had companies come to give estimates, it still has yet to happen. The best improvement to our library facility would be more space. Currently our space is poorly designed to meet the needs of our learners. With over used areas and underused areas, the need for flexible spaces to meet the changing needs of our learners is crucial to our success. I think all VT library buildings need to offer places for people to explore resources, to be curious and provide access to the many ways to answer their questions.   Libraries started as a way to provide books, (expensive at the time) to those who couldn't afford them. We have morphed in being able to provide more than just books, and yet our spaces are still mostly used to store our collections. Though there is definitely no decline in the use of these resources, there needs to be a shift to provide more. I think many libraries which have been built or redesigned recently have taken this into account, but our older libraries are not there yet, and need the support to be able to do so.

Warm Regards,
Jill Abair M. Ed.
jabair@U32.org
Teacher-Librarian at U-32 Middle & High School
802-229-0321 x 5133 (Library) x5601 (Voicemail)

Energy efficiency- have used covid money to replace and improve air handling equipment. Upgrading all components, drives, motors, dampers, replaced aging pneumatic controls with Direct Digital Control system. We're on a multi-year lighting upgrade (I.e., LED lighting; motion-controlled lighting, with hi-lo, set points.). Working on building envelope updates (windows, doors, etc.)

Historic Preservation- Using nitrogen pre-action sprinkler system in special collections. The system keeps the pipes dry until two events trigger water to flow through the pipes. We don't have a conservation lab. We have disaster preparedness kits. We have a freezer for items that are water damaged but not enough staff capacity to complete repairs. What's in the freezer stays in the freezer. In regards to our Special Collections building, we have to be aware of the history of the building but make it work for a library.

Human health and safety- First duct cleaning in Howe Library was done twelve years ago. Eye opening in regards to the type of debris in the system. All of the ducts were then encapsulated. This protects the insulation from degrading. The recommendation is to clean every ten years, but it costs too much to do this regularly ($250,000 twelve years ago). Don't have the funds to keep up. We have upgraded and changed filters. Hardwired carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, and all of our buildings have a sprinkler system. Lack of natural light (which is good for human health) but don't have enough UV screening to help protect materials. Have to balance human needs with preservation. Also, infrastructure won't allow us to open up spaces.

Accessibility- work with ADA coordinator to address issues that come up. Bringing areas up to code for big projects. Adjusted all pull and push tensions on doors. Handicapped opener on the first floor. Most major needs have been addressed. Would like to add multiple handicapped openers (at least one on each floor) but not enough money.

We don't have proper storage for all media types. Don't have humidification in all collection areas, just rare books. Need the ability to monitor temperature, humidity and water. (Wireless monitor with real time alerts and data)

Flexibility- Work toward flexible furnishing. aging infrastructure within our buildings make it difficult to incorporate flexibility in regards to spaces. (I.e. we can't create moveable walls). Detrimental to our ability to be flexible. Can't change the footprint. (Type of building material used deters this). Would like to have more office spaces but can't make those changes. Can only use funds for student spaces, not staff.

Inter generational needs- Next step in evolution of furniture planning (spaces for those who are light sensitive or special learning needs, for instance). More collaborative spaces. Makerspace/Fab lab would be great, and there was a plan for this, but no funding.
$320 million dollar deferred maintenance budget. Head of UVM Facilities does not have the budget to keep up with maintenance. This effects us. Can't repurpose spaces unless this is solved.

Need to upgrade the technology in our study rooms and conference rooms. Staff spacing is inadequate (consultation/group study space, teaching space, collections space, offices/conferences/general meeting spaces, staff lunch space, etc.) How are we going to find funding?

A statewide preservation team would be useful to help all of us during emergencies.

Sincerely,
Scott Miller (UVM Libraries Building Manager) Maria Avery (Howe Library), & Denise Hersey (Dana Medical Library)

I thought I would share with you some observations I've made comparing our evolving hybrid-library in Jeffersonville to larger municipal libraries I previously worked for in another state.

The most impactful area of growth for the Varnum Memorial Library would be an addition of space. Our lovely library was built with just two rooms to be used by the public, and the growth Cambridge has experienced can no longer be accommodated by our building space.

Most pressing are the needs for work-spaces for individuals who daily rely on the Varnum's free wi-fi as well as room for programming. Additionally, as our community's demographics evolve, we are in crucial need of space to house more materials that speak to a wider audience than general adult fiction and young children's picture books. Our Young Adults are consistently squeezed into whatever spare corner we can find, and our attempts to grow our non-fiction offerings are restricted.

As the nature of work and how families are structured in their day evolve with the lessons of the pandemic, Vermont libraries play a critical role in addressing and aiding these needs. So many people work a hybrid-schedule or work from home, and the internet is required. The Varnum offers the fastest wi-fi in the area and we consistently have community members parked outside the building working in their cars because of lack of space within the building. Additionally, we have a greater need for programming with young families, senior citizens and school-aged children but due to lack of space, we are severely restricted as we try to balance what is safe for the staff and the public. If we had more room, we could offer so much more to the community.

Thank you for taking time to ask, and thank you for being an advocate for all the communities that our libraries serve.

Warmly,

Carrie Watson (she, her)
Librarian
Varnum Memorial Library
194 Main Street
Jeffersonville, VT 05464
802.644.2117
carriewatson.varnum@gmail.com

Bree Drapa - Director, Westford Public Library

I love my library building. I love how old it is, how beautiful it is, how it creaks like an old ship when the wind blows, and how there is that one squeaky board – you know the one. I love its charm, its grace, its character. There is so much to love…. but there is also so much to do.

My library building is old! It was built in 1844, something my Midwest transplant brain has a hard time understanding. My building pre-dates the Civil War. It was around to watch the troops muster and drill right across the street on the town green. It was built without electricity, indoor plumbing, the internet and other modern conveniences. It was built before automobiles, so much so that now our front porch sits in the right of way of Vermont Route 128 and the historic windows rattle as the plow and large trucks go by.

This wonderful old building has served this town in so many capacities. It has always been a public building – never a church and never officially a school. It has hosted town meetings, traveling troupes of performers, and even indoor half court basketball in the 1950s. It served as overflow for the school next door and some town residents remember toasting marshmallows on the coal stove in the basement between lessons. It has served as the library since the late 1970s and has been in its current state since the early 2000s. The library is one of the nicest buildings in town and people feel proud to have it in their town.

If you own an old house, you know there is always something breaking or an ongoing project. Running an old library is no different. On top of collection development, budgeting and programming, repair and maintenance take up a large portion of my time. I have learned so much about plumbing, wiring, fire codes, crawl spaces, insulation, preservation and attics.

In the past 15 years or so we have: installed a heat pump, replaced our heating oil tank, upgraded our lighting for energy efficiency and brightness, completely insulated the building, installed a sump pump after the basement flooded, put more outlets in, upgraded our porch and handicap accessible ramp, redid our parking lot – twice, painted the exterior, and fixed every rotten clapboard. I'm sure there are more things I could list, but you get the picture. Of those projects, three stand out as being very impactful.

1. Insulation – before insulating there was a foot of air between the exterior and interior wall of the library. With help from VT Historic Preservation, we were able to insulate and cut our heating costs by 70%.
2. The Heat Pump – we have lovely historic windows that do not open. It would get so hot in the building that the computers would shut off and our lighting started to melt. One time our thermostat flipped from 99 to H. While you can interpret that H as you like, I can tell you it was not a pleasant working environment. With the heat pump, we now have comfortable temperatures and our lights and technology work a lot better. Our staff also works better! People stay and cool off; programming is much more comfortable.
3. The new ramp – secure, pleasing to the eye, and accessible – a win for all our patrons. This accessibility project has spurred us on to look at other ways to make our library more accessible. We have plans!

With all that improvement, you might think we are done – but no – there is always another challenge to keep this old building serving this ever-changing community.

Looking ahead I see three major challenges, and these are things that I think many other libraries in Vermont will also be struggling with:

1. Accessibility – We often say, "Libraries are for Everyone", but not everyone can get into all the places at my library. Our children's area is not accessible. Built on an area that used to be a stage, you must climb four steps to get up there. There is no ramp or lift. Not only does this limit patrons with mobility issues, but it also limits access to families with strollers. Our bathroom and entryway have accessibility issues. While they might be legally or ideally accessible, reality is quite different. Accessibility changes like the ones we need are very expensive.

2. Space – Maybe people in 1844 were smaller – but we could certainly use some more space! I just don't see how we can make it happen. We are right up against VT Route 128 and the back third of our library sits in a flood plain/wetland zone. Adding another story on top would change our historic architecture. We keep the floorplan flexible, but it can be very tight with programming. We also must keep our collection weeded and small in order to fit our space.

3. Water – both for drinking and waste. Our building sits on the site of an old tannery and our well water is not drinkable. It is contaminated with arsenic used in the tanning process. We are also the only public toilet in town. We have an aging shared waste water system with the town office next door. Our leach field is under the town office parking lot. Our community is working hard to develop a community waste water system, but it is challenging. If this system does not pass and the old system fails, we have very few waste water solutions. Thankfully, the state of Vermont has been generous with grants to help out this system, but it still causes division in the town.

And, of course, this is all done by a volunteer Board of Trustees and one full time employee – me. We do not have a facilities manager – no building in our town does! We lack the TIME, MONEY, and EXPERTISE to handle all the building projects that should be done. Writing grants and fundraising take up so much time. Permitting and project managing take up so much time. Researching and talking to experts to know what is needed takes up so much time. Plus, we are supposed to be running a vibrant library for our community!

One other "building" area I would like to talk about is our digital infrastructure. I know that technology is another part of this testimony, but I see our digital infrastructure suffering from some of the same problems as our physical infrastructure. It is not accessible to all our patrons. It needs regular maintenance. It suffers from looking dated and out of touch, just like carpet and furniture. I also have the same problems with being able to "fix" it - I lack the TIME, MONEY, and EXPERTISE. I would like to see digital infrastructure included as part of the library's facilities.

How can the state help in all of this? I think MONEY is self-explanatory, and TIME might be an issue on our end, but I think the state could get creative with EXPERTISE. Our problems are not unique to Westford – accessibility was the top issue in a recent VTLIB facilities survey. Consultants with preservation, accessibility and construction expertise, architects who are vetted and understand libraries, grouping the ordering of supplies, etc. creative solutions would have a great impact on the library community, especially our small and rural libraries.

Thank you for your time.

Our library in Weston is in an historic and well-situated building--over 200 years old, a library for over 100 years--but lacks space: no bathroom or running water, very little space for programming, no storage, no work area for staff, limited space for resources.
The library board is currently working on a strategic plan, and the town, on behalf of the library, has recently been gifted with a small parcel of land that will enable some type of expansion. The strategic plan will in part give us a blueprint for what kind of expansion the community wants, but funding it in a small town will be a challenge. Any funding help for infrastructure from the State of Vermont would be extremely valuable; if nothing else, a strong statement about how important public libraries are to democracy and town culture would nurture our momentum.

Linda Saarnijoki
Board Member, Wilder Memorial Library
Weston, VT

Following is testimony from the Windsor Library.
Barbara

Facilities. The Working Group may study whether library facilities and buildings could be improved with regard to energy efficiency, accessibility, flexibility, human health and safety, historic preservation, and intergenerational needs."

Energy Efficiency: Two years ago, the Windsor Public Library had an energy audit done by Efficiency Vermont. With huge, 100-year-old windows, a finished basement and a vaulted ceiling with no attic, there is not a lot of insulating possible. Two things they suggested that could make a huge difference in our energy efficiency are installing cold climate heat pumps (which probably won't be done due to the historic building) and installing solar panels on the office roof (also probably won't be done due to marring the building's historic nature.)

Accessibility: The Windsor Public Library's children's room, meeting room, historical records room and bathroom are located in the basement while the rest of the library is on the main floor. While this historic library building -- built in 1902 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places -- does have a handicapped-accessible ramp leading to our main entrance, there is currently no way for someone who isn't fully ambulatory to access our children's room, meeting room, historical records room, or the bathroom. For many years, the Windsor Public Library's planned approach to becoming accessible included a costly expansion to the main building and installing an elevator. This approach proved cost-prohibitive. We have now adjusted our goal to instead install a lift into the existing building footprint. We now have a much more affordable and workable plan for installing a lift, redoing the stairs to the basement to increase safety, and renovating the bathroom so that the library is much more accessible to our community.

The Windsor Public Library has raised $83,000 so far from grants and private donations towards our project. We probably need to raise at least another $20,000. We have our construction permit and were granted a variance to install a lift instead of an elevator. A grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation has paid for our lift. We are seeking 3 contractors to give us estimates for this job.

Lanpher Memorial Library
141 Main Street
P.O. Box 196
Hyde Park, VT 05655
802-888-4628
hydeparklibrary@yahoo.com
lanpherlibrary.org

April 4, 2023

Re: Capital Reserve Fund Information for Working Group/Facilities

In 2018, the Lanpher Memorial Library, a Municipal Library in Hyde Park, VT, began the process of setting up a Capital Reserve Fund.

The Trustees worked with the Town Administrator to come up with language for an article to be passed at Town Meeting 2019 to establish a Capital Reserve Fund to meet long-range Library expenses and could also cover emergency repairs.

To prepare for this, the Trustees hired a building inspector and a contractor to do a complete inspection of the Library building. The inspector then created a list of prioritized anticipated and existing building repairs/needs. The contractor got estimates for each item that the inspector targeted.

The Trustees put together a spreadsheet with each of the needs, costs, and which year they would plan to address each item, with the understanding that the list was fluid, and they would be able to change it depending on how much money was in the Fund, and what the most pressing needs/issues are.

The Article that passed at Town Meeting read:
"Shall the voters create a Reserve Fund for library purposes to be under the control of the Lanpher Memorial Library Board of Trustees with funding from donations, fees, grants, interest earned on investments, or gifts and by any appropriation approved by voters in future years?"

The Trustees annually commit to raise $12,000 to go toward the Library budget. With the Selectboard, the Trustees decided to continue to commit this amount, and the Town would gradually add voter approved appropriation each year, until it reached the $12,000 amount, at which time the annual appropriation would be $12,000 from the Town. This way, the Town of Hyde Park would essentially fully fund the Library budget, and the Trustees would then commit the $12,000/year to the Capital Reserve Fund.

In 2019, $3000 was appropriated by the voters. In 2020, $6000; in 2021, $9000; in 2022, $12,000, in 2023 $12,000.

Since the establishment of a Capital Reserve Fund, the Library Trustees have done roof repairs, replaced a hot water heater, installed a sprinkler alarm system, had cement siding and wood trim repaired, electrical work, and emergency elevator repair work.

Please let me know if there are questions, or need for clarification about this process.

Sincerely,

Amy Olsen

Amy Olsen
Library Director

August 16, 2023

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
Thomas McMurdo, Interim State Librarian
Thomas.McMurdo@vermont.gov
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.6M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify today on the importance of public library facilities and the pressing need for adequate funding to ensure their proper upkeep, modernization, and remodeling to meet the changing needs of their communities. As someone who has worked in various Vermont libraries throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the indispensable role that libraries play in our communities and the challenges they face in maintaining and improving their facilities.

Library Facilities as Essential Community Spaces

Public library facilities are vital components of our communities, serving as educational, informational, and social hubs. These spaces must not only be in excellent operational condition but also accessible and inviting for the public. I would highly recommend that legislators read the book, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* by Eric Klinenberg (2018). Eric writes eloquently about the importance of libraries as a public space. I'd like to offer two quotes from the book:

"There's a term you don't hear these days, one you used to hear all the time when the Carnegie branches opened: Palaces for the People. The library really is a palace. It bestows nobility on people who can't otherwise afford a shred of it. People need to have nobility and dignity in their lives. And, you know, they need other people to recognize it in them too."

-and-

"In a world where we spend ever more of our time staring at screens, blocking out even our most intimate and proximate human contacts, public institutions with open-door policies compel us to pay close attention to people nearby. After all, places like libraries are saturated with strangers, people whose bodies are different, whose styles are different, who make different sounds, speak different languages, give off different, sometimes noxious, smells. Spending time in public social infrastructures requires learning to deal with these differences in a civil manner."

Another book, "How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy" by Jenny Odell

"True public spaces, the most obvious examples being parks and libraries, are places for—and thus the spatial underpinnings of—"what we will." A public, noncommercial space demands nothing from you in order for you to enter, nor for you to stay; the most obvious difference between public space and other spaces is that you don't have to buy anything, or pretend to want to buy something, to be there."

The public library facility is a space of true equity in a community and provides the necessary structure for accessing all of our equitable library services.

A Structure for Collections & Technology

Libraries need secure, reliable, dry and temperature controlled spaces for their collections. Books and other materials need to be stored safely. New books and materials need to carefully stored, and historical and unique items need extra care and attention. And as was mentioned during the Working Group Testimony on Technology and its importance in delivering various library services, library facilities need to have the most up to date electrical systems and the best internet connectivity.

Meeting Rooms and Programming Spaces

Public libraries often offer meeting rooms in their facilities that serve as valuable spaces for community organizations and groups to gather. The meeting rooms also double as programming spaces, enabling libraries to provide a diverse range of programs. For instance, these rooms are essential for hosting children's story times, fostering early childhood literacy, and facilitating educational activities for elementary and middle school students. Additionally, these spaces are used for teen programming, often providing the only teen services in a community.

Community Support and Disaster Resilience

Library facilities assume a crucial role in times of challenges and disasters. During extreme weather events or tragedies, public libraries, like those in Vermont, often serve as shelters or cooling centers, offering a safe haven for the community. Furthermore, as the world faces increasing environmental concerns, library facilities are designed to provide clean air and filtration systems, making them places to escape to from poor air quality due to wildfires or other environmental hazards. In disaster situations, libraries may transform into technology centers, offering internet access and essential services to community members in need.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Libraries strive to ensure that their facilities are accessible to all members of the community, including those with disabilities. This involves adjustments such as ramps, elevators, wider aisles, and accessible restrooms. These efforts reflect libraries' commitment to inclusivity and their dedication to serving every individual in the community.

Outdoor Spaces and Digital Access

Library facilities extend beyond indoor spaces; libraries also aim to create welcoming outdoor environments. This approach is driven by the recognition that many community members rely on library Wi-Fi even when the physical library is closed. The importance of digital access was particularly evident during the pandemic, when library Wi-Fi remained accessible to individuals who depended on it for internet connectivity.

Knowledge for Life.
Knowledge for All.

Library Facilities and Modernization

However, despite their critical role, library facilities often face funding challenges for maintenance, improvements, and modernization. In my experience at the Fletcher Free Library and other Vermont libraries, there has been a constant struggle to secure funds for basic maintenance and enhancements.

Maintenance and Wear and Tear

Due to the heavy usage libraries experience, their buildings often endure significant wear and tear. At the Fletcher Free Library, the extensive opening hours, including evenings and weekends, reflect a commitment to equity by accommodating working parents. Yet, these extended hours contribute to accelerated deterioration of the facility. While the city has attempted to address deferred maintenance, challenges remain in fully addressing the needs of the library.

Capital Campaigns and State Funding

In response to these challenges, libraries often undertake capital campaigns and seek grants to fund updates and renovations. For example, the Fletcher Free Library is currently exploring a capital campaign to modernize its interior. State funding is crucial for such endeavors, and some states have implemented successful programs to support libraries in their construction projects.

Massachusetts Libraries Construction Grant Program

One standout example is the Massachusetts Libraries Construction Grant Program. This program, initiated by a state bond in 1987, allocates funds specifically for library construction projects. These grants have enabled the construction of new libraries, additions, renovations, and conversions, illustrating Massachusetts' dedication to public library facilities. You can read all about their program here: https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/index.php

In conclusion, the importance of well-maintained, accessible, and modernized library facilities cannot be overstated. These spaces serve as community pillars, offering life-long educational opportunities, access to books & materials, assistance by librarians, support during challenges, and access to digital resources. Adequate funding is essential to ensuring that libraries can fulfill their multifaceted roles and continue to support the diverse needs of their communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Danko
Library Director

Written Comments: TECHNOLOGY

Howard Burrows
Trustee at Brooks Memorial Library

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of State Libraries:
==
Focus on Technology May 20, 2022

Howard Burrows, Trustee, Brooks Memorial Library
  ghburrows@comcast.net, 603-630-0012, Brattleboro

As I prepare this, I am participating in a Webex Event conducted by the NASA/HQ TOPS panel of experts. NASA where I had worked in Digital Libraries has determined to Transform to OPen Science (TOPS), a complete transformation that dares to "take a sledgehammer to traditional NASA research operations". New opportunities.

Brooks public library is working on a Strategic Plan. After I expressed some exasperation at the impossibility of planning given the world's outrageous pace of change, Tonya Ryals in the Vermont Department of Libraries suggested an OCLC WebJunction Course entitled "Strategic Planning in a Deeply Weird World." We are experiencing in our lifetime changes that would have taken 20,000 lifetimes to experience in the past.

One of the American Library Association Divisions, The Library and Information Technology Association (ALA LITA), has fused to become a new ALA Division called CORE. Its mission is to bring library infrastructure into the center of an ALA 5-Year Pivot Strategy.

Pivot

For now, Vermont probably can't spend the $40 million that NASA is devoting to its transformation to Open Source. But I would consider some sort of pivot. Libraries form the human center for the explosive new changes we are seeing -- changes that stretch even beyond library and information technologies – changes that affect every segment of Vermont society across age, education, and economic status.

Compassion and Support

People active in the evolving technical infrastructure know -- no one can understand the opportunities or the dangers of the current tack.

Librarians need to understand this! And they need new appreciation by their state for unpredictable new responsibilities. Librarians need new sources of money and possibly new organizational support for work-wide regional teambuilding.

Staff

Librarians are busy and could not hope to keep up with all the changing opportunities and risks. Those who take the time to try -- leave to join the tech industry at a much higher salary. Yet at no time have local public libraries been more essential.

Libraries need additional staff to allow worktime training and testing of the new opportunities. Staff need the freedom and responsibility to create agile transformations. And they need new personal resources (not limited to increased salary) to gain the resilience they will need to face new challenges at work.

Lifelong Learning

It is no longer the case that learning "advances" with age: our children understand the new gamified reality better than the professors. Yet there is also much gained by the lived experience that is not obvious to the twitching youth: values don't change! Perhaps library staff should not come to work as "experts" but as co-learners facilitating, catalyzing community projects that bring age groups and work groups together across existing divides to share what they have to contribute. There should no longer be a barrier across library types: one card for school, public, academic, and museum libraries. Common technology application advancing together requires this!

Collaboration

Divided we fail. It may be that asking more of trustees could help here: trustees come from beyond the MLS, or more recently MLIS, degree. As a trustee wanting to offer so much, I have slowly become aware that librarians are already busy. And what experienced librarians were trained to do is still needed --

But now!! Patrons carry cell phones: they often already *contribute* to the "information ecosystem." They write, and video, and podcast... Oh, and Tweet and Instagram. They have facebook and linkedIn accounts. Many have already replaced these with more the robust Google docs and map utilities; GitHub and personal websites.

Divided we fail. Libraries are the natural public center to address security risks and to consider the new reasons to want privacy. Librarians might work together regionally to become aware of the nature of the risks and to recruit the cyber-crews that up our game. Trustees bring with them their training and lived experiences. Recruit new types of trustees to take on new helper/advisor roles beyond mandated Board duties.

By aggregating assets and extending the virtual community perhaps Vermont libraries can be, you know, all that they can be. As it stands, vendors are experiencing "consolidation" and costs and license rules are out of control. We need new approaches to hardware and software purchasing, and new contracts with the vendors that block profit-taking.

Status of Libraries in Vermont

The charge to this Working Group is " making miscellaneous changes in education laws." A strong message should come out of this report that it will take much more than "miscellaneous changes!"

Strengthening and supporting libraries of all sizes and improving library services for the public might need a "pivot" to new definitions. "Libra" has always been more "judge" than "book." In this new Age of Information and Misinformation, libraries have a deeper role to slide communities as painlessly as possible into their rapidly evolving new world.

Faster link speed and broader bandwidth are insufficient to the cause: they bring trouble without a deepened understanding of what all these fast links entail, what they impact. And this is new for libraries; libraries need advocates so they can be re-envisioned as leaders in cultural, economic, and civic advances -- just to see that these changes are, in fact, "advances."

Rapidly evolving information landscapes have created critical new risks, obligations, and responsibilities. And locally, it is Vermont libraries that must take these on! -- but to do so libraries will need to be transformed, even re-imagined!

For me, the main message is that we are all in psychic denial, numbness.

Vermonters don't just need "more" access – they need more literacy, enough literacy to gain respect for the outrageous and unpredictable emerging realities.

Libraries are trusted. To maintain that trust libraries and librarians need significant new investment; they need additional time and staff to engage their communities in testing the new tech.

Vermont must transform libraries into information literacy centers – to do this they need investment in a new scale of funding and staff support.

Libraries will lead the State of Vermont into a safe and exhilarating future.

Wendy Hysko, Director
Brownell Public Library
January 28, 2022 at 11:00am

TECHNOLOGY:
In late 2007, a group of approximately 15 libraries joined together in hopes to provide downloadable audiobook services to the State of Vermont. The Green Mountain Library Consortium was officially born in 2008 as a result of these meetings. ListenUp! Vermont was the inaugural project of GMLC, initially bringing together over 80 public and school libraries to provide downloadable audiobooks via Overdrive. In the same year, VOKAL, the Vermont Organization of Koha Automated Libraries was formed, dedicated to creating a shared catalog and Integrated Library System. It launched its first three circulating libraries in 2010, and now has 59 member libraries. Mango, an individualized language learning service available to patrons for use at home, is another service facilitated by GMLC. This online service provides visual and auditory learning in over 60 languages. Finally, after a lengthy feasibility study, GMLC launched a statewide interlibrary loan delivery service in 2016, with 78 participating libraries. The service quickly grew to over 100 libraries and was adopted by the Department of Libraries, as an essential service. Though Vermonters are known for their fierce independence, this consortium proves that working together has its advantages.

This is especially true for Vermont's smallest, rural libraries. Bucolic communities love their libraries, but they often fail to fund them adequately. Staff are not paid a livable wage. This results in high staff turnover, which is a huge deal when you run a one-person library. Institutional knowledge can be lost with each changing of the guard. Often times these librarians have little to no training in information science or technology. So, in addition to being asked to do an exorbitant amount of work for too little pay; they are now responsible for keeping on top of the library's technology needs. To date there are four VOKAL libraries still operating on an EZ Proxy system, and 54 GMLC members are still in need of being transitioned off this old legacy system, which requires thousands of dollars each year, and three organizations to keep it hanging on by a tenuous thread. Upgrading to a session initiated protocol (SIP) server is needed because it actually logs into the system and authenticates the patron's account, instead of just accepting any barcode within a specific range, making for a more secure transaction. Many Vermont libraries have chosen less robust, but more affordable ILSs that do not accommodate SIP. They will be transitioned to Universal Login Manager (ULM) that requires more manual updates by the library, but is a more secure system to protect patron privacy with passwords. In equal measure, patrons want digital media, but they are unwilling to update their current devices to ones that support the ever-changing technology. As a state, we still struggle with broadband availability. By looking at the issue of technology, we are shining a bright light on the dichotomy that haunts Vermont—inequitable service models.

Consortiums like GMLC have worked hard to bridge the gaps they find amongst member libraries, but state support and funding are needed. There is huge range in education levels, technologically speaking—the state must step up and provide more robust training to bridge these divides. Technology is not going away and support to tech services must become a priority. Communication needs to be improved, from both directions. Completing the annual report cannot be optional. Lack of state funding is holding Vermont libraries back from obtaining true equity of services. Libraries have managed to keep their heads above water during these trying times, but it's time for state government to recognize the value public libraries offer to the communities they serve; it's time for state funding.

Susanna Kahn
Charlotte Public Library
Working Group Testimony – Technology Meeting (5/20/22)

Technology is an integral part of everyday life and is crucial for the operation and relevance of libraries. The pandemic highlighted the importance of technology when libraries remained open, but operated remotely. Quickly, we adjusted to Zoom, increased our digital collections, and figured out how to provide services from a distance. As the technology librarian, I taught people how to Zoom so they could attend library programs, go to remote doctor appointments and attend church groups. We updated our website to provide the latest information about operations, Covid, mental health resources and activities during lockdown. More people are using technology and the internet to explore interests and get a deeper understanding of the world. At the same time, they are encountering misinformation and scams. As trusted community hubs, libraries are positioned to provide reliable information, education and resources to enrich and improve peoples' lives. Technology plays a large role in this. Below are some things to consider in order to stay relevant, be accessible to all, and meet the needs of the whole community:

- Staffing
    - All staff should be able to do basic troubleshooting and be familiar with the library's digital services and how to access them.
    - All front end staff should be able to assist patrons with logging on to public computers, using the printer and accessing library wifi.
    - All front end staff should have some basic tech skills or be willing to learn them. Basic tech skills are ever expanding.
    - Having a technology librarian (me) on staff allows us to:
        - Provide training to staff and patrons.
        - Do complex troubleshooting.
        - Keep abreast of technology trends that are relevant to the community and library.
        - Maintain website.
        - Provide programming. Some examples:
            - Privacy settings on your phone
            - Fraud prevention
            - How to Zoom
            - How to access online library offerings (Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy, Vermont Online Libraries, etc.)
            - 1:1 tech help
- Technology
    - Broadband wifi access that is available in the library and also in the parking lot for 24/7 access
    - Printing and scanning capabilities for staff and patrons
    - Up to date staff and patron computers
    - Up to date software (office suites and malware/privacy programs)
    - Equipment for quality hybrid and online programming
    - Websites that are ADA compliant

May 11, 2022

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

Of the technology currently provided by Ilsley Public Library, access to high-speed internet is certainly the most critical. Over the past several decades internet access has shifted from being a luxury to a basic necessity. The pandemic has underscored how essential it is to our daily lives, from accessing medical care to applying for jobs to connecting with loved ones. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also revealed just how deep the digital divide runs in Vermont. The Vermont Department of Public Service surveys and maps the deployment of high-speed internet access in Vermont, and a review of the most recent data (2021) demonstrates that about twenty percent of Vermonter households do not have access to internet with 25/3 Mbps or above.[1]

Not surprisingly, Vermonters that live in rural areas, or are low-income, are less likely to have the kind of speed and bandwidth required for multiple users to access the internet at once. In many communities, public libraries are the only provider of free public internet, and Ilsley Public Library is no exception. Ilsley offers free, high-speed Wi-Fi 24/7. We always knew that some community members would utilize library Wi-Fi after hours, but during the pandemic, when the building was closed to the public, we noticed a significant uptick of people parking close to the building, working in their cars. We learned that, in addition to adults using library Wi-Fi to work remotely, caretakers were bringing their children to the library parking lot to complete and submit assignments for school, using the library's internet.

In response, the library installed a new router and additional access points to provide longer-range deployment of our wireless.[2] We specifically placed access points to allow for stronger Wi-Fi in the parking lot and library garden, recognizing that many community members require internet access during non-business hours. Of course, accessing Wi-Fi requires a device, and not all community members have a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Ilsley Public Library has eleven public access desktop computers. While we have reduced the number of public desktops over the past few years (as more and

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[1] State of Vermont Department of Public Service. "Broadband High-Speed Internet Availability in Vermont." Accessed May 9, 2022. https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/broadband-availability
[2] This work was funded by a VCF Technology Grant.

more library patrons arrive with private laptops), we recognize that we will always need to provide some number of public access computers for community members that either do not have, or did not bring, a personal device to the library.

It would be a mistake to think that the only people who access the internet at Ilsley Public Library cannot do so at home. On the contrary, many community members come to use the library as a space to work remotely or engage in distance learning, even though they have adequate internet access at home. As the post-pandemic world shifts to more remote and hybrid work, we are seeing more and more people come to the library and "set up shop" for the day. Many people don't want to work exclusively in their home, and the library provides a quiet space with many amenities, as well as a sense of community. In an effort to support this increase in remote work at the library, we recently purchased three large tables with embedded power ports in the tabletop, allowing patrons to plug in their devices easily, and cutting down on the number of cords in the ground/wall that people can trip over.[3]

During the pandemic, the library learned how to hold programs and organizational meetings remotely. The technology that supports these meetings (a 360 degree video conference camera and microphone, monitor, laptop) is also available to the community for use in the library building.[4] The combination of technology and our private conference room has been especially valuable, as more community members have needed to conduct business, health, and class meetings online. A silver lining of offering hybrid library programs and meetings is an increase in attendance. The library trustees, for instance, have noticed an uptick in citizen participation during hybrid meetings. Offering hybrid meetings has become a tool for increasing inclusion and participation.

In addition to internet, public computers, and meeting technology, the library provides access to printing, scanning, and faxing. This is an important community resource; people need to fax and scan documents for medical or legal purposes, and most do not have the ability to do so at home. The library provides chargers (and access to electricity) to power small electronics such as phones and tablets. **Many people don't real**ize this is a resource of value until their phone dies in downtown Middlebury, at which point it becomes thei**r "favor**ite library resource **ever."**

Several years ago, the library partnered with Middlebury Community Television to create a Digital Media Lab. The Digital Media Lab is a sound baffled room, featuring an iMac workstation with full Adobe Creative Cloud suite, studio grade audio recording capability, and a turntable, cassette player, and VCR/DVD deck. Equipment and

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[3] To learn more about Ilsley Public Library as a co-working space, you can read an article I recently wrote for the Addison independent, as well as a companion piece written by a library patron, Steve Gross: https://www.addisonindependent.com/2021/12/30/dana-hart-libraries-can-be-good-co-working-spaces/ https://www.addisonindependent.com/2021/12/30/opinion-ilsley-welcomed-me-for-co-working/

[4] The library's Meeting Owl Pro was purchased with an ARPA Grant to Public Libraries for Equipment and Supply Purchases, through the VT Department of Libraries.

software in the Digital Media Lab allows for video conferencing, podcasting, recording voice overs, video editing, and screen-casting, as well as the conversion of numerous types of analog media, such as LPs, cassettes, and VHS tapes.

All of this technology would receive very little use if we didn't offer training on how to use it; before community members use the Digital Media Lab, they book an appointment for an overview and training session tailored to their project needs. The library also offers Youth Media Lab, an introductory video and animation workshop for students in grades three and up. Participants learn to use iPads and cameras to capture still photographs and video, and create and edit short films on laptop computers.

More broadly, the library offers "tech help" to community members on a range of issues and devices. Librarians coach community members on tech skills as various as setting up an email address, how to access and navigate electronic resources and phone apps, and how to transfer files to another computer or device. Community members increasingly need assistance bridging technologies, and come to the library not to master a particular digital skill but to achieve a specific goal or task. They may have a smart television, but need assistance accessing the library's film streaming service. They may have a smart phone, but don't know how to use two-factor authentication with their email account. Librarians play a vital role in helping community members navigate these technology challenges.

As we look to the future, providing access to emerging technologies needs to be a priority for public libraries, perhaps especially rural public libraries. Increasingly, familiarity with technology and IT skills will be required for job applicants. Exposure to and familiarity with cutting edge technology already provides a significant advantage in today's job market; it isn't a stretch to imagine that an absence of this kind of exposure and skill development for children could have long-term economic consequences. In the same way that all children deserve access to materials and programs that promote early literacy and numeracy, all children need access to emerging technologies.

Several years ago, Ilsley Public Library arranged to borrow virtual reality equipment from the Hannaford Career Center for a week of drop-in VR experiences. We turned our Community Meeting Room into a VR space and provided one-on-one tutorials for all ages. To attract children, we billed this as a fun video-game type experience, but when I gave the tutorials, what I saw was a group of young people becoming comfortable with a technology they will likely encounter in school and then in the workforce. Learning at an early age that emerging technologies are not scary, and can be mastered with time and an open mind, is a powerful message for children.

In addition to providing instruction, public libraries provide an opportunity for communities to share resources that may be too costly for individuals to purchase and maintain, such as 3-D printers and simple robotics. Emerging healthcare technologies

might be a good candidate for circulating technologies, such as home heart rate monitors and fitness trackers. We don't know what the future holds, but we know that technology evolves quickly and being an early adopter is expensive. We need to prepare our communities for the reality that libraries investing significant sums of money in cutting edge technology isn't just appropriate, but necessary.

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of Vermont's public libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Hart
Director

JESSAMYN WEST - VERMONT MUTUAL AID SOCIETY

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May 13, 2022

My name is Jessamyn West. I am a librarian who lives in Orange County Vermont. I have a technology background, an MLIS, and I have worked for and with public libraries since moving to Vermont in 1997. I've written a book about technology instruction called *Without A Net: Libraries Bridging the Digital Divide* and I do public speaking on technology topics nationwide. I run the website and other technology for the Vermont Library Association, a professional association for public librarians in the state. I am the elected Vermont Chapter Councilor for the American Library Association.

My main work has been helping small rural libraries and their patrons learn to use technology to solve problems. I started as an outreach librarian at Rutland Free Library where I taught email classes using a flip chart and began my current work in 2005 when I was hired at the Randolph Technical Career Center as an Americorps worker. This is a regional tech ed facility serving many "sending towns." RTCC wanted to do some outreach to those sending towns and so my job there was a combination of teaching local technology classes in their adult education program, doing direct outreach to the rural libraries in those towns, and what I called "Drop-In Time" which was an open session where anyone in the community could come ask technology questions on a weekly basis.

Drop-In Time started because we were finding that the people who signed up for our basic technology classes sometimes didn't have the basic technology skills—vocabulary, mousing skills, keyboarding—to take those classes. We would also sometimes get referrals from the state's vocation rehabilitation people and the local adult basic education program. Over time that job morphed into what I do now which is a similar Drop-In Time on a weekly basis as a library assistant with Kimball Public Library in Randolph Vermont. Since the beginning of COVID I will also occasionally do tech support email exchanges or Zoom/Skype/Teams/Hangouts technical support which the library employs me for, at library assistant wages.

I'd like to briefly address what I see as the main issues in the areas the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont has asked about.

Library services for specific segments of the Vermont population

The bulk of my work is with older members of Vermont's population, ranging from my age up to mid-90s. Many of these people are also on a fixed income and can not afford to get assistance from technology professionals. If they were not getting help from the library, they would often not be getting help at all. Examples of the sorts of things they need help with, based on my last week's work:

- getting music back on a phone after a beloved app stopped working
- getting a CD-ROM to play in a computer when it wouldn't auto-play
- Figuring out why Outlook wouldn't open (these people called tech support and after two hours decided they would contact me instead)
- Figuring out how to log into a blog platform and transfer a blog from another platform
- Figuring out how to make two-factor authentication work when you don't have a smart phone

A few things that are important to this population group

- **accessibility factors** - many people in this population have one or more issues that require accommodations. This can range from basic accessibility issues—setting a larger font, or getting a better pointing device for a shaky hand—to more complicated ones involving cognitive and memory challenges or mental health issues that can make being in a stressful environment exceptionally difficult. The public library is well-positioned to help address these issues since we are nominally accessible generally, but staff don't always have the training, particularly the technical training, to know how to make accommodations in the digital realm.
- **outreach issues** - sometimes it's a challenge letting people know the library is a place for this sort of service. Not all libraries in the state offer this kind of service and people may not know or think of the library when they think of "getting help with the computer." Many patrons do not know that the ABLE library can help with people needing accessible formats. We spent a lot of time finding the right way to reach people and often it's either word of mouth or putting something in the local newspaper that gets to people.

- **defining "solving the problem"** - many people in this service population have what I would consider "chronic" technology needs. They are aware that they have ongoing issues but do not have the ability to stay on top of them for various reasons none of which are lack of effort. They have a hard time finding good information sources to assist them with their technology needs and often rue the lack of print manuals to guide them through solutions to their issues. It is difficult for them to shift to the solutions that work for other population groups—googling, checking online support forums, watching YouTube videos—and they can often fall prey to scams because they have low confidence in their own abilities to assess and distinguish good information from bad information.

  As one example, a student Googled "Netflix phone number" to get help with her Netflix account and a scam site showed up higher in the Google results than Netflix's actual phone number. She called the number on the screen and someone tried to take over her computer. The library can be a trusted source of information to help people learn to differentiate good information from bad information however, again, staff need to have their own technological competencies and this can be erratic at a statewide level, even though there are many technologically competent librarians in Vermont.

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

This is a tricky topic because many libraries responded differently to the most recent emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic. My own library made a decision to be closed to the public (providing curbside services and some virtual programming) for much of the past winter (November - April) which had a devastating effect on people who were less able to interact with the library using technological methods. While the library is often seen as a destination for getting access to resources (i.e. you want to learn about fishing we'll help you find resources about fishing, we will not, personally, teach you to fish) with technology sometimes we did have to get to the "teach a person to fish" level because, similar to Drop-In Times in the past, if someone couldn't use Zoom, they couldn't attend a library program. So my role shifted to someone who would help people practice using

technology so that they would be ready to use it for the thing they wanted to use it for.

So, for example, a woman in my community wanted to attend her granddaughter's Zoom violin recital but was concerned that she wouldn't be able to use the tools properly. We practiced Zooming (me from my home, her from her home) and practiced turning the camera and the microphone on and off, entering and leaving a Zoom room, using the chat feature. I also did this with people who needed to send an email with an attachment, or open an attachment that was sent to them. They could practice by emailing with me. Many people do not have people to practice with, or not someone they feel comfortable being vulnerable with. The library can be, again, a trusted source of skill building so that people can access the tools they need to live their lives.

In short: people who had some level of technological competency or support networks for technology set up before the pandemic fared better than people who did not. While access to a computer and internet are and continue to be important, many people in Vermont, digitally divided people in particular, primarily interact with the online world via their phones. This can be social media interactions, or even things like preparing a resume, writing a document or applying for a job. Historically it hasn't been a library's role to help a library patron with a phone issue. However, since phones are becoming more ubiquitous and also the method through which people are going online to access resources and information, libraries have had to shift to being able to help with these devices. This can even include things like figuring out a patron's phone plan to determine why they can't do a thing they are trying to do online. It's complex and sometimes time-consuming but an absolutely essential role for libraries in rural communities where people lack other options.

Even though this is not on the topic of technology I'll mention specifically that every library in the state that I have been to has a book/media collection that is more diverse than its population. In a state with a lot of class diversity but very little racial diversity, I think this is a crucial part of the role libraries fill for their communities.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services

We were exceptionally lucky in this state that our State Department of Libraries took a leadership role early on in the COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries were often adrift and trying to serve their communities as well as possible. VTLib helped by distributing PPE and administering grants for other durable equipment (air filters, plastic dividers, teleconferencing equipment, additional wifi nodes) but also being a calm and caring institution which collected and shared statistics and stories of how other libraries were, and are, managing the crisis.

Libraries which had to close early on in the pandemic learned new skills, offering not just curbside book lending, but things like curbside printing, which is essential in communities with no local printing options. They expanded their wifi services to extend outside of the building and created outdoor spaces where people could access the internet. They found ways to do contactless or socially distant programming.

But not all libraries engaged with these options equally. I did some online programming for one library in a small community which was doing its first online programming in February of 2021, considerably late in the game. Many of our public libraries interact and exchange information and ideas using mailing lists offered by VTLib or the Vermont Library Association and libraries that were not using these tools would get further isolated.

As someone who is not only comfortable but enthusiastic about using technology, trying to figure out ways to make using technology a genuine option for not just these libraries but also their communities has been one of the challenges that the Vermont Library Association has been trying to address in the past few years.

In conclusion, my concerns about technology relative to the status of Vermont libraries is primarily in making sure that Vermont's library patrons have equitable access to not just the internet and technology-enabled devices but also to trusted and trained staff who see the library's role of providing access to information extending into the digital realm.

Thank you.

A complete list of libraries I have worked at, with, or for, in Vermont

Aldrich Library, Barre
Baxter Library, Sharon
Bethel Library, Bethel
Bradford Public Library, Bradford
Brooks Library, Brattleboro
Calef Library, Washington
Carpenter-Carse Library, Hinesburg
Charlotte Public Library, Charlotte
Chelsea Public Library, Chelsea
Goodrich Public Library, Newport
Hartland Public Library, Hartland
Kimball Library, Randolph
Peacham Library, Peacham
Pittsfield Library, Pittsfield
Rochester Library, Rochester
Rockingham Free Public Library, Bellows Falls
Roxbury Free Library, Roxbury
Royalton Library, Royalton
Rutland Free Library, Rutland
Starksboro Library, Starksboro
Tunbridge Library, Tunbridge
Williamstown Library, Williamstown
Windsor Library, Windsor

Lisa Sammet
Jeudevine Memorial Library

The Jeudevine Memorial Library was one of the original libraries under the FiberConnect Grant. We have remained with First Light and VT Fiber for several reasons.

The first reason is that we are able to offer the fastests speeds even when we have a lot of users on the system.

Once we have built our addition, we hope to further use the advantage of these high speeds to offer many more services and programs that need high speed internet.

Another reason is that the E-rate applications are done for us. Many years ago before we had FiberConnect, I did E-rate applications. It was a lot to do and very complicated for a small library.

We also appreciate the help from the service desk when there have been problems, though there have been few problems.

We would like to see new routers employed.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

Amy Grasmick
Kimball Public Library
Working Group Testimony – Technology (5/20/22)

Kimball Public Library has participated in VTLIB's internet WAN, FiberConnect, from its conception in 2010, to going live in 2013, to today. FiberConnect has provided incredibly reliable and stable internet access for the Randolph / Braintree community, at a low cost. Thanks to E-Rate discounts managed by VTLIB, Kimball Library receives a nearly 75% reduction on our internet bill (from $3,060 to $796 annually), but does not have to filter access as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act. If we contracted for internet service independently, we would likely be forced to choose a much lower level of service than the 100 mbps we have enjoyed for almost a decade: Filtering internet access is counter to our ethical commitment to free access to information. Without a discount, cost would likely force us to choose a less-expensive speed, thus limiting performance.

The original hardware specified in 2010 by the then-Department of Information and Innovation (now Agency of Digital Services) - router, switch, patch panel, wireless access points - continues to serve, although well past its lifespan. This is certainly a concern, as we have heard from other FiberConnect libraries that finding replacements is difficult if not impossible. Troubleshooting connectivity issues is often challenging, and can require intervention by ADS, particularly when vendors like econtent providers or our ILS support company are involved. It's a complex dance to try to figure out how to solve problems or to offer new functionality to our patrons. However, all in all, FiberConnect has been a huge boon to the Library and the community.

Amy C. Grasmick, Director
Kimball Public Library
67 North Main St.
Randolph, VT 05060

August 16, 2023

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
Thomas McMurdo, Interim State Librarian
Thomas.McMurdo@vermont.gov
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.6M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to write to you today on the importance of significant advancements and challenges in the evolution of public libraries in relation to technology. The expansion of public library services has been a continuous journey, with technology being a key driver of transformation over the last few decades.

Equitable Access and Technological Expansion

Public libraries have historically aimed to provide equitable services to our communities. In recent years, the rapid expansion of technology has further emphasized this commitment. As we embrace technology, our goal remains steadfast: to ensure that all members of our community can benefit from the opportunities and resources technology offers and to offer, free and equitable access to technology.

Internet Connectivity: A Foundation

Internet connectivity is the cornerstone of our technological services. Its quality and reliability are crucial for both staff operations and public services. Public libraries may offer a variety of computers, tailored to specific needs, such as public computer access online catalog computers and self-checkout computers just to name a few. Our Library manages over 75 computers as well as a myriad of other technology equipment including printers, mobile devices (iPads), a microfilm machine, a laptop & hotspot lending library, and more. In addition, our Wi-Fi services extend both within the library premises and to areas outside, accommodating patrons who access the internet from their devices. As we continue to see more and more patrons streaming content for workforce development, etc., we know we will need to keep up with the required bandwidths for these kinds of uses.

Diverse Services and Support

Our libraries provide essential services through our technology centers, equipped with desktop computers, scanners, fax machines, printers, and of course, free access to the internet. These centers cater to various needs, from job applications and job/career research to accessing social services. Librarians offer both formal and informal technology support, conducting classes on topics ranging from basic word processing to advanced coding. We also offer constant, daily, personalized support to individuals on their various technology needs. This personalized assistance is critical for patrons of all ages and backgrounds, as they navigate the digital landscape.

Ensuring Online Safety and Literacy

Librarians play a crucial role in educating patrons about online safety, information accuracy, and digital literacy. The diverse age groups we serve, from children to seniors, require ongoing guidance to navigate the complexities of the online world effectively.

The Need for Specialized Expertise

While librarians perform admirably in assisting patrons with technology, the evolving landscape demands specialized technology experts. These experts are essential not only for maintaining the technology infrastructure but also for staying ahead of emerging challenges and opportunities. Funding for continuous training and staffing expansion in this area is paramount.

Managing Integrated Library Systems (ILS)

Integrated Library Systems (ILS) are intricate databases that manage patron information and our books & materials inventory. These systems underpin our lending and return processes. The expertise to manage and optimize these systems is vital to delivering seamless library services. We also use these systems to extract aggregate data to analyze how to best maintain our collections and how to best provide resources to our patrons.

Online Services and Digital Resources

Public libraries extend their reach through online services, including e-books, audiobooks, databases, and language learning platforms. The maintenance and management of these digital resources require ongoing technological expertise. This is important in several areas including the complexities of how we offer them, how we support them and how we maintain them.

Front-Facing Website: A Gateway to Services

Our websites serve as portals to the vast array of technological services we provide. These platforms cater to all age groups, offering value through engaging and informative content. Regular updates and adaptations are necessary to ensure accessibility and relevance.

The Road Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

As we look ahead to the next decade, the challenges and opportunities posed by technology are vast for public libraries. The emergence of artificial intelligence promises to be a game-changer, necessitating preparation and adaptation. While libraries are diligently preparing for this shift, we require funding to sustain our hardware, expand our technology offerings, and provide ongoing training to our staff with technological expertise. We will need to expand our staff to be able to manage the growing demands.

In conclusion, the evolution of public libraries in the digital age is an ongoing journey. We are committed to providing equitable and accessible technological services to our community members. However, the challenges presented by this evolving landscape are significant. I write to you today to request your support in our efforts to maintain our technological infrastructure, expand our services, and equip & expand our staff with the expertise needed to navigate the complexities of the digital world.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mary Danko
Library Director

Testimony on Technology submitted to Denise Hersey & Maria Avery on 4/8/22
Bryan Carson: Web Services & Systems Librarian
Middlebury College
bcarson@middlebuy.edu

Hi Denise and Maria,

I'd be happy to share what I've experienced in the last nineteen years in my position at Middlebury College.   It is a short testimony. The Middlebury College Library has in my experience never really lacked anything with regard to your statement:

"whether Vermont libraries have sufficient access to basic technological resources, cyber-security resources, high-speed Internet, electronic catalogs, interlibrary loan and other interoperable systems, and appropriate hardware and software".

My position puts me right in the middle of most of the systems/resources listed in the quote above. I'm very hands-on with the library systems and the related interoperable systems.

Even though we have steadily had reduced budgets since the 2009 economic downturn, we have been able to purchase / license various systems, move many of our library systems "to the cloud" or other vendor-hosted solutions, and add/update services. We've expanded services while reducing staffing. Nevertheless, we were well positioned to provide ample support to Middlebury's globally far-flung components both before and during the COVID lockdowns.

Library Systems the Midd Library currently uses:

- Innovative Interface's Sierra (the ILS a.k.a. the electronic catalog -- vendor-hosted)
- EBSCO Discovery Service (vendor-hosted)
- LibGuides (and a whole suite of LibApps from SpringShare vendor-hosted)
- Website is part of the main Drupal site with many library-specific integrations. (I bear no responsibility for its design.)
- EZproxy for e-resource authentication (2 self-hosted instances)

- Docutek ERes (electronic reserves) (self-hosted)
- ILLiad (interlibrary loan) (self-hosted)

None of the curricular tech / learning management systems are included here. That's a different department.

All that said, I am not a person who creates or administers budgets. However, I will say that, at least to this point, the College has been well able to support its mission with the level of library resourcing described above. You may want to contact the Middlebury Library Dean of Libraries or leadership group to discuss budgets.   I am happy to provide their contact information if you need it.

In addition, because you state that all this is will be matter of public record, I'll state that everything I've written is my professional opinion and does not contains any confidential information.

Testimony submitted to Maria Avery and Denise Hersey (4/12/22) from Stacey Knight, Associate Director for Systems & Web Development, Saint Michael's College, sknight3@smcvt.edu

What library systems are currently in place at your library?

These are our main library systems.

- FOLIO (open source integrated library service; EBSCO hosted) migrated Summer 2021
- EBSCO Discovery Service
- EBSCO link resolver
- Clio (Interlibrary loan)
- Ezproxy (self-hosted) IT helps with upgrades and certificate renewals
- LibGuides/LibCal (use for library website hosting, subject guides, library calendar, and research appointment scheduler. Our IT department uses LibCal equipment module to circulate equipment for)

Do you have staff responsible for supporting technology in your library?

I am the main person responsible for supporting technology in the library, but we all play a role in supporting technology. I am responsible for troubleshooting our library specific software like FOLIO, Discovery Search, ezproxy/authentication issues, coordinating certificate renewals with IT, etc. I often serve as an intermediary with our IT department for library issues. I do not handle any hardware issues, and library staff usually reports issues with our public computers, smart board, etc. directly to our IT department.

What position in your library is responsible for technology?

My position of Associate Director of Systems & Web Development is primarily responsible for technology.

How have your technology needs or systems changed in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Our technology needs/systems have not really changed with the pandemic.

What are your technology needs? What support do you need?

With the library staff and the IT staff shrinking over the years, we have less internal resources and skills available to us. Our IT department has also done more outsourcing due to less staff so they do not have a lot of time and resources to support library initiatives.

Need: Hosting solutions for open source software

One recent need is finding a good hosting provider that provides server maintenance for open source products.

We currently have a third party web hosting platform that I set-up years ago to facilitate some library projects, but we must do all of the server maintenance ourselves. I no longer have the time or expertise to keep this server secure and up-to-date, and our IT department does not have the resources to assist us. I would like to move off it as soon as possible, but in order to do so, we need to find a new home for

our open source archives database Archon. Library Host is one provider that we are exploring as an option for us.

We also have another open source product that we would like to use called [Library Data Platform](#) which would allow us to create customized reports for our new open source integrated library system FOLIO (hosted by EBSCO) that we migrated to in the summer of 2021. At this time FOLIO does not have any robust built-in reporting so Library Data Platform which be a good solution for us.

I am curious if other libraries are also using more open source products and need robust hosting solutions.

Common themes in the submitted testimony:

School librarians are interested in a single automation system for all school libraries, but only if migration is easy, resource sharing is less cumbersome and consortium buying helps to alleviate budget pressure on individual schools/districts

Equity is a common concern, reflected in device access, tech support staffing and access, broadband availability, budget inequities, technology support, training and PD for staff and students, and uneven tech deployment in elementary schools in the same district.

Librarians are asking for more state support for shared digital resources, especially ones that would complement Vermont Online Library and be more accessible to younger learners, students below grade level and ESL students, such as Brainpop, Scholastic Bookflix, PebbleGo, ProQuest, Ebsco, Britannica, ABC-Clio, Culturegrams and LibGuides. More access to digital audiobooks, especially titles that can be shared among users or that have multiple copies would be valuable. There's also concerns about the sustainability of limited use lending models regarding audiobook and ebook purchases. Several librarians suggested partnering with UVM or Vermont State University so that we could have access to their collections of high-quality digital resources (looking for things like JSTOR, Elsevier, Blooms).

Interlibrary Loan is challenging for school libraries. They are often single person libraries, and don't have the budget for mailing items back and forth. Access to the courier system could make participating in ILL cheaper for libraries who have the staff to support loaning and borrowing.

Deb Ehler-Hansen, Fair Haven UHS

I think we could use:
a single library automation system for all schools throughout Vermont
better access to the courier system so that we could participate in ILL more easily
more state support for shared digital tools/access
windows/PC computers that support programming and other STEM/STEAM related learning activities...the chromebook - in general - does not support these learning experiences

Abby Adams, Shoreham Elementary School

Bandwidth is still a huge problem in our schools. Some do not have enough internet capacity for a whole class to use it at the same time. (This is not a problem in my school, but I know it exists in several places.)

In our school, I would say that more state support for shared tools would be amazing. We use the Gale databases from the state, but our budget is such that we don't really have any other tools. There are better PK-5 research tools out there!

I also think that uneven technology support is an issue in our communities. In our rural school, we don't have anyone other than me who can troubleshoot our many devices (1 to 1 chromebooks) onsite, and I'm only there 2 days a week. The tech guys work in Middlebury,

which is 25 minutes away. It means that problems tend to sit for longer periods of time. If I didn't have that capability, we'd be in an even worse place.

Jen Wasyliko, Springfield High School
- a single (cloud-based) library automation system for all schools throughout Vermont - with consortium pricing & support for running parallel trials, testing, migration of records, etc...
- better access to the courier system so that we could participate in ILL more easily
- consortium pricing & state pricing for additional databases such as Jstor, Elsevier, Blooms, etc... OR - connectivity with available resources via Vermont State college libraries (not sure if this is possible)
- Re. cyber-security: Our district is severely understaffed in the IT area, and I'm sure we're not alone. We have K-12 filters applied to internet searching for students. Apparently, this is dictated by the constraints of our system.   These overly strict filters effectively result in censorship at the high school level.   Some gatekeepers have the ability to unblock sites for students re. popular research topics such as gun violence, social justice, lbgtq+, etc. - BUT it requires students ASKING for help. For those needing to conduct independent / personal research on sensitive topics, we may be unwittingly restricting their access to information. I'm not sure how this can be addressed at a state level - or if local districts would be willing or able to cede control, but I think this should be addressed.

Julie Goraj, Ludlow Elementary & Mount Holly Elementary
- a single library automation system: automation systems vary quite a bit by price which is why I use library world to meet the needs of my two less than 100 student elementary schools. Conversion to another system might be difficult, and time and cost could be substantial.
- more state support for shared digital tools/access: This could be great for some of the resources like Brainpop, Scholastic Bookflix, PebbleGo, etc... which are all too expensive for our smallest of schools. If they could be a part of the Vermont OnLine Library or something similar, it would be wonderful!

Jill Abair, U-32 Middle & High School
The biggest issue facing school libraries is equity in resources. As someone who works at a Middle & High School that serves multiple communities, we find that our students do not come with the same skill sets. Some students have had access, but not the right staff to support their usage and understanding of devices/resources. Some haven't even had access to the tools. Some students come with a great set of technology skills, in how to navigate the web, how to type, how to use google drive, how to code for robotics, etc, while others have barely had time on their computer. This sets our students apart from each other, and its impact is growing yearly. One thing that often escapes people when thinking about technology, is that it takes more than putting a device in someone's hands. We've seen many smart boards purchased and never used, because the teachers (professionals who strive to better themselves and their practices) don't have the right training. The same can be said for chromebooks and tablets in the hands of our students. As we are becoming more technology dependent, there is frighteningly no intentional training happening for students and staff. And while these advancements are beneficial and in many ways necessary, we cannot truly see the benefits until we can properly deploy it.

Alyson D. Mahony, Doty Library (Worcester) & Rumney Library (Middlesex)

I work in two small rural elementary school libraries and there are technology inequities. While we do have chromebooks for all students, we don't have daily technology support for our learning community. One school has a librarian / tech integrator 2 days a week and one school has it three days a week. This means that classroom teachers are on their own in terms of support and professional development. If a classroom teacher is teaching a technology rich lesson and has trouble with their devices or students' have trouble with their devices there is no one to call on in the moment of need. Digital citizenship skills are unevenly taught since these skills are not explicitly part of the standards we are reaching for. Ideally the librarian technology teacher would be teaming with classroom teachers to imbed these schools across the board but this is next to impossible for a part time librarian. The budget for software is unevenly applied in our district, high school students have much more access to databases, e and audio books than elementary students in the district. This might seem intuitive but these opportunities are necessary for teachers to reach a wide range of learning needs for our littlest learners to be successful. Instead of aiming for success early on we tend to wait and use a bandaid approach. I would like to see a full time librarian / tech integrator / steam teacher in every school no matter your address.

Meg Allison, U32 (Montpelier)

School libraries are hubs of technological innovation and connection. To continue to support our students' needs, school librarians need equitable access to more online research portals such as JSTOR and other online research hubs. It's not equitable that students from better funded districts get access to more resources. It would be wonderful to partner with the University of Vermont and our State College system to provide high school students with access to the online resources available in those library collections, especially considering that state funding and taxes support those institutions.

Many teacher-librarians have additional endorsements in educational technology and embed technology integration not just in their library classes, but in content-level and unified arts curriculum. Teacher-librarians are often the "go-to" staff in smaller schools to run SBAC testing and troubleshoot technology. Teacher-librarians have been on the frontier of innovative technologies, transforming spaces in their libraries into STEM-inspired Maker Spaces. Teacher-librarians design and teach about digital citizenship and online ethics. In this day and age of an increased need for critical literacy and digital skills to decipher mis- and dis-information, the work that teacher-librarians do is vital to our democracy and a well-informed citizenry.

Genevieve Gallagher, South Burlington HS

I'm embarrassed to admit that CLOVER has always seemed really clunky to me and SBHS hasn't participated very much since the community library separated from us and moved out. The few times I've participated (both as the sending and receiving library) books were lost and then there was confusion about paying for their replacement. I wonder if we were on the same catalog/automation system if that could be used instead and might be easier?

Greater state support for digital resources would be fantastic- it might be hard to agree on which resources we should all have, but I really appreciate the Gale access. The other big ones that come to mind are ProQuest, Ebsco, & Britannica (ABC-Clio is another that we really like).

Rebecca Sofferman, Colchester Middle School

As a Vermont public school librarian, I would love to see more support for school libraries in our state with respect to consortia pricing and support for technological resources. I began my career in New York State, where each region has a Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), each of which includes a School Library System Director. This position is in charge of organizing consortium pricing for things like databases, Library Management Systems, and other technological resources. They also help to train and support new librarians, coordinate content-specific professional development, advocate for school librarians, apply for grants, and manage data collection and reporting with respect to the libraries in the region. It was an invaluable support service for me as a school librarian and I really miss it! Although we do have a state library program here in Vermont, it is strongly geared toward supporting public libraries. While I certainly think that is important and necessary, we have so many school librarians in the state that could use more support. Particularly those in rural areas without librarian peers in their districts, or those who don't have a lot of training as school librarians. I would strongly advocate for the creation of a librarian position at the state level in Vermont designated solely to support school librarians, in addition to the state librarian supporting public libraries.

Something else we could really use as school librarians in Vermont is better resource sharing. Having the Gale databases available to schools is SO helpful, and I think we could add more resources to our arsenals with consortium pricing and organization. Many schools struggle to afford things like quality Library Management Systems for managing their collections, additional databases, or technology tools. In addition, it would be so helpful to have access to a courier system for Inter-Library Loan. Many school libraries don't participate in that program because we can't afford the postage to mail books back and forth (plus the US mail is more unreliable these days).

Keeley Schell, St. Francis Xavier School, Williston
My #1 concern about technology is the cost of digital media that libraries don't own. Things like Libby and Sora take a huge chunk of our budgets and leave us with nothing after a year, or a certain # of checkouts. I can understand this for continually updated resources like online encyclopedias, but for things like novels it seems like an area where we are capitulating to sign all of our budget over to big tech. I would like to see Vermont libraries advocate for a more library- and user-oriented system of ownership of digital materials. (Good luck with that, of course...)

Stephanie Sherman, Middlebury High School
My name is Stephanie Sherman and I have been the school librarian at Middlebury High School for the past four years. Technology is a means of providing access to information and resources. School libraries strive to provide equitable access to information and resources for all Vermont students and staff. My testimony highlights current successes and future needs in technology to provide access to digital resource subscriptions, library catalog systems, interlibrary loan, and computers.

(1) Digital resource subscriptions Our high school subscribes to academic databases such as JSTOR, ScienceDirect, ABC-Clio and Blooms Literature. We also subscribe to video databases such as Infobase Classroom Video, and newspapers and magazines such as National Geographic, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Proquest Newspapers. We take full advantage of the two resources the VT Department of Libraries offers to Vermont schools- Gale's databases known as Vermont Online Library, and Swank Video streaming. These resources are highly used

at my school and we are thankful, however we need to organize more consortium purchasing for our schools to leverage our budget funds and create a statewide K-12 shared digital resource. Our school technology organization, VITA-Learn, now organizes statewide consortium purchases, however there is minimal librarian representation in this organization. Librarians are specialists in evaluating, selecting and managing digital resources, yet we are often not understood and seen as leaders in this important role. Our teachers and students also need more access to eBooks and audiobooks. They expect their school library to provide resources like Audible, or Amazon Prime or Netflix to support their curriculum, however these media organizations do not allow a license for schools and this has created barriers. It is up to our libraries to find and provide this access, as well as educate teachers about licensing and digital rights. We would also benefit from a statewide subscription to an application such as LibGuides from Springerink so that we have an efficient and intuitive way to organize and share technology resources. I am passionate about advocating for this need and would be willing to volunteer as a liaison between Vermont School Library Association and Vt Department of Libraries to organize more consortium purchasing and build a statewide school digital library.

(2) library catalog systems Our school currently uses OPALS library catalog and many VT high schools use Follett library catalog system. It would benefit all of our schools and especially our rural schools to have a consortium for a single school library catalog system. One of the newest and most intuitive and flexible systems available is Accessit Library. Coordinating a statewide school library system would take a lot of work, however it would be beneficial in training, managing, and promoting our library resources. It would increase access of library resources to all of our schools and consortium pricing would leverage our budgets.

(3) Interlibrary loan for schools The Vermont Library interlibrary loan CLOVER system is an amazing resource. We have a large library collection at our school and I am continually processing requests. I am fortunate to have an assistant to help manage interlibrary loan and I am permitted to use our school mail funds to mail books. I make many requests from Davis Family Library at MIddlebury College and personally deliver and pick up interlibrary loan items. I am thankful and appreciate the access to digital articles that I request through CLOVER for many teachers. Many school librarians do not have an assistant to help manage requests and don't have access to postage funds so they do not participate. How can our school libraries be included in our statewide courier system to make this access equitable to everyone in our state, especially in our rural, small schools?

(4) Access to computers All students at my school have access to a chromebook, however many students bring their own laptops. Students who bring personal computers have the ability to install and run software programs and often their personal laptops are faster and more powerful and reliable than the Chromebooks the school loans. Many students can't afford a personal computer and rely on the library as a place to access reliable computers that run software such as the Adobe Suite programs. Libraries need to be supported so they may offer the most current technologies so that all students have opportunities to access and learn different types of technologies, software and learning applications.

Jess Wisloski, Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes (Burlington)

I do not feel that there is equitable school library technology hardware provided across the school district I am in; I came into a school library that had no printers on the same floor as the library, and no expectations that students would ever have any need for printers, which

surprised me - and nobody in the IT department seems to think there's a way to create a print queue where I can approve print jobs. There was no book or document cam/projector, and the very old smartboard in the library is positioned 1. on top of a bulletin board, and 2. right underneath a skylight, and 3. in between two closets, one of which are accessed throughout the day for literacy materials. I wouldn't care if there was no smartboard at all, as long as we had a working document cam or projector, which everyone else has. The device I was given was a low-quality Chromebook, but I often use software that requires higher speed processing, so I need to always use my own macbook. I used to work in the 2nd-largest district in the state, and I used to report on the first-largest school district in the state, and I will tell you, the technology at those as well as a distant runner up that I interviewed at, is far superior the district I work in, the third-largest in the state. It is obvious our district money needs to go to more urgent/pressing needs, but all the more reason to make sure weighted funding is considered as UVM's report on school funding advised, not sticking to a rigid average that leaves high needs students and schools in situations where they are learning on 20-year-old technology or more.

Frances Binder, Colchester High School

Something that occurs to me regarding technology would be access to digital audiobooks. We of course have access to the Vermont Schools Shared Digital Collection which is great. I often add more to the collection for our school, and I am blessed with an adequate budget so I can generally swing adding titles on demand as well as supporting a small collection of playaways. The trick is that because these are all single-user (or the multi-user option is prohibitively expensive), we run into issues when we have a group of students who are all in need of the same audiobook for class (this happens quite often actually). I have created one solution which is to buy audiobooks through Libro.fm and put them on five little mp3 players that I check out...but when there's a need for more than five with a single title I start to feel like I'm skating pretty close to the edge where copyright/fair use are concerned. This is all a long way to say that perhaps some kind of statewide consortium arrangement with a service like Bookshare might be useful. Maybe also being able to work with the ABLE library...right now that's not something that is supported, at least not in all cases/with all kinds of resources.

Annette Goyne, Richford Junior/Senior High School

My school and district have made technology a priority for several years now, so I feel we have much in place. The one thing I would like to improve is replacement of some hardware that is now obsolete. I have a set of iPads that people want to use, but they are about 9 years old and we cannot add new apps or update the ones we have. I also have some ancient desktop PC's which would get used more if they were faster.
That said, Every student has a Chromebook, we have high-speed Internet, good printers, and the ILL Clover process is so much better!

Testimony
Almy Landauer

"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;"

> Public Libraries in Vermont need a significant increase in funding - that is not based on local property taxes - in order to adequately provide both materials and services such as ESL classes, public computer access, support and training, inclusive and diverse programs, and outreach to the populations listed above. Just as the funding for schools is increased to support serving these populations in schools!

"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; and"

> Emergency preparedness: Many libraries are town/city partners in emergency planning. This is a role that increases the workload of library staff.
> Public Safety: Libraries often provide safe spaces, warm/cool places.
> Economic Development: Libraries provide bulletin boards, racks of brochures, often digital listings of community/regional/state-wide, contacts and resources, resume and job application assistance, access to the Internet for unemployment benefits and applications, and that oh-so-important but intangible community space where people meet and talk and network.
>
> All these things require funding. Libraries could do so much more with better state funding. Starting with staff numbers and better pay for library staff. Because who makes all this happen? Trained library staff of course!

"The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services."

> Libraries did a tremendous job continuing to serve their communities during the worst of Covid. We did this mainly with no extra funding - in fact some budgets were cut, some staffing was cut. We were a literal and figurative lifeline for many.
>
> I could go on but that's all I have time for 😊
> Thank you for listening!

Kate Owen
Thetford Academy

Technology at the Thetford Academy Library has advanced considerably since I first began working here 13 years ago. Our school now offers each student a computer, there is a library website, and access to resources in digital formats has grown. Even so, there is still much we are lacking.

If I could prioritize the State's attention and budget to meet the needs of my school library I would:

- Improve the quality of digital reference resources that address the humanities: particularly social studies and literary criticism. Expand the VOL to include more diverse resources, including state-wide purchases of GVRL reference titles. Consider state-wide contracts with other vendors (ProQuest, EBSCO, etc.). Maine's collection is admirable.
- Accept that in schools the lines between library services and educational technology are very blurry, and provide state-wide access to resources (we should be on this map) such as Newsela.
- I would appreciate a state-wide ILS system someday (Destiny, perhaps), but as someone who has managed a switch to Verso and then to OPALS over the past 3 years, I am not in the mood to do it again anytime soon.

Testimony on Technology submitted to Denise Hersey & Maria Avery on 5/18/22
Lyman Ross, Systems Librarian: lross@uvm.edu
Aaron Nichols, Access & Media Services Librarian: aaron.nichols@uvm.edu

What library systems are currently in place at your library?
- Illiad for ILL
- Book Scanners
- Voyager is our ILS
- Springshare products (Content management system)
- SFX (for serials)
- Drupal for our website
- ISlandora- Digital Collections
- ArchivesSpace- used for special collections finding aids
- EZProxy
- Primo- discovery layer
- MySQL Server
- Pharos- printing
- Omeka
- For staff: Virtual desktops, on campus provided VMWare infrastructure, and secure LINUX terminals (Open Sense Solutions) for the public. Also a variety of applications for Windows and MacIntosh computers for staff.
- Virtual server (we get this from the University)

Do you have staff responsible for supporting technology in your library? What position in your library is responsible for technology? One FTE or a percentage of an FTE?

The UVM Libraries has 4.5 FTE in direct support of technology. 4 employees support the technology needs of the Howe Library and the Silver Special Collections library. The remaining .5 FTE is allocated to support of Dana Medical Library.

What are your technology needs? What support do you need? In what areas could you grow?

- Would like to support Controlled Digital Lending.
- More support for the Center for Digital Initiatives and digitization projects.
- Better Discovery layer on website (i.e. Blacklight)

How have your technology needs or systems changed in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- With a large move to remote work, we had to deploy a lot of Webcams for staff and set up remote desktops (in particular for folx who work closely with Voyager).
- The University provided and supports Microsoft Teams.

Additional Comments:

There are some services only available to affiliates of the University. Our ILL system, Illiad, for example, is only available to affiliates. Similarly, remote (off campus) access to our digital collections are only available to current UVM affiliates.

Library Working Group
Testimony from Vermont Librarians on Technology
Vermont Humanities – Jacob Pelletier
May 20, 2022

Overview of Themes in Reported Testimony

We are pleased to partner with Vermont libraries on many of our programs, including our First Wednesdays series of free humanities lectures, which are hosted by nine libraries across the state from October through May. A season is typically made up of 72 individual talks.

Like many cultural organizations that offer public events, we had to pivot to online presentations when the pandemic started. We initially hosted digital events every Wednesday night, beginning in April of 2020 and continuing through September of that year. We mostly presented on Facebook videos that we had recorded and edited in advance, although some were Facebook Live events. The response was overwhelmingly positive, but recording and editing talks in advance was time consuming.

Although we had hoped that our 2020-2021 First Wednesdays would be held in person, we had to present all 72 talks digitally that year on the Zoom accounts of the individual host libraries. Zoom meetings had their flaws as it could be a chore to keep people muted, and the cameras of some attendees could be distracting.

When we needed to again use digital presentations for much of our 2021-2022 season, we tried out a new Zoom offering, Zoom Events. This platform was great for us as event organizers, as it made it easier for us to collect registrations, communicate with attendees, and manage cameras and views during the event itself. But some users struggled to use Zoom Events, as the platform requires folks to have a Zoom account to attend.

After spending a lot of staff time trying to help our end-users, we eventually abandoned the Zoom Events platform and now use the Zoom Webinar platform. It's not quite as easy for us to manage as Zoom Events, but we can still communicate with folks before and after the event and can share videos shortly after an event ends.

Thirteen events in our most recent season were held in-person at the libraries. These had much lower attendance than our digital First Wednesdays events this season. We averaged about 40 attendees for each digital event.

Benefits and Disadvantages of Digital Events

While we miss meeting with our audience in-person, we have seen a lot of benefits of digital events over the past two years:

1. People can choose which talk they'd like to attend based on the topic instead of geography.
2. We can book speakers from outside Vermont more easily and for lower costs.
3. We can share recordings immediately after the event. In the past, the in-person talks were recorded by cable access stations, and it could take weeks for the videos to become available.
4. We get many more responses for surveys from digital attendees than we did by distributing paper surveys at our live events. Around 100 people fill out a survey each month, or more than

ten per talk. And because people are at home with a computer, they often share much longer responses than they would if they were filling out a survey by hand while sitting on a folding chair.

5. While some people say they miss the in-person events, the dominant comment shared is for us to please continue offering talks by Zoom. We hear this from people with small children, people who do not like to drive at night, folks with mobility issues, and those who live a long distance from any of the host libraries, including in other states and countries!

6. Offering talks online has exposed us to a new audience. In 2020-2021, over 45% of attendees said they had never come to a First Wednesdays event before.

There have been some disadvantages to hosting talks primarily online

1. We see part of our mission as helping to build community. This is much easier at an in-person event than during a Zoom Webinar.

2. For the host libraries, it has been a mixed bag. Some locations have loved it, while others feel they get no benefit from the digital events. Folks are not as aware of the library on Zoom as compared to coming into the actual library building itself.

3. Because each season we had planned to host a full in-person slate, we have ended up with nine Zoom events taking place at the same time on the same night, we are essentially competing against ourselves. Folks often tell us: "it's so hard to choose."

Changes for Future Programs

After receiving this input and holding programming meetings with our partners, we have made some changes to the typical format of the First Wednesdays season.

1. After discussion with the host libraries, we have decided to offer a mixture of in-person and digital events in our upcoming 2022-2023 season, which will begin in October.

2. The libraries will host nine in-person talks on the first Wednesday of October, November, and December. We will offer one Zoom talk during those months, on the second Wednesday, so as to not directly compete with the in-person events. We are hopeful that some of the in-person events can offer live streaming.

3. In January, February, and March, we'll offer three digital events on the first Wednesday, and skip the in-person events. These are the months with the worst weather and driving conditions.

4. We will return to in-person events in April and May, with again one talk held on Zoom those months.

Participant Testimonials

To help frame the context of the themes discussed above, included are a few testimonials from participants from the First Wednesdays 2021-2022 season.

1. They are a treasure trove, especially on line if you do not have direct access in your community, but it would help if more were taped and available, at least for a time to view, since they all happen at the same time. Moving to a future hybrid model to allow for in person and remote

participation would be great, not just so I, in Burlington, can attend in St. J, but many people in St. J may not be able to attend in person (child care, elder care, infirmity..) so now that we have the tested ability to provide both we should keep the door open. (Fall 2021, St. Johnsbury Event)

2. The 1st Wednesday initiative is fabulous. The range of issues presented is great. The ability to Zoom presentations from each of the nine towns is terrific. And this last point can be magnified when one realizes he/she doesn't need to go out in blizzards to "attend". Bottom line: "Bringing what matters to all Vermonters." What's not to like? (Fall 2021, Middlebury Event)

3. Have enjoyed First Wednesdays in past then got out of the habit when COVID shut things down for a time. ZOOM makes it so easy - though the 'community' element isn't as strong as when in person. Still, I don't know that I'd have attended if an in person event so appreciate you making these programs still available on ZOOM. (Spring 2022, Norwich Event)

Considerations for the Future

After exploring these themes, we have discovered a few possible options for ways technology can be used to continue improving library programs and connections with stakeholders.

1. Sending digital surveys after live events has proven incredibly fruitful as participants are much more likely to respond and give meaningful feedback.
2. When holding a virtual event, it is important to consider which platform works best for your needs and the needs of the participants. For example, a Zoom Call works great for a small intimate discussion but becomes unwieldly if more than 20 people are in the event.
3. Virtual events provide a wide range of accessibility features including the possibility to easily record an event. We have utilized the live transcription feature, which is computer generated, but does provide great captioning for free. These programs are also able to invite live interpreters and captioners easily if an event requires more precise captions or translations.
4. As we move towards more of a combination of in-person, virtual, and hybrid events, it is important to consider what local marketing options are available to increase invisibility. These include more traditional print marketing as well as digital marketing through websites, social media, and email campaigns.
5. If funding is available, looking at developing infrastructure in libraries and organizations for live-streaming events would be important to consider. As noted in our surveys, people still will want to participate in virtual events in the future, and live streaming is a way to promote community building while providing wider access to programs.

Bree Drapa - Director, Westford Public Library

I wrote this in my facilities testimony and was told to bring it up again in the discussion on technology:
"One other "building" area I would like to talk about is our digital infrastructure. I know that technology is another part of this testimony, but I see our digital infrastructure suffering from some of the same problems as our physical infrastructure. It is not accessible to all our patrons. It needs regular maintenance. It suffers from looking dated and out of touch, just like carpet and furniture. I also have the same problems with being able to "fix" it - I lack the TIME, MONEY, and EXPERTISE. I would like to see digital infrastructure included as part of the library's facilities."

In additional to our digital library, The Westford Public Library has had many technology triumphs and tribulations.
Triumphs:
With a grant from PLA and some help from VTRural Development, we were able to expand the library's wifi signal throughout the entire Westford Common. We were able to do this in April 2020 – greatly aiding our community as they navigated working from home, social distancing, telemedicine and on-line schooling. We saw the need when our small, three space parking lot was jammed with people trying to use our free, 24/7, high speed internet. We have had consistent usage since then, averaging almost 1000 unique users per month. Our town only has a population of 2000!

We also used our ARPA TECH grant to allow printing from anywhere on our network, including the parking lot. Due to changes we made years ago, we allow patrons to print up to ten pages for free per day. Printing is very popular at tax time and for boarding passes and Amazon return labels. Patrons have been pleased they can now print from their own devices, allowing for greater privacy that using a public access terminal. (which are also new – thank you ARPA!)

I've gotten very good at trouble shooting Libby over the phone with patrons and helping my older patrons in person. They've gotten very good too – go them!

Tribulations:
Keeping up with technology! Whether it is ereaders for Libby or troubleshooting why the computer isn't working, it is a struggle to be the tech hub for the town with no formal training. Good thing I have a growth mindset and am willing to try stuff!

It is also hard to assess what is next in tech and what is being phased out. I am no longer buying audiobooks on CD, relying solely on Libby for that part of our collection. I think DVDs might be the next thing to go, but they are still pretty popular with certain segments of our library population. But, my budget does not allow for physical and streaming movies, so I feel I am missing out on a segment that would use streaming.

Knowing what to buy takes so much time! Sometimes I have more money than time!

Sometimes I do not have the answers and that stinks. It can be frustrating when a community member is relying on you to print or help them access very important documents (taxes, real estate transactions, travel documents, etc.) and you just can't.

I think the pandemic has made more and more people aware of the role of technology in our lives and the digital divide that libraries have been talking about for years.

Solutions:
Not sure there is one, but it would be nice if Josh, as the tech consultant, got to travel around to libraries like the other consultants did pre-covid. It would also be nice to have a tech help line like some school districts or large companies have.

Written Comments: COLLECTIONS

Traditionally libraries have held a collection of books, but now collections are so much more than just books. Yes, they still have books, both regular and large print, but they also have DVDs, audio books, non-traditional items, and downloadable and streaming services.

Books still make up the majority of the collection here in Bennington with 55,000 books accounting for about 64% of the physical circulation numbers.
3,500 DVD's account for another 33% of the circulation figures.
Audios, with a 3,400 collection, account for about 2 % of the circulation numbers.
Non-traditional items makes up the balance of the circulation numbers of physical items.

Our non-traditional collection includes area passes, snow shoes (these have been so popular that we are increasing the number of snowshoes we have this year), a telescope, a backpack with binoculars and nature books, puzzles, and a moisture meter. In the children's room we have backpacks with books and manipulatives, most of these are bulky and do not fit on traditional bookshelves. Libraries are not built to house these non-traditional items, so although we would like to expand our holdings to include ukuleles, cake pans, garden tools and seeds, we first of all have to come up with a storage space and figure out access for the patrons.

Downloadable and streaming collections have a small, but loyal following. They are a way to expand our collection to the computer savvy among our patrons.
Hoopla has been popular most users maximize their allowable checkouts each and every month.
Overdrive/Libby has a steady stream of users. Patrons are not keen on the long wait/hold times, followed by the necessity for instant download.
We used to offer RBdigital, but now this is no more, we eagerly look forward to the new offering through the state.

We are fortunate here in Bennington to have a dedicated Vermont History room to house the Library's special collection of Vermontiana and materials on local and New England History. Due to our geographic location we also spill into some New York locations, ones that are close at hand. These items do not circulate, but patrons and visitors are welcome to browse the shelves and most of the items housed in the room are visible in the catalog. Highlights of the Vermont History Collection include: Town of Bennington National Register of Historic Places Sites and Structures Survey, Urban Sites and Structures Survey, and Rural Sites and Structures Survey, Vermont State Yearbooks (1915-1999), local high school yearbooks, and subject files maintained on topics related to Bennington County and Vermont. Last year we had our high school yearbooks digitized.

As part of the Catamount Library Network(CLN), we already share our catalog with 21 libraries from around the state; this is an excellent way to increase the selection for our patrons. Patrons can place holds on other libraries items, as long as they are not classed as new, and staff may do so on behalf of the patron. All members of CLN are in the courier service which we find invaluable. On an average month Bennington will ship out about 400 items and receive slightly less. A shared catalog comes with its drawbacks as well as its advantages; duplicate records in the catalog make it harder for patrons to locate a specific copy of an item. With at least 21 different catalogers adding items, all with different levels of knowledge, the consistency of records in the system is varied. To fix a catalog of all duplicates and to ensure good, consistent

records takes time; time that a busy cataloger generally does not have. The importance of training all catalogers so that only good records are added to the catalog is essential.

For those hard to find items and as a last resort we go to CLOVER. There are very few items that get requested on CLOVER and many of those are unique, specialist titles. Only very rarely are we unable to fill the patrons desires.

Since I started my current position, I have been in charge of the fiction collection at Bennington, and I have been attempting to diversify the collection. After having been curated by the same person for 30 plus years the whole collection seemed to be very one-note. Either mystery or romance and usually with a cast of white characters.
With any project it is necessary to measure your baseline so any changes you make can be quantified. I have made some inroads towards a more diverse collection, by first weeding out dated, unused and broken books, and then adding a Diversity collection code to the collection database to easier define that growing collection, and to follow the usage statistics. I have spent the last three years looking for diverse titles, and finally I am ready to start a full diversity audit of the collection. This will not be a quick process as each and every title needs to be analyzed. I feel that this could be a wonderful project for a student.

Our patron demographic spans all ages, however there are larger numbers at either end of the scale. Our more mature patrons enjoy browsing the shelves and had a hard time during lockdown. Although we offered to select some books for them, we were very seldom taken up on our offer. Our very young patrons enjoy coming to the library to use the manipulatives and enjoy the displays and activities featured each month. Patrons with children are more inclined to check out materials for their children than themselves.

Submitted by
Wendy Sharkey
Bennington Free Library

Vermont Department of Libraries: Working Group Testimony

January 4, 2022

Collection Development: When I first started as a youth services librarian, I looked forward to the semi-annual Materials Review sessions with enthusiasm and expectation. While I eagerly soaked up all information about books and other resources, I also discovered the value of time dedicated to developing collaborations and sharing resources. The longer I get to be in the library, the more I realize what an important asset this type of offering is for all librarians, those new to the profession and veterans alike. Learning about new titles in a shared setting makes for a more generous and less threatening means of boosting the quality of collections at individual libraries and across the library community.

Collection-Specific Resources: We are fortunate to have a local history curator on staff here at the Charlotte Library. This person brings interest and expertise to field questions from interested community members and visitors as well as to teach other staff about the resources available in our library. I believe that funds and training should be allocated at a state level to allow more libraries to foster and maintain curated local history collections. The staff position can be especially valuable to the library and community in partnership with a local history society as well as in collaboration with the Vermont Historical Society. Such cooperation can further strengthen library ties within its community as well as throughout the state.

Collection Access: The library should not be barrier to equity but an open door to access. Emmanuel Acho, former NFL player and author of *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man,* described visiting a library as "like going to the airport with a passport but without a ticket." Our job is to make that sure that everyone has the ticket as well as the passport. Making resources available for those who do not (yet) use the library is one key step. Collection development needs to be proactive and provide resources for all. This includes resources for community members who may not feel welcome, due to language or technology barriers. It also includes potential members of our communities such as refugees and new Americans.

Margaret Woodruff, Library Director
Charlotte Library

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

Library Name: Ruth B. Winton Memorial Library

School Name: Colchester High School

Town or towns served: Colchester (some students also from the sending towns of Georgia and the Champlain Islands)

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Frances Binder, School 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):   A little over 8,200 titles in house with access to some 4,000 digital titles through the Vermont Schools Shared Digital Collection.

Number of students at your school: Just over 700

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 consists of about 40% fiction titles, 33% nonfiction, and the remainder of the collection is comprised of our professional collection,videos, audio, biographies/memoirs, story collections, graphic novels, and a few other small special collections. We do a brisk business in interlibrary loans as well through Vermont's CLOVER system. The average age of our fiction is about 10 years, and the average age for our nonfiction collection is about 18 years.

What are the strengths of your current collection?

Some strengths of our current collection are:

- Recent large-scale/wide-lens and ongoing EDIS audit of our fiction collection which has greatly improved the diversity of authors and stories represented in this collection
- Ongoing efforts to improve and expand our digital offerings (Swank K-12 movie streaming, additional databases purchased outside of the VOL collections, digital audio devices, e-books purchased)
- Adequate staffing in our library allows for regular and routine selection and deselection processes as well as regular EDIS auditing
- Adequate budget allows for adequate book ordering capabilities

What are the weaknesses of your current collection?

- The collection is pretty dated, particularly the non-fiction collection - a large deselection process was completed in the last school year and we are now working to update the collection a bit at a time
- The non-fiction collection is also in need of an EDIS audit - this is in progress as well

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.

We are active in CLOVER (Vermont's ILL system) both as borrowers and lenders. We find that the ILL system works quite well for us (barring pandemic-related delays these past couple of years). Our one big wish with the ILL system would be that schools could participate in the courier service. Currently we are only able to lend and borrow through the postal service which means that some libraries won't lend to us (if they only lend through the courier service). It also means that in order to borrow books from our local library, I or my library assistant must make trips on our own time to pick books up and return them. While we do this willingly (anything to get books in our students' hands) this does represent a real cost in terms of personnel time and resources.

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 collection of playaways as well as a small collection of mp3 players which I use to upload specific titles from Libro.fm. These collections primarily serve students who may have various reading and/or learning challenges and need to access texts in a different way. I work to create a collection of audiobooks which offers a mix of popular titles as well as titles which are

often assigned in classes. I have also collaborated with our Humanities department to ensure that books they use for group reads are available in a variety of formats for their students.

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?

In addition to the audiobooks mentioned above, we also offer access to many digital audiobooks and e-books through the Vermont Schools Shared Digital Collection on OverDrive/Sora). Our students tend to prefer print materials when possible so though I offer these when our print copies of popular titles are out for instance, students will often request an ILL before going to the e-version. These digital collections are primarily used by students when they are assigned to them, and some students used these collections during remote and hybrid learning. We offer access to e-, audio, and enhanced e-readers through TumbleBooks as well. These titles do see some use through our special education department.

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 used to circulate some digital cameras, microphones, and A/V equipment, but these items are now all housed and circulated by our IT department. We do have some board and card games which students borrow as well as art/craft supplies, but these are not formally circulated. We also loan headphones, but again these are not cataloged or formally circulated.

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?

We continue to assess our collections for diversity, inclusivity, and representation. We strive to provide students with the fullest range of stories and voices possible. I've only been in this position since the 2019-20 year…so I have yet to experience what we might once have considered a "normal" school year here, therefore it's a bit hard for me to say what has changed in our collection over time, but I can say that our biggest goal (and also probably one of our biggest challenges - in a good way) is to work to be consistently aware and responsive to the changing technologies and resources available to our students, and to continue to seek out student input and teacher input to discover how we can use our resources and expertise to best

serve our students. I think one of the other big challenges for school libraries, always, is figuring out how to strike the right balance between educational support, research support, and just plain nurturing a love of reading for fun. Our multiple roles as school librarians (the ALA names these as: instructional partner, teacher, leader, information specialist, and program administrator) require large amounts of ingenuity and flexibility from all of us. Additionally, we must be tireless advocates for our programs as we work to shift the perception of libraries as "extra" to libraries as ESSENTIAL parts of our students' growth and learning experiences. In my experience this continues to be one of the biggest ongoing challenges that school librarians and library programs face. Meeting these challenges, for me at least, means engaging in conversations with other school librarians, idea and resource sharing widely with colleagues across the state and farther afield, reading and learning independently, working to build and deepen relationships with colleagues in my school and district, and seeking out ever more opportunities for professional development and growth.

When finished with this form, please email your completed document to Meg Allison (mallison@u32.org) or Karen McCalla (kmccalla@millriverschools.org)

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

Library Name: Colchester Middle School Library

School Name: Colchester Middle School

Town or towns served: Colchester plus some kids from the Island towns (South Hero, Grand Isle, North Hero, Alburgh, Isle La Motte)

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Rebecca Sofferman, School 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 _____ NO _____

Collection size (number of volumes):   11,923

Number of students at your school: 500

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 about evenly split between fiction and nonfiction. In recent years I've been purchasing more narrative nonfiction or other higher interest nonfiction as opposed to books that would formerly have been used for research. Most research is done via our school databases or the Web. I've increased our school's graphic novel collection and in particular our Manga collection as interest in that format has exploded since the pandemic. We subscribe to the VT Schools Shared Digital Collection (VSSDC) for eBooks and audiobooks. Our circulation has dropped in the last couple of years. For example, last year we averaged around 500 print books circulated per month whereas before the pandemic it was over 600. So far this year, however, our circulation has skyrocketed, which is fantastic!

What are the strengths of your current collection? I feel our curriculum strengths are a quality collection that includes an increasing percentage of titles with diverse characters and authors. It's extremely important that students have "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors" in our collection, and all purchasing (as well as the books I choose to feature) takes that into consideration. I also feel that our collection is responsive not only to curricular needs but also student needs and requests.

What are the weaknesses of your current collection? I would like to offer more "DIY" books in our collection, as well as more current biographies. I also need more Manga, because students are so hungry for it! But, they are hard to find right now with supply chain issues.

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. We share resources between the schools in our district regularly, and we have a courier that goes between buildings on a daily basis. My school also participates in Clover (including when we need books from our public library), although this doesn't get heavy use. Any Clover books must be delivered through the US Mail. When we need books from our public library, we used to have a courier that delivered and picked up books, but that went away during COVID, so now our district librarians have to pick up and deliver books ourselves. I am a lot less likely to offer this to students than I was previously since I don't live near the library, but I will certainly make it happen if students need something.

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/local history collection, to support research projects. We also have a small collection of middle school books in Vietnamese and in French to support some of our New American students. Finally, we have a small collection of leveled readers that were purchased before I came. These get a fair amount of use to support students who are reading far below their grade level.

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 have audiobooks available as playaways, and also through the VSSDC in Overdrive. eBooks are available primarily through the VSSDC as well, and through Mackin (that collection was started

before I came and I haven't added to it because I think it's easiest to teach students one platform and the VSSDC has more books available). Students can access the books via the catalog but I think most of them use the link on the library website. I sometimes add books for our school to the Overdrive collection, especially for our summer reading program. I am so fortunate to have the VSSC. It gets a fair amount of use at our school and we wouldn't be able to provide so many eBooks or audiobooks otherwise.

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. I have games and puzzles and globes in the library and sometimes they are borrowed for other classes. However, I don't have them cataloged, I just have a sign-out sheet. I have a small makerspace and sometimes items from there are borrowed as well. Some tech equipment such as portable DVD players, cameras, and microphones sometimes are loaned. Finally, we do have a handful of DVDs but I don't really purchase new ones anymore. Our computers don't have DVD drives and we use the SWANK streaming service to show movies (or youtube).

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? As mentioned above, my print collection is mostly focused on interest/pleasure reading and student silent reading requirements, rather than research. Hardly any research takes place with print resources now in our school, with the occasional exception of biography projects. I maintain a really tiny reference section and I do have some nonfiction books on a wide variety of subjects because sometimes students are banned from their devices and need print resources. I maintain a picture book collection, even though we are middle school, because some students like them, sometimes they bring them home to read to younger siblings, and sometimes teachers like students to use them for literacy projects.

I am very fortunate at our school that our ELA teachers require students to do independent reading to meet their reading proficiencies, and they encourage students to come regularly to the library to choose books. My role has shifted a bit since the pandemic (I'm still doing less in-person teaching and more sending out video lessons to classes), and it's left me more time to conference with students about finding the ideal reading materials.

I am planning to do a bigger weed of the nonfiction section at some point in the very near future to free up more shelf space for the areas where I am doing more purchasing (especially graphic novels, manga, and other fiction). My fiction section is genrefied as well as my biography section. I may try to genrefy the nonfiction at some point too, to get away from the outdated and inequitable Dewey system.

My biggest challenge is that I don't have a library assistant and these types of projects just take so much time. I sometimes can get student assistants but they are easily bored with this work.

When there are only so many hours in a day, my priority is teaching and reader's advisory, not collection development and maintenance. I haven't been able to complete a library inventory in years. All libraries need assistants, or else the librarian just becomes a very overqualified library clerk!

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Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of State Libraries: Collections
January 3, 2022
Susan O'Connell, Library Director, Craftsbury Public Library
director@craftsburypubliclibrary.org
802-586-9683

Library collections vary widely from community to community based on local interests and available space for the collection. Vermont libraries are an independent lot, and one of the greatest benefits of that is that a well-trained librarian with enough time and resources can ensure a stellar collection for the community.

While I believe our libraries are doing an excellent job, I see two areas of improvement that could provide even greater benefits. One area concerns local collections, and the other concerns improving systems statewide.

Local Collections: There are few libraries in Vermont large enough to employ librarians with a dedicated collection development focus. Most librarians in our small libraries wear many hats and must be skilled in everything from cataloging to readers' advisory to collection development. In the past, librarians had a very useful aid from the VTLIB Library Consultant for Children's Services in the form of a quarterly Materials Review workshop. These sessions gave an overview of noteworthy material for juvenile patrons. They provided reviews of recently published works which served as a safety net of sorts for those responsible for collection development. While the Materials Review sessions were not a one size answer to juvenile collection development, they helped to make sure titles that would be appropriate for the collection did not miss the attention of the person in charge of ordering.

Why is this service needed for the juvenile collection when it was not provided for the adult collection? I see two reasons that this service was especially applicable for the juvenile collection.

- One big difference between juvenile and adult collections is that while our adult readers are quite stable our juvenile readers are always aging in and out of the collection. That means that a dynamic adult collection needs to be constantly refreshed as our readers may be reading adult fiction from our shelves for ten, twenty, even fifty years! In contrast, juvenile collections need the best material for different age groups from infants through young adult. While the collection must always be evaluated for relevance, inclusivity, currency of information, physical condition, and interests of readers, a juvenile collection can rely more heavily on the same material over time than an adult collection can.
- Quite often the children's librarian is responsible for collection development of the juvenile collection. In many of our smaller libraries, the director may be fully trained through a Master's Program or the VTLIB Certificate of Public Librarianship, while the children's librarian may not have had the opportunity to receive specific collection development training. The Materials Review sessions provided support to ensure new materials exemplifying everyday diversity and updated non-fiction texts were brought to the attention of multitasking children's librarians for their consideration.

I believe that bringing back the Materials Review workshops would provide a valuable service to children's librarians around the state, and would be an excellent way to help libraries develop and evaluate their collections, particularly through the lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Statewide Systems: In Vermont, many small independent libraries exist within close proximity to each other, and many library users are members of numerous libraries in order to take advantage of different collections. This "sharing" of library patrons is a good way to ensure that Vermonters have quick access to as much as possible within the constraints of the individual systems and patchwork of collaboratives currently in place. However, I believe Vermonters would be better served if we could look beyond our individual systems, and create larger collaborative systems that would better serve our users and reduce costs for libraries.

Throughout Vermont there have been different ways of addressing this issue, from the VTLIB sponsored Catamount Consortium of 19 libraries throughout the state to the Home Card, One Card, and LOCAL collaborations that allow users from one library to use their card at another nearby library. We can and should do better though, to improve services while reducing costs.

One step in this direction could be to implement a statewide library card that could be used at any library regardless of the Integrated Library System (ILS) used at each library. To provide better cost savings and more seamless discoverability of material, we should look at providing one ILS for all libraries.

Vermont is a small state, and there is no reason one system could not serve all Vermonters. That is not to say it would be easy. There would be many hurdles to overcome as we work to find common ground melding one system from many independent ones. However, we would all benefit from this process in the long run, through better access to materials and cost reductions if each tiny library did not have to bear the burden of their own ILS.

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

Library Name:

School Name: Doty and Rumney school libraries

Town or towns served: Worcester, Middlesex Vermont

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Alyson Mahony library media specialist

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 _____ NO_____I don't think so_____

Collection size (number of volumes):   Doty = 6,408 materials / RMS = 12, 832 materials

Number of students at your school: Doty = 185 patrons / RMS = 342 patrons

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.

Average age of collection: Doty = 19 years old / RMS = 21 years old

Part time librarians don't have as much time to weed and discard out of date materials or to complete an inventory.

What are the strengths of your current collection?

Doty has been awarded several grants so that it has a great collection of award winning mathematical books and books that promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. As a small, rural school this collection is extremely important to readers who do not have access to books at

home, and are far from public libraries and bookstores. Several home school students access the collection, as well as custodial staff and para-professionals.

Rumney students are by and large voracious readers and before the pandemic parents often browsed the library and checked out books for home reading.

What are the weaknesses of your current collection?

The Doty collection is small and missing many items. Although the population is small, these patrons deserve a larger collection and access to the collection year round.

Both Rumney and Doty collections are dated and the collection of DIY and makerspace books, as well as books that reflect rural interests are lacking.

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.

Inter - district library loans work great because of the close network of librarians that work together. Clover is time consuming for me but I will use it a couple of times a year to get sets of books for book clubs and book walk materials.

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.

I have curated a collection of read aloud books that target social, emotional learning for guidance counselors and teachers to use in their classrooms.

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?

Some students use SORA and I teach them to use Libby to access some books from the public library. I wish we had a separate budget for audio books and that the system was more straight forward and streamlined.

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.

Games, some maker supply kits. I would like to do much more.

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?

Time is the biggest challenge. With more time, more grants could be written for STREAM supplies, diverse titles, and UDL tools to access materials.

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

Library Name: Enosburg Elementary

School Name: Enosburg Elementary Library Media Center

Town or towns served: Enosburg

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Joanne Reed Allen, Teacher Librarian + TEAM [Technology Empowering All Minds] Teacher

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 _____
NO_____x_____

Collection size (number of volumes):   6833

Number of students at your school: 288

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.

The collection consists of over 50% nonfiction titles. Early Childhood Education students do not check out books. They borrow from their own classroom libraries. Students have library class once a week and as of As of January 4, 2022, 2,462 titles have been checked out. Below are the most circulated titles / series:
- The most circulated series has been Dav Pilkey's Dog Man series which holds the top 5 highest spots followed by
- the Marvel Encyclopedia: the definitive gide to the characters of the Marvel Universe,
- Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants series
- David Shannon books
- Jeff Kinney's Diary of a Wimpy Kid series,

- Raina Telgemeier's books [Smile, Sister, Drama, Ghosts, Guts]
- Lauren Tarshis I Survived Series
- Mo Willems Elephant + Piggie series
- Dork Diaries by Rachel Russel,
- Doreen Cronin books [We did an author study]
- Tui Sutherland's Wings of Fire series,
- Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants series,
- Many nonfiction lower level reader books: crocodiles, puppies, snow leopards, baby animals, slam dunk basketball, horses, poo in the forest, rabbits, deer hunting for kids, komodo dragons, big book of who, sports illustrated big book, and more]

Nonfiction is circulated at a high rate. Many of the nonfiction picture books are in forward-facing bins, which builds great interest. Over the past 2 years I have added and updated many nonfiction animal books at lower levels to capture all reading abilities. Another focus has been in building an inclusive community.

What are the strengths of your current collection?
1. Many nonfiction for lower level readers including animals, sports, community helpers, things that move, and more.
2. 22 items per student
3. ⅔ collection is nonfiction

What are the weaknesses of your current collection?
4. Average age of Nonfiction- 2007
5. Average age of fiction- 2006
6. 17% of titles are 2017 and newer

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.
I participate with our Middle/High School and the local Enosburgh Public Library for interlibrary loans. The librarians request the books and disperse to students.

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.
No special collections, only LOCATIONS for students to find specifically what they are looking for: an early reader's corner with fiction + nonfiction, lower level nonfiction reading, fairytales

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?

During COVID I have NOT used the Kindle with audiobooks. It is very time-consuming to manage audiobook content this way

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.

Have a box of games that need to be processed but currently do not circulate these items.

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?
With the collection analysis from Follett, I hope to update much of the Nonfiction section to support the NGSS and Social Studies standards, as well as student interests.

January 5, 2022

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
Thomas McMurdo, Interim State Librarian
Thomas.McMurdo@vermont.gov
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.3M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

I am excited to be able to provide input on the topic of *collections* in public libraries.

COLLECTIONS
A public library's collection is one of the key services it provides to its community. Hundreds of years ago library collections only included printed material, but in the last two centuries it has expanded well beyond that to include a myriad of formats, still all with the express purpose of providing the loaning of materials at no charge that inform, delight, and support lifelong learning at no cost and with easy access for everyone.

At the core of all of our collections, and the responsibilities of these collections to our communities, are the tenets found in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement, both developed by the American Library Association. All public libraries embrace and follow these statements that clarify and uphold the intellectual freedoms that are a core to our democracy. These documents are provided at the end of this testimony. It is important to understand that librarians fight censorship of any kind against our collections. Our collections have been curated in accordance with policies developed with our Library Trustee Boards and

through the thoughtful work of professional librarians. Currently, libraries are facing unprecedented attacks against our collections because of political agendas. Library collections are not political and any attempt at censorship is serious. The American Library Association has recently put out a statement in this regard and it can be found at the end of this testimony as well.

For the purposes of this testimony, I will provide some basic overview information on public library collections, and then I will present information by dividing the topic into the two major collections public libraries provide: physical collections and virtual collections, also known as eResources.

> *Libraries are community treasure chests, loaded with a wealth of information available to everyone equally, and the key to that treasure chest is the library card. I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card.* — Laura Bush

GENERAL OVERVIEW
Purchasing and Curating
The job of purchasing items and formats for the library collection is a continually daunting task. With limited budgets, librarians must curate collections they believe provide the best options for their communities. Communities in Vermont vary. Some communities serve large populations of Immigrants and Refugees and some communities serve large portions of Seniors. Communities are constantly changing in their demographics and librarians respond to those changes by what they thoughtfully add to their collections.

Libraries need consistent and reliable funding for their collections. This funding works best when it is tied to some growth factor to the communities they serve. A growing community needs to have a growing library collection that supports it. Funding library collections should not be capricious and state standards would greatly help.

Librarians need training and continuing education to ensure they are developing the best collections for their communities. Ensuring that money is budgeted in yearly operation budgets for this training, as well as supporting the Vermont Department of Libraries (VT LIB) to provide

this training is imperative. VT LIB has been the provider of a variety of librarian training but we need to expand this training and make it easier for all librarians to take part.

There are wonderful opportunities for supporting and facilitating sharing for both physical and virtual collections that will be explored later in this testimony letter.

Access
A library's collection is only as good as the access to it. Access to collections requires a quality, automated, computer system that catalogs the collection and provides patron account features, as well as many other collection management features. In the library industry these computer systems are called an ILS, or an Integrated Library System. A quality ILS needs to be available online, be intuitive for the user, and have a robust backend to support the collection structure.

Currently there are a variety of automated systems utilized by libraries throughout the state. And some libraries are not automated at all. There is a huge opportunity to go to a statewide ILS that would not only improve access for all Vermonters, but would better facilitate sharing among libraries, including Inter Library Loan, which is discussed later. This kind of improvement needs backing and support from the State of Vermont as statewide leadership is integral for such a project's success. Additionally, adequate funding must be regularly set aside to ensure the sustainability of such a system.

Another point that must be made about access to physical collections is to have adequate open hours so community members can pick up items. Having evening and weekend hours are extremely important, especially for families and folks that work long or odd hours. Again, adequate funding for libraries is necessary to provide the needed open hours.

PHYSICAL COLLECTIONS
For public libraries, what is kept in our brick and mortar buildings is a varied and exciting physical collection for all ages. As everyone knows, our core service is loaning books. These books are fiction and non-fiction. They are resources for education, research, and entertainment for everyone in our community. Each demographic that we serve is carefully considered when we purchase books. The youngest children have board books available to them to provide the earliest literacy exposure to spark a lifetime of love of reading, while our

senior populations have carefully selected Large Print books that allow them to read more easily.

It is important to highlight the importance of the book collection for youth. The sheer abundance and ease of access to youth books and materials from birth through high school has major impacts on the learning. It is only the wealthy families that can afford to buy the picture books, the early readers, the fiction books that are all part of the journey of learning that children go through. It is estimated that a child that has picture books read to them in their early years of development builds a word database of over 60,000 words, compared to a word database of only 10,000 words for those children who are not read to. Providing the vast selection of books in a library collection increases the chances of young children having a solid base of literacy that will lead to their academic success. Since libraries are free to all, there is an equity for any child to benefit from a library's youth collection.

As a child progresses to reading on their own, the need for a quantity of early readers and early chapter books are instrumental in building their confidence to becoming solid readers. Moreover, it should go without saying that the books provided for our youngest community members are chosen to not only be factual and correct, but are also selected to promote diversity and inclusion in a myriad of ways. Children go through voracious periods of reading and absorb content like sponges. Youth librarians take this seriously and are always updating the youth collections to be relevant, meaningful, and exciting.

In addition to books for reading, public libraries provide Audiobooks on CDs and Playaways, which are self-contained audiobook devices. Many people prefer to take in information and books auditorily. This is for a variety of reasons, including accessibility for some individuals living with disabilities. The library also provides DVDs and Music CDs in our collections. Some people think these formats are antiquated, but it is important to understand that not everyone can use downloadable or streaming services. Many folks do not want to have a digital account for a variety of reasons. It is important to be especially aware of this for migrant communities who have justifiable concerns about their anonymity.

Miscellaneous or Library of Things
One of the more recent developments for libraries to have in their collections are "things" that may be borrowed that can help a community member learn a new skill and help save money.

By borrowing something that they only need to use once in a while, like a food dehydrator or a special gardening tool, libraries are serving as a cost-saving community resource while encouraging green living.

One of the most important additions to the "Library of Things" collection during the pandemic has been the addition of laptops and hotspots which has helped to bridge the digital divide for many Vermonters. Increased support for these types of laptop and hotspot collections is very much needed.

Interlibrary Loan

As you may already know, Interlibrary Loan is the mechanism by which libraries can borrow books and materials from each other. These items are processed by librarians and then sent via a van delivery system throughout Vermont. The sharing economy of libraries is one of its most unique features and enables any community member to get an item from anywhere via Interlibrary Loan. Technology has greatly increased the ease of access with improved systems, however, there is much more potential that can be expanded. Other states have state-wide systems that allow patrons to initiate Interlibrary Loans and the items are seamlessly delivered to the patron's home library for pick-up.

Vermont is a fairly small state and the opportunities for collection sharing using a statewide system and the van delivery system is an exciting opportunity. There are ways of geographically dividing the state, developing standards, establishing a statewide library card, and effectively using the van system that would be economically advantageous and would provide optimal provision of materials to Vermonters. I sincerely believe this project is doable. It would take work, dedication, and funding, but would have clear, positive, impacts on getting quality items to our community members.

With a statewide automated system, increased collection sharing would occur, and could be broadened even to the level of collection development. There are ways to share the costs of collecting and maintaining back collections, with libraries becoming subject experts. Again, statewide leadership and funding is necessary to make this kind of project happen and be successful.

Local History Collections

As someone who has worked in several Vermont libraries, I know that almost every library has a very unique local history collection. These are treasures that tell the town's or city's history and are deserving of special mention. The care of these collections is very specific and improving their access by digitization should be a priority for our state. There are many programs that can help public libraries digitize their collections, however, often funding is an issue. Funding also means the provision of staff to help get these projects going and then funding for ongoing staff to ensure these collections are properly maintained. Digitization not only preserves and protects these valuable collections, it also greatly improves access.
Our Vermont history is a large part of our identity and is often an economic driver for those studying it or personal genealogy stories that are connected to it. The Fletcher Free Library has a lovely Local History Collection, but it is in desperate need of tender care and digitization. We see folks who come in every week and use the collection for a variety of purposes, often after traveling very far. We want to continue to improve and care for our collection to continue to provide this valuable access in a thoughtful and standardized, industry accepted process. Major funding is our current obstacle to making this happen.

Foreign Language and ESL (English as a Second Language) Collections
Burlington has a large population of Immigrants and Refugees. We work very hard to have a Foreign Language collection that provides reading materials for these populations, but also instructional materials so that our community members can learn the languages that these folks speak. We also have built and continue to build a collection that supports learning English as a Second Language. Materials in this collection include: instructional books, dictionaries, grammar books, easy reading books, grammar books, teacher aid books, and more. This collection offers Citizenship materials as well. These include such materials as test prep books and practice flash cards.

These collections are one of the most difficult to maintain. Our community is constantly changing, note our newest Afghan refugees are arriving right now and we are working to update our collection accordingly. Also, these items are heavily used and need regular replacing. Finally, we would like to expand this collection and include more books that work on other skills, such as math or job skills. Funding is our biggest challenge in meeting the needs of this collection. Statewide support would have great impacts and would signal from all our public libraries that the state of Vermont takes the inclusion of our Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant populations seriously and with concern for their well-being.

VIRTUAL COLLECTIONS

Public libraries also provide eBooks & eAudiobooks through a variety of web and app services. One such service is Overdrive which is provided by our consortium non-profit, 501(c)3: the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC). Overdrive provides the majority of our eBooks and eAudiobooks. GMLC was started over 10 years ago to meet the demands of Vermonters to provide these virtual collections, like Overdrive. GMLC has worked with the member libraries to provide this essential service, as well as many other library services. When libraries work together in this consortial manner to provide services like these, the economies of scale are abundant. Our consortium needs funding and support so we can continue to grow.

There are many possibilities to make these collaborations bigger and better, to not only include Overdrive, but other vendors of virtual collections. Again, leadership and funding at the state level could provide guidance, management, and strategic planning that would help to equitably distribute these resources to all Vermont libraries.

There are also streaming services for television shows and films, as well as digital magazine collections. The Fletcher Free Library individually works with the vendors Hoopla and Kanopy to provide expanded eResources, but we would gladly welcome the opportunity to work with the state to be a part of a bigger buying group that would leverage our combined power and provide of management economies. We would be very interested in exploring new opportunities for digital magazine collections and graphic novel collections, too.

Another part of the digital collection that is very important to the library resources we provide are eResources. These include informational databases that include both popular periodicals and peer reviewed journals. Having access to this quality information is crucial for our patrons and for the reference help we give our patrons. Additionally, these research resources help entrepreneurs and businesses obtain information to create business plans and expand their markets. This digital collection resource is currently provided for by the Vermont Department of Libraries, but there are many opportunities to expand it and provide access to even more quality information.

At the Fletcher Free Library, we also provide access to the New York Times, Consumer Reports and Value Line. Again, paying for these services as an individual library is very costly. By

negotiating as part of a larger, state group there is huge potential for lowering costs and providing more resources with better access to ALL Vermonters.

Interactive eResources

Finally, it is important to remember that part of our collections include interactive eResources, like free online classes. These can be computer classes, Test Prep classes, language classes (both foreign languages and English as Second Language), and all kinds of various educational classes. These classes help to continue life-long learning and specific skill building to assist with employment and economic development. These are provided through a variety of vendors, some through a VT LIB contract, and some through individual contracts. Once again, negotiating large contracts on a state level would be a great improvement for libraries and Vermonters.

There are other online services that would be wonderful to offer our communities. For example, libraries in other states offer online tutoring services for students and more classes through Lynda.com.

Public libraries are continually assessing their collections to best serve their communities. Throughout the history of public libraries, we have continually expanded what we provide and how we improve access. This will continue into the future as libraries are a necessity in providing services equitable to everyone in our community. However, we need support with ample, consistent funding and with strong leadership to make sure this equitable social infrastructure continues. We know that an informed democracy is a strong democracy. By providing free and easy access to our carefully curated collections to anyone who walks through our doors, we are a large part of ensuring that America is and will continue to be a strong democracy.

Thank you for taking the time to take in this testimony. I hope you can better understand the richness and impacts that public library collections bring to a community for folks of all demographics and of all circumstances. I would be delighted to engage with anyone who would like further information or has questions.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Mary Danko
Library Director

> *The health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries.* — Carl Sagan

https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill
Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.
Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.
Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement

The Freedom to Read Statement
The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.
The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:
1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or*

considered dangerous by the majority.

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

   Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

   No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

   To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of

life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*
   The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

   It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer*

to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.
The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.
Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.
A Joint Statement by:
American Library Association
Association of American Publishers
Subsequently endorsed by:
American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Association of American University Presses
The Children's Book Council
Freedom to Read Foundation
National Association of College Stores
National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

https://www.ala.org/advocacy/statement-regarding-censorship

ALA Statement on Book Censorship
The American Library Association opposes widespread efforts to censor books in U.S. schools and libraries

CHICAGO - Due to a dramatic uptick in book challenges and outright removal of books from libraries, ALA's Executive Board and the Boards of Directors for all of ALA's eight divisions have released the following joint statement regarding attempts to remove materials that focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and books by Black authors or that document the Black experience or the experiences of other BIPOC individuals:

In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender, or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections. Some of these groups even resort to intimidation and threats to achieve their ends, targeting the safety and livelihoods of library workers, educators, and board members who have dedicated themselves to public service, to informing our communities, and educating our youth.

ALA strongly condemns these acts of censorship and intimidation.
We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

**Knowledge for Life.
Knowledge for All.**

We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed to be orthodox in history, politics, or belief. The unfettered exchange of ideas is essential to the preservation of a free and democratic society.

Libraries manifest the promises of the First Amendment by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of their content or the viewpoint of the author. This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

In 1953, when confronted with comparable threats to our democratic values, the American Library Association issued the Freedom to Read Statement, a declaration in support of freedom to think or believe as one chooses, the freedom to express one's thoughts and beliefs without fear or retaliation, and the right to access information without restriction. ALA's Executive Board, staff, and member leaders reaffirm not only the principles of the Freedom to Read statement but also the daily practices that ensure it continues to inform the profession and that library workers and library trustees have the training, information, tools, and support they need to celebrate and defend their communities' right to read and to learn.
With the freedom to read under threat, the ALA, including its Executive Board, Divisions, Roundtables, and other units stand firmly with our members, the entire library community, allied organizations, and all those across this country who choose to exercise their own right to read and access information freely, and we call on others to do the same.

> *American Library Association Executive Board*
> *American Association of School Librarians Board of Directors*
> *Association of College and Research Libraries Board of Directors*
> *Association for Library Service to Children Board of Directors*
> *Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures Board of Directors*
> *Public Library Association Board of Directors*
> *Reference and User Services Association Board of Directors*
> *Young Adult Library Services Association Board of Directors*
> *United for Libraries Board of Directors*

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There's a term you don't hear these days, one you used to hear all the time when the Carnegie branches opened: Palaces for the People. The library really is a palace. It bestows nobility on people who can't otherwise afford a shred of it. People need to have nobility and dignity in their lives. And, you know, they need other people to recognize it in them too.
— Eric Klinenberg, *[Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life](#)*

ilsleypubliclibrary.org

Ilsley Public Library
Main Street, Middlebury VT | 802-388-4095
Sarah Partridge Community Library
East Main Street, East Middlebury VT | 802-388-7588

January 4, 2021

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

For better or worse, when people think of libraries they think of collections and, more specifically, they think of books. As a librarian, I spend a lot of time busting two pervasive and diametrically opposed myths: one, that libraries are repositories for books and little else; and two, that the physical book is in decline (if not already dead). The latter myth is the quickest to bust: sales of print materials continue to go up year after year, and this trend is echoed at the Ilsley Public Library, which circulated 81,162 physical materials in FY 2020 and 58,465 in FY 2021. Many people continue to prefer physical books, and the fact that digital natives continue to checkout physical library books in high numbers indicate that this is unlikely to change in the future. Circulation of physical materials by teenagers, for example, who have had access to digital e-books their entire lives, has gone up every year for the past four years at Ilsley Public Library. During the pandemic our community members made excellent use of our curbside pickup service, demonstrating that even during a time when people ventured out of their homes for only the absolute essentials, they still came by the library to get books.

The second myth takes more time to address, because once you start talking about everything libraries do (even if you are just listing out everything libraries have in their collections) you could go on forever! Like many libraries today, Ilsley has a diverse circulating collection, made up of books, DVDs, audio discs, newspapers and magazines, and our ever growing "library of things." When library collections are well maintained and responsive to their community's needs, they ensure equitable access to educational and cultural materials, as well as to treasured community resources. For example, the Middlebury community values the town's natural beauty and access to recreation. In response, the Ilsley Public Library offers snow shoes and ski passes to the local mountain, the Snow Bowl, and Rikert Nordic Center. Snowshoeing and skiing are not affordable activities for everyone in our community; providing access to equipment and passes increases access and allows everyone to take advantage of the best Middlebury has to offer.

Our circulating collection supports another value Middlebury residents hold dear: sustainability. Resource sharing allows many people to use a single copy of a book or item when they need it without everyone having to purchase, store, and ultimately dispose of multiple copies. As climate change becomes a greater imperative people are realizing that

Tom and the Committee,

Collections are difficult to improve in small libraries. We need more room, and we are working on an addition to the library. As we are right now, if we buy one item, we basically have to discard an item.

The other major problem for us is our materials budget. We really don't have enough money for materials. Since we are trying to raise money for the addition, I don't want to ask for more donations for materials, though what we get from our appropriation is not adequate. Luckily, we have a few people who donate good books.

It is hard to enhance small collections when you don't have enough space or money.
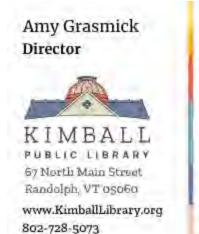

Lisa Sammet, Library Director
Jeudevine Memorial Library
93 North Main St
PO Box 536
Hardwick, VT 05843
www.jeudevinememoriallibrary.org
802-472-5948

If COVID19 drove any point home for Vermont public libraries, it's the huge challenge of meeting our communities' appetite for e-content. While my library building was closed in 2020 and into 2021, I, like many of my fellow librarians, shifted nearly all of my collection purchasing to ebooks and downloadable audio. These formats are available 24/7 for community members who have both an internet connection and a device on which to read / listen - which are obviously barriers for plenty of people. During the nearly two years since the pandemic arrived in Vermont, the digital content landscape has evolved in ways that create additional barriers, and the conditions weren't favorable to begin with. Here are some things that impact libraries' ability to serve:

1. Overdrive has by far the greatest marketshare when it comes to leasing ebooks and downloadable audio to libraries. During the past two years, Overdrive has acquired several major digital content providers, reducing competition in the market even more. In Vermont, most public libraries contract with Overdrive as members of the Green Mountain Library Consortium, to share both the cost of and access to a leased collection of ebooks and audio. Some libraries, my own included, also lease content from Overdrive for use by that library's patrons. Just as with physical books, ebooks and audio can only be used by one person at a time.

2. Unlike physical books, which libraries own and therefore can keep for as long as they like and sell if they choose, e-content is leased. Of the 20 titles I recently added to Kimball Library's Overdrive collection, 9 have a lease period of 12 months, 6 are in the collection for 24 months, and only 3 will be available "forever." And by forever, I mean for as long as Kimball Library contracts with Overdrive. If we opt to leave their platform, none of the collection will be available for our users.

3. I leased those 20 titles at a cost of $948.71, with prices ranging from $15 to $99.99. This constitutes 7.6% of the Library's annual budget for the adult collection. For $300.74, I can purchase 17 of them as print books or compact disc audiobooks. (In fact, most of them are available in the physical format at the Library.) 3 are available only in digital form, a growing trend particularly in audiobooks but also in print books.

4. Amazon does not sell or lease digital content to libraries at all. As they make inroads as a publisher, not just a vendor, a larger proportion of books simply isn't available to library users.

5. The challenge of selecting e-content is huge, and for me is largely driven by which items my patrons have reserved in the shared Green Mountain Library Consortium collection. Because the prices are so high, the lease terms are so short, and my budget is so limited, my purchasing skews heavily toward best sellers - which means generally very mainstream writers and content. Publishers and reviewers have become somewhat better at highlighting diverse authors and content, and it's easy to create a more diverse physical collection. That falls away under the pressures of meeting the greatest demand by users of the digital collection.

6. Unlike physical books, ebooks and audio cannot be shared among Vermont libraries except through the Green Mountain Library Consortium. Interlibrary loan has been a great leveler of access to books and other materials - my community members can

borrow items that are in public, school, and academic libraries throughout Vermont and even from across the country. This is not an option for the e-content libraries lease.

There are a lot of reasons to be concerned about the transition of books from physical to digital formats. The largest professional organization in the country, the American Library Association, has been advocating for more equitable access to e-content for more than a decade, with no discernible effect. Prices continue to rise, competition is disappearing, and libraries continue to struggle to provide a diverse collection for their community members.

Amy C. Grasmick, Director
Kimball Public Library
Randolph, VT

Amy Grasmick
Director

K I M B A L L
PUBLIC LIBRARY
67 North Main Street
Randolph, VT 05060
www.KimballLibrary.org
802-728-5073

At-the-door services begin November 8, 2021 at the side door under the awning.

Monday-Friday 10am-5:30pm
Saturday 10am-1pm

Please note that any response or reply to this electronic message may be subject to disclosure as a public record under the Vermont Public Records Act.

When finished with this form, please email your completed document to Meg Allison (mallison@u32.org) or Karen McCalla (kmccalla@millriverschools.org)

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

Library Name: Marlboro School Library

School Name: Marlboro School

Town or towns served: Marlboro

Person submitting this testimony and your job title: Cynthia Hughes, 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 _____ NO___X_____

Collection size (number of volumes): 8100

Number of students at your school: 107

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.

What are the strengths of your current collection? Nice fiction for middle school and upper elementary. Great picture books.

What are the weaknesses of your current collection?
We need more pre-school materials.   I also feel that we need to update our nonfiction. I realize that this is a tricky situation with so much information online now, but at my previous job the kids loved our nonfiction books. I'd also like to genrefy our collection for better access.

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.
Our district is setting up a union catalog of our 8 schools. We do not participate in inter-library loan at the moment. Our school is in transition, and the library was moved to a smaller space with many materials boxed up, so it's a work in progress until a building project is complete.

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. No.

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 have very few of these, but we do have an audible account for audiobooks.

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.
New to this library, but I plan to do this in future.

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?
I cannot speak to the past collection, but I do see a need for updates to nonfiction and building a pre-school collection.

**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 genrefied 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.

Randal Smathers
Director

Amy Williams
Assistant Director

GET CONNECTED!

RUTLAND FREE
LIBRARY

Nov. 23, 2021

To the Working Group on the state of Vermont libraries. Please accept the following as written testimony re. collections.

Collections. The Working Group may study the size and diversity of library holdings and assess the strengths and gaps in materials available to Vermonters. The study of collections may include an assessment of how libraries may best share resources across differing libraries and communities, whether libraries offer community-specific resources, and whether libraries maintain special collections or historical artifacts.

Resource sharing in Vermont libraries is haphazard at best, expensive, and inefficient. It's also a highly valued service: I would suggest that in light of continued budget constraints on the one hand and competition from Amazon on the other, the ability to share collections around the state is the single most important task facing Vermont libraries. It needs a complete overhaul.

Central collection:

The state of Vermont chose to eviscerate the Department of Libraries (VTLIB) budget in 2015, and the effects continue to hamper library services today.

Before the cuts, VTLIB maintained a substantial central collection. Even for libraries with large (by Vermont standards) holdings, it provided a backstop, in particular for large print, book club sets, and other specialized collections. The ABLE service is pretty much the last vestige of those statewide services. These services were irreplaceable for smaller libraries, where buying a regular *and* a large print (and perhaps audiobook and at least one downloadable version) of popular titles is often prohibitively expensive. So users in those libraries often simply have to wait until larger libraries make them available as interlibrary loans, typically months after the initial purchase. Obviously, the central library couldn't provide duplicate versions of everything to everyone, but it was better than where we are today, which is next to nothing.

Demand for those services, on the other hand, has continued to grow. The various formats noted above are a driver. A reader who needs large print or an audiobook to keep up with their favorite series is ill-served by a system that can only provide regular print, or that delays borrowing by months. Increasing diversity also creates a need: A recent directors' meeting identified works in languages other than English as another area where

individual library budgets aren't able to provide a good selection to serve populations of new Vermonters and / or migrant farm workers.

It's heartening that VTLIB is discussing these needs. Right now, in the case of foreign-language titles, it often means telling new Vermonters that we can't serve them.

Ultimately, the decision to eliminate the central lending hub role of the state hasn't saved any money, it's just pushed the cost down to the individual library level: A classic example of a false economy.

Another result is that larger libraries, with more robust collections, are essentially subsidizing these services – with the built-in six-month lag on new titles -- for small libraries. This is a natural occurrence, and not Vermont specific. For example, many large academic libraries have begun charging $20 per title loaned to public libraries to avoid being turned into lending libraries for the general population. In the Vermont case, however, large libraries that loan too many books via interlibrary or consortial loans are punished through surcharges on the courier system.

Shipping:

The interlibrary loan system needs help. When a major draw for the state's single largest consortium is that it doesn't make borrowing between libraries easier, you know there's something wrong. A large part of that is the courier system.

Rutland has been the canary in this particular coal mine, as the largest collection in the Catamount consortium and one of the largest statewide. In the past three years, RFL cardholders have borrowed, on average, 3,850 titles per year from other libraries and we have loaned 5,790. It is fulfilling the role of backstop that the state central library provided. To handle this 60/40 split between supply and demand, Rutland had to get three courier drops per week, and have had as many as nine bins of books arrive in a single day. Rutland Free is happy to share its collection, but under the heading of "no good deed goes unpunished," libraries are charged extra for every bin and every delivery over the "norm." That doesn't count the staff time involved, or the demands on our physical plant. In Rutland's case, shipping / receiving has completely outgrown the space available, and it's one of the pressing reasons why the library is facing a multimillion-dollar renovation. It is unsustainable.

This is not intended as a tale of woe, but a cautionary one. The state Department of Libraries helped launch the Catamount consortium largely as a pilot for a statewide lending model. It has succeeded beyond its capacity. Borrowers love the access to a broader catalog, and so have stressed the system to the breaking point.

A large part of the problem is that interlibrary loaning will always be hub-and-spoke. Larger libraries will always be asked to loan more of our larger collections than we will need to borrow from our smaller peers, ***particularly once the state stopped providing this***

service. The courier model as it stands is designed as one-size-fits-all in direct contradiction to how it works.

Again, it's not saving any money for Vermont taxpayers, it's just putting the bill on local taxes instead of state ones. ***It's time to take stock of the lessons learned in the Catamount experiment, and act on them.***

Statewide catalog:

The state recently rolled out its CLOVER catalog, which is a step forward, but it's only part of a solution.

Almost 100 Vermont libraries use the Bywater / Koha ILS, including something like 11 of the 15 largest libraries in the state: so well more than half of Vermont borrowers are served by libraries using Koha. In Koha, once a librarian finds an item, it's the matter of a couple of clicks to go ahead and order it. If it's not available, it requires starting the search over in the CLOVER system. The decision by the state to choose incompatible software is, honestly, baffling. I am typing on this on a standard QWERTY keyboard. For those of you familiar with the history of technology, you know that keyboard layout was designed not to make typing easier or faster, it was designed to slow typists down to minimize how often the mechanical keys of typewriters would clash. CLOVER is the QWERTY keyboard of statewide catalogs: designed to slow things down.

Proposal:

The state should be encouraging statewide borrowing. We want our user base to grow, and the way to do that isn't to have artificial barriers to smoothly providing materials, whether in-house or from other libraries. Those barriers will push readers, frustrated by delays, to online services. It does create a class divide, where well-off readers can download their pick of the world's libraries to their tablets instantly, and those with fewer resources have to wait weeks or months to get a book.

Public demand is clear: They expect choice. It's why we have two large consortia and why groups of libraries (like Chittenden County) are forming home-card systems. I would refer you to Mary Danko on that. But the state, instead of leading the way, is acting as a drag on progress through the design of systems that do not reward participation.

The state needs to build a network that ensures popular titles are available in a variety of formats and languages, with an online catalog that enables not only patrons searching but ordering their own titles, and a courier system designed with that in mind. The "big" collections need support to backstop that demand. Amazon is not making it harder to find and order books; libraries are.

A central library – like ABLE – is the best solution for a lot of these issues, which are after all exacerbated if not outright caused by the state's decision to decimate that resource. But even central planning could help. One suggestion is a system whereby certain libraries maintain back catalogs of certain authors and not others. For example, if Rutland

has every Janet Evanovich back to *One for the Money*, could Fletcher Free hold all the Sue Grafton, starting with *A is for Alibi,* and so on? Every library is going to buy as many of the hot new bestsellers as they can afford, but maintaining a back catalog is expensive, and space- and time-consuming.

An excellent working example is the Putney School library (link below). Through the generosity of a single donor, Putney has the finest collection of literature by Black authors and works about the Black American experience in the state, with the possible exception of some of the large academic libraries. How can / will / should the state support their loaning those works to other Vermont libraries? Or is Putney expected to carry the load, and for how long?

In short, I feel that any discussion of the state of Vermont libraries that doesn't address both the challenges and opportunities for a functioning, affordable, and effective system of statewide borrowings is selling the future of Vermont libraries short.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Randal Smathers,

Director, Rutland Free Library

* *https://www.vpr.org/vpr-news/2019-11-07/opening-up-all-of-that-experience-putney-school-alum-builds-librarys-collection-of-books-on-race*

Dear Tom and Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

I am submitting this testimony for your consideration. Thank you.

In regards to collections in Vermont libraries, for all residents and especially for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, youths and children, immigrant and migrant communities, and people living in poverty, unequivocally the best way to improve access to library services and collections is to develop and implement a state-wide library card and catalog. This is something that librarians have been talking about and requesting for many years.
Imagine a patron who has no personal transportation being able to, without paying a fee, use the nearest public library. Imagnine a new American being able to browse and use any library that might have collections in their language without having to wait for inter-library loans. Imangine the increased access for those living in poverty who cannot afford to pay non-resident fees at a library that is able to offer collections and services that are not available at their tiny hometown library.

People who have lived elsewhere before coming to Vermont are usually astounded that we do not offer a state-wide or even county-wide library card. This is standard practice in most other states, and for good reason. To implement this would require significant resources from the state. Increased state funding for our public libraries is critical.
Yes, it's a large and complex undertaking, but the longest journey starts with one step.

Almy Landauer

I've been in the Vermont Library world (over 30 years) and have seen a lot of changes in the makeup of our collections. From albums to tapes to discs to streaming, the needs and wants of our patrons have kept pace with the changing media formats of the time. Although our collection at the St. Albans Free Library has seen an increase in digital acquisitions, print format is still the foundation of our services. How much longer that remains has been the ongoing question.

At our Library our reference based print resources have been whittled down to less than a dozen titles and we have not replaced or updated a title in the last few years. We have no plans to add to this collection. We are extremely selective when purchasing any audio/visual materials as we dedicate more funds to online content services. We are a little less selective with donated audio/visual materials but even that is starting to change as space and processing are given consideration.

For our Library, the current challenge is to fill requests from patrons for one title but in various media formats. Someone might want the latest Louise Penny in print, while someone else might want Large Print and another wants audio but doesn't have the ability to stream. This is where ILL services and the Courier have played a very important role.

To look ahead and ask how the Vermont Department of Libraries could help libraries with their collection development, I would say the continued funding of ILL/Clover and the Courier is a must. There is also a need for guidance on how libraries can collaborate on collection development. How can we have a collection strength and share that with others while not having our patrons lose out? I also feel the need for more collaboration with the funding of streaming services is also necessary. This is a service that will only grow and get costly to libraries.

Thanks to the group and all the work they are doing.

MaryPat

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THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
LIBRARIES

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).

utilizing their local library collection allows them to purchase fewer things, thus reducing their shipping footprint, consumption, and ultimate waste. This works particularly well for items used only rarely, for example moisture meters or a telescope (both of which reside in Ilsley's collection). Libraries are also well positioned to work with local partners to circulate non-traditional library items. For example, last summer Safe Routes Middlebury partnered with Frog Hollow Bikes and Local Motion to pilot an e-bike lending program in Middlebury. The trial was immensely popular, but in order to keep the program running the community needed to take ownership of both the bikes and the reservation management. The library was asked to step in to manage the circulation of these e-bikes; when the snow melts this spring, three e-bikes will be available to check-out through the library.

While they do not replace physical materials, digital e-books and audiobooks are an important component of our collection, and have allowed the library to expand our reach. Patrons who live far away from the library, or who are unable to come into the library for any number of reasons, can now access a significant portion of our collection remotely. The rise in streaming services has also allowed us to augment our collections in a new way: through Kanopy, the library is able to offer patrons access to 25,000 films. These titles should not be viewed as part of the library collection, because we do not own them. But from the user's perspective, it makes little difference if a book or movie is owned outright or paid for per circulation, downloaded or streamed: they have access through their library.

In short, library collections provide community members access to education, cultural enrichment, and recreational opportunities. Ilsley Public Library is fortunate in that our collection development budget is generally adequate and has allowed us to build a robust collection which is treasured by the community, but even still our patrons can't always find what they're looking for. If the book in question is available at another library, patrons can become frustrated that they do not have borrowing privileges there. There are generally ways to connect a patron with a book--for example, through Interlibrary Loan, or with Homecard borrowing privileges. But ILL can be slow and costly, and not all libraries participate in Homecard. It leaves patrons wondering why they can't simply go borrow a book at another Vermont library down the road (especially patrons that have recently moved here from out of state, and are used to state wide lending systems).

Library systems seem to work well on two fronts: first, by increasing a patron's access to collections outside their home library, and second, by consolidating certain collection management costs and efforts. Middlebury is one of very few public library systems in Vermont; we have a main branch, Ilsley Public Library, and a branch in East Middlebury, the Sarah Partridge Library. Patrons have full access to both collections, and materials travel between the two locations. We are able to reduce duplication of work by having all cataloging and book processing take place at Ilsley, and of course there is a savings in having both libraries share one catalog system. This works well for Middlebury, on a micro level.

On a macro level, Ilsley benefits from membership in several consortia: GMLC, VOKAL, Homecard, and CLOVER. VOKAL and GMLC have provided us with a more affordable, shared catalog for accessing our collection. Titles are catalogued by librarians at all 50+ libraries in VOKAL, saving time and effort for our library cataloger. We also benefit from the technical and cataloging expertise of librarians across the VOKAL network when questions arise. By pooling our financial resources through GMLC, we can offer a much larger digital collection than we would be able to afford on our own. Management of the collection (through GMLC selectors) is also shared.

Having said that, GMLC, VOKAL, and Homecard all rely on volunteer services to keep them running, and not all libraries in the state participate. I believe a discussion about a statewide consortium—one which receives funding and administrative support from the state—is a conversation worth having. Perhaps the Department of Libraries would be well positioned to lead this conversation, as they have strong experience managing the interlibrary loan service CLOVER and, more recently, taking over management of the courier service that was initiated by the Green Mountain Library Consortium. My personal experience is that librarians in Vermont are eager to work together, and have found creative ways to share resources. I hope the Working Group will consider ways to provide additional support to existing systems, and explore the possibility of a future in which patrons need only one card to access all of Vermont's public libraries.

With many thanks,

Dana Hart
Director

Written Comments: PROGRAMMING

Dear Tom,

In response to The Working Group for the Status of Libraries call for testimony, I am submitting statements regarding two program initiatives that have a significant impact on my practice as a youth services librarian and the programs we offer at Bennington Free Library.

1.Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI):

Now more than ever, our libraries are providing expanded services and outreach to children and families. Librarians work continuously to improve the cognitive content of our programming, as we elevate the traditional story hour into meaningful learning experiences for children. Thanks to VELI, Bennington Free Library & many public libraries throughout the state have been able to do this. Thanks to our VELI training, we know that in order to be successful learners and communicators, young children need multiple experiences with books, frequent and interesting conversations with adults, and diverse and repeated early learning experiences. Thanks to VELI, our public library has been central in providing these learning opportunities throughout our community, even during the pandemic. VELI began in 2010 and has been a guiding light ever since...we hope that this important work can continue with the support of the Vermont Department of Libraries.

2. Museum ABC's:

The Museum ABCs program is a collaboration between Bennington Museum and Bennington Free Library. The program is intended for children ages 3 to 5 and their adult companions and supports early literacy and a lifelong love of museums and learning. Now in its eleventh year, the innovative and hands-on program has impacted the lives of hundreds of pre-school children. Children and families have explored art, objects and historical concepts in the galleries of the Museum, engaged in storytelling and fundamental literacy exercises, and created artwork based on monthly themes. Children ask and answer questions, share their opinions, make observations and work collaboratively. In partnership with Bennington Free Library, thematically appropriate children's books are shared during each session and families can further explore books which are available in the Children's Room.

This year Museum ABC's received an A.D. Henderson Foundation grant to fund expansion and outreach of the program intended to serve our neediest families. This was a significant move forward especially during the pandemic. We intend to build on the momentum and continue with our mission. The Bennington Museum and Bennington Free Library "bookend" Main Street making the Museum ABC's message very clear: local libraries and local museums can work together to create community by supporting children & families.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Donigan
Youth Services Librarian
Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 442-9051

Submission to The Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
Re: Programming
November 3, 2021

Public library programming combines socialization, education, and empowerment in ways only the public library can offer. Bennington Free Library's programming for adults focuses on exposing people to opportunities and services in the community and includes a variety of partnerships. We began offering workshops co-hosted with the Bennington Department of Labor office five years ago. Programs included offering a Job Club encouraging community members to drop in the library to meet with a Job Center Specialist, (The library's downtown location is easier to access than the local DOL office.), hosting a CCV Job Hunt Helper in 2018, and presenting an annual "Model Employees" event featuring a fashion show demonstrating interview and workplace attire, conversations about professional behavior and soft skills, and an opportunity to connect with other jobseekers. In addition to economic development, our programs have supported public health through a RiseVT grant-funded community walking initiative in the summer of 2019. Walks featured downtown recreational facilities and businesses, the farmers' market, local history, and a dietician sharing healthy snack ideas for busy parents during a stroller-friendly walk. Our library also secured funding through RiseVT to begin our snowshoe collection, which we are increasing for the 2022 season with support from a local snowshoe manufacturer.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our operations and services significantly, we've leveraged relationships with community partners to offer new services to seniors. We began a monthly online book club in collaboration with Green Mountain RSVP in October 2020 which is still going strong. Additionally, we are offering a book delivery service to homebound seniors with support from Green Mountain RSVP. Adapting is our "new normal," so when our library was closed to visitors we expanded our outreach and distributed books for all ages at Shires Housing food distribution events in August and December of 2020. We took advantage of flexibility offered by a longtime programming partner, the Vermont Humanities Council, and extended our Vermont Reads 2020 programming through June 30, 2021. Making use of a generous donation, we purchased Chuck Taylor Converse sneakers for Southwest Tech graphic arts students to design, using art to relate to the themes of Angie Thomas' Vermont Reads 2020 book, *The Hate U Give*.

Like many things in public libraries, adult programming changed significantly to adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many people, I've struggled to find footing as I transitioned from a very successful, first-ever library mini golf event inside our library at the end of February 2020 to closing our doors less than one month later. I moved events online, offered adults creative outlets through take-and-make activity bags, and I am again offering small programs requiring masks with limited attendance. These adventures in adaptation allowed me to appreciate the uniqueness of public library outreach and programs. Most recently, over the Labor Day holiday weekend and the return of Bennington's beloved Garlic Fest celebrations, one of our youth services librarians and I hosted a table at our local farmers' market. We've done this for several years so the venue wasn't new, but on a whim we decided to give away a collection of Beanie Babies and small stuffed animals donated to the library. It's difficult to put into words how much joy this small act brought everyone who visited with us. Some of the sincerest

expressions of wonder and gratitude came from adults; those who preferred to "leave a toy for someone else to enjoy" regaled us with nostalgic memories and struck up conversations with others nearby. It was just one morning, and all the tiny critters had found homes within three hours, but for each person we met there was a moment of connection. It can't be easily distilled to hash marks and quantifiable data, but it speaks to "community identity and resiliency" very clearly.

Respectfully submitted,
Karson Kiesinger, Reference and Adult Services Librarian
Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street
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Phone: 802-442-9051 Email: reference@bfli.org

November 8, 2021

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
Thomas McMurdo, Interim State Librarian
Thomas.McMurdo@vermont.gov
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library (FFL) located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.3M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

I am excited to be able to provide input on the topic of programming in public libraries. Library programming is a vast topic as public libraries serve community members of all ages and abilities with a diverse selection of topics designed to educate, inform, inspire and delight. As with all library services, library programming is free and open to the public. Public libraries' commitment to equity is a key tenant of all of our library services and programming is a key part of that. All public libraries work hard to be ADA accessible, however needed funding for building modifications and improvements to serve those with disabilities are often not prioritized by towns.

I have divided the programming topics into categories that I believe are meaningful and relevant to current needs of Vermont communities.

EARLY LITERACY
Early Literacy library programming serves children from infants to preschoolers. The impacts of Story Times, Music Programs, Language Programs (for example, Spanish Musical Kids is provided at FFL) and guided Play Programs are well documented through

empirical research as having positive impacts on both the children and their families. When our youngest folks participate in library programming that instills a love of reading, builds a database of broad vocabulary, and facilitates a powerful connection to reading, they also gain dozens of kindergarten readiness skills that set them up for success for their entire education. Equally important, families learn how to better engage with their young children by learning early literacy techniques through modeling by librarians at these various programs.

YOUTH – Ages 6-10
The challenge of providing robust programming to this age range never seems to deter our Vermont Youth Librarians. Book Discussions, STEAM Programming, Art Programming, Chess clubs, Robotics Clubs, Coding Clubs, Read with a Dog, and Author Events are just some of the programming you can see at any Vermont library on any given day. Youth programming occurs year round and at all times, often targeted during afterschool hours, weekends and during school vacations.

Summer Challenge programs are deserving of a special mention. Once only about summer reading, public library summer challenge programs have expanded to include meaningful STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) activities that work to address academic summer slides in all learning areas. Equally important, public libraries provide robust programming during the summer months so that families can keep coming back to the library for more learning and more books. Some libraries, the Fletcher Free Library included, provide support for various camps in their communities or even put on some of their own summer camps.

TWEENS & TEENS
It is well documented that public libraries are often an important lifeline for Tweens and Teens. Developmentally this age group is hungry for meaning and connection. Public library programming often provides accessible entries into learning worlds that are creative and exciting without the pressure of being graded like in school. Writing programs, Makerspace programs, Poetry programs and Manga Clubs are just some examples of programming for this age group. In addition, this group learns about leadership through programming by getting involved in library Teen Advisory Boards and volunteering to assist with programs.

ADULTS

Adult library programming covers a wide swath of topics, all meant to provide life-long learning, civil discourse and community engagement through stories. The list of phenomenal programming is never ending but some examples of Adult programs are Book Discussions, Author events, Lectures, Crafting, Cook Book Clubs, Music performances, Poetry events, Gardening & Homesteading, and Writing Clubs.

Three special mentions are warranted in the area of Adult Programming: English Language Learning/Citizenship, Technology Programming and Workforce Development Programming

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING/CITIZENSHIP

Many Vermonters don't realize that public libraries often provide classes for English Language Learners and Citizenship classes. As a trusted institution, public libraries are successful at bringing expanded learning to immigrants and refugees.

TECHNOLOGY

Public libraries were one of the first public entities to provide free and easy access to public computers and internet connections. Along with the physical needs (supplying PCs, Laptops and/or tablets) of connecting folks to the internet, libraries provide strong technology programming   to help folks learn the basics of computers to the more complex. Basic classes like Introductions to word processing, spreadsheet applications, slide show presentations, and more advanced classes like website design are just some of the offerings. Our library also loans hotspots and laptops to the public.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Public libraries give support to those seeking employment and those wishing to grow their careers in a variety of ways. Programs can include resume writing, creating a website, and effective job searching. Libraries offer computer classes that target job seekers and instruct them on how maximize all the functions in the Google Suite (Docs, Sheets, Drive, etc.) which can help job seekers manage their resumes, cover letters and employment correspondence.

It is also worth special mention that public libraries often put on very large events, either singularly or with partners. The Fletcher Free Library has offered large events such as: Irish Festival, Grow with Google, Seed Swap, Burlington's Highlight (New Year's Eve programming), and children's theater programs.

SENIORS

Public libraries often have special programming for Seniors that include books discussions, lectures, and recreational programming. We often partner with Senior Centers and Senior Housing facilities to provide programming that supplements their program offerings.

OUTREACH

For every one of the programs mentioned, they also occur outside the library's walls through outreach. Early Literacy Story Times are coordinated to take place in home day cares and with partner organizations like Head Start. Youth programming happens in After School programs in partnership with the school district. Summer Challenge programs are taken out to parks and nutrition sites throughout cities and towns all summer long. Tween/Teen programming often travels to the middle & high schools and various city afterschool programs offered by other organizations.

These outreach programs are intentional to ensure that populations that are experiencing challenges receive free, quality services that meet their needs.

EXHIBITS

Oftentimes public libraries are the only space where community members can share their art or hobbies. The public library supports exhibits of community talents often with opening receptions and coordinated programming. Not only do these kinds of programs promote community interaction and facilitate connections, they often offer opportunities for folks to get to know each other more intimately, crossing divides that can be cultural, racial, or socio-economic.

Furthermore, public libraries often partner with other community organizations to promote learning. The Fletcher Free Library has been proud to host Exploring Human Origins (A Smithsonian Evolution Project), the 1619 project (Hampton History Museum) and Hostile Terrain (Undocumented Migration Project) for just a few examples. These

partner exhibitions have brought numerous community members into the library space for wonderful connections and thought-provoking conversations.

MEETING ROOM SPACE
It is important to consider providing meeting room space to the community as programming. This library service involves managing reservations, staffing and set-ups. Additionally, it includes technology support, which can be extensive as librarians support a variety of technological devices.

PASSIVE PROGRAMS
Passive library programming has grown steadily over the past decade. This type of programming involves having interactive materials out for engagement for all ages, often with a display component. It might be a craft or STEAM activity for youth or it could be a Poetry Writing prompt for teens and adults. It is often connected to other programming in the library or a theme of the month. This type of programming allows for folks who might be timid about attending a program but still lets them participate in a collaborative way that makes them feel a part of the community. It is also another way that the library promotes the love of lifelong learning.

A FOCUSED LENS ON EQUITY and RACIAL JUSTICE
Over the past year and a half, public libraries have been more assertive in ensuring that programming includes themes of equity and racial justice. Many book discussion programs have centered on Black/ Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) stories and/or were books by BIPOC authors. Many lecture programs were purposefully planned to engage on some of the most challenging issues facing our communities and the treatment of the BIPOC community.

COVID 19 IMPACT
During COVID-19 public libraries needed to be innovative and pivot sharply to continue to provide programming for their patrons. Libraries innovated to attempt different approaches to provide library services in a safe way during this very challenging time. This often included embracing outside activities and technology, such as Zoom. Below are some examples of programming that were added or adjusted due to COVID.

- Provide virtual Book Discussions, Story Times, Computer classes and Speaker Events via Zoom.
- Start and maintain a YouTube channel with fun, interesting content.
- Create short videos on Instagram and Facebook demonstrating how to use online services and short, bite-size programming.
- Provide instructional programming that helps folks understand library online resources like Ancestry, Overdrive, Kanopy and more.
- Utilize outside space as much possible.
- Create StoryWalks® in parks & story experiences in windows so families have fun, literacy outdoor activities.
- Design Scavenger hunts.

One of the challenges of making these shifts was, and still is: funding. Libraries are under pressure now to provide virtual and hybrid programing to meet the needs of the community with tight budgets.

Author Deb Fallows recently interviewed me. Her article beautifully sums up the Fletcher Free Library's experience during the beginning and mid parts of the pandemic. Here is the link if you would like to read it: https://www.ourtownsfoundation.org/libraries-lead-the-way-again/

Thank you for taking the time to take in this testimony. I hope you can better understand the richness and impacts that public library programming brings to a community for folks of all demographics and of all circumstances. I would be delighted to engage with anyone who would like further information or has questions.

Thank you again,

Mary Danko

Mary Danko
Library Director

Programming Testimony

October 18, 2021

Dana Hart, Director, Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury

Programming is a backbone of the Ilsley Public Library. Our ongoing assessment of library programs (through statistics, surveys, and anecdotal feedback) demonstrates that Vermont communities are hungry for programs and, if programs are offered, they will be well attended and will enrich community members' lives. Ilsley's experience with programming also demonstrates that thoughtful, engaging programs require substantial funding and staff time. Public libraries are often asked to do more but are not supported with adequate resources. Programming is an essential service, and in order to provide programs libraries need dedicated funding.

There is great demand for programs in Middlebury, so we devote significant resources to programs. Three years ago we added a full-time position specifically to allow us to meet growing demand for programs; in 2019, pre-pandemic, the library planned or sponsored 900 programs which were attended by over 18,000 participants. The library has a five-person programming team that meets three times a year to make sure our programs are in alignment with the library's mission, are meeting the needs of our community, and are reaching underserved populations (reaching underserved populations often means meeting those populations where they are, and library programming regularly takes place outside of the library building). I am attaching a document we use to guide and evaluate our library programming. Ilsley is able to provide rich and engaging programs because we have 1) a dedicated programming budget (about $13,000 annually), 2) adequate staff hours dedicated to programming, which includes time for planning and evaluating programs, and 3) an understanding at the admin/trustee level that many of these staff hours need to take place outside of the library building.

During the pandemic, we promptly canceled all in-person programming, along with the rest of Vermont libraries. Over the following year and a half, we continued to provide programs in three distinct ways, which changed the way we think about 'library programs' at Ilsley.

1. Digital Programs. The library immediately pivoted to holding as many planned programs as possible remotely, primarily using Zoom. Benefits of remote, digital programs are that they allow patrons to connect in real time, providing a sense of community. It also increased accessibility for patrons that have a difficult time making it into the library building for programs. For our youngest patrons, digital Storytimes provides a sense of continuity and security. Drawbacks are that patrons started to experience Zoom fatigue as the pandemic wore on. Going forward, we plan to utilize remote meeting technology occasionally, as a tool to extend access to programming.

2. Outdoor Passive Programs. The library worked with the town, local businesses, and homeowners to install Books on Sticks in several areas around town. These storybook walks were immensely popular with young children and their caretakers. After evaluating the program and discussing its value with local daycares and schools, the library has decided to continue to

operating Books on Sticks in perpetuity. Benefits include giving caregivers something fun to do with their children at *a time that works best for them*; promoting outdoor excursions; and placemaking benefits for downtown Middlebury. A drawback is that it is a time intensive program to maintain, requiring ongoing maintenance and updated stories.

3. Take-and-Make Passive Programs. The pandemic caused the library to redirect much of our programming budget to developing Take-and-Make projects for both youth and adults. These are bags that can be picked up at the library and completed at home; bags include an age-appropriate craft and instructions. Youth bags tend to focus on a STEAM theme. Again, after evaluating the program and noting overwhelmingly positive community feedback, the library has decided to continue to offer Take-and-Make bags as part of our regular programming going forward. Benefits include reaching new library users (many caregivers would ask if they could take extra take-and-makes for their neighbors, who didn't regularly visit the library and wouldn't have otherwise seen the bags), and, again, allowing patrons to participate on their own time. A drawback is that these craft bags can be costly to create.

Our patrons have let us know how much they value in-person programming, and we are slowly returning to in-person programming as it allows. The library is the heart of the Middlebury community, and in person programs provide many important benefits which cannot be replicated by digital or passive programs. But we learned during the pandemic that library programs can adapt to meet patrons where they are and can provide cultural enrichment even during periods of great upheaval. We learned that passive programs (site specific programs and take-and-make crafts) play an important role in allowing us to reach patrons that prefer to complete activities on their own, or cannot make it into the library for regularly scheduled programs for any number of reasons. We also learned that we can extend the reach of certain programs by hosting them on a digital platform, allowing patrons to Zoom in remotely. As we move out of the pandemic, Ilsley will rebalance our programming budget to accommodate more passive programs and will utilize remote digital access for programs more frequently.

Dana Hart, MLIS, MA

Director

Ilsley Public Library

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Programming at Ilsley Public Library

Ilsley Public Library provides free public programming as one means of fulfilling the library's mission. These programs are one of the library's essential services and significant staff time is devoted to planning and implementation. As such, the following definitions and pillars of programming have been developed to clarify the desired outcomes of library programming and provide librarians with guidelines as they develop programming for the community:

Strong programming is responsive to the needs of our diverse community, supports all of the library's pillars of programming, and furthers the library's mission.

A strong program is one that incorporates at least one pillar of programming, has an intended audience demographic, does not unnecessarily duplicate other programs currently offered in Middlebury, is promoted prior to the program, and is evaluated post-program.

Pillars of Programming

- Increasing knowledge or awareness of a subject

- Teaching a new skill

- Building social or community connections

- Fostering literacy and a joy of reading

- Providing cultural enrichment, recreation, or inspiration

Other definitions:

- A **program** is an intentional service or event in a group setting developed proactively to meet the needs or interests of an anticipated target audience.

- A **library program** is one that is planned and implemented by library staff.

- A **library program with a partner** is one that is planned and implemented by library staff in collaboration with another organization (collaboration can come in the form of staff time, funding, use of non-library spaces, etc).

- A **library sponsored program** is one that is not planned or implemented by library staff, but qualifies as a strong program and receives support from the library in any of the following forms: library spaces beyond what is provided for in the Meeting Room Use Policy; staff support in planning and/or promoting the program; financial support.

- A **non-library program** is one that is not planned or implemented by library staff and does not receive support from the library, but is held in library facilities as per the Meeting Room Use Policy.

- A **passive library program** is a service designed such that patrons may participate individually and without the physical presence of library staff. Passive programs are an important part of Ilsley's overall programming and are tracked internally.
- **Reference** and **technology help** are not developed proactively and are usually conducted in a one-on-one setting. They are important library service but are not considered programs and are such are not included in program statistics.
- **An off-site program** is a library or library-sponsored program held in a location other than Ilsley Public Library or Sarah Partridge Library. Programs might be held off-site for many reasons, including: if the goal of the program is to reach populations who might not otherwise have access to the library; if the program requires equipment or amenities not available in library facilities; if the program attendance is expected to exceed library space.

Updated 9.9.2020

Programming testimony

1. 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. ***We don't have many immigrants in Hardwick, there are migrant farm workers, but we don't see them, they remain hidden. I don't know if they are undocumented. I don't have time or energy to figure out how to engage them. I'd love to do more with seniors, but our building is not accessible and we don't have a good space to do programming with them. We are working on an addition and REALLY hope to begin construction in the spring of 2023.***
2. 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. ***We had a big role in our local mutual aid group that sprang up because of COVID, Hardwick Neighbor to Neighbor. The group is still meeting and we are still part of the working group. We see that the group needs to continue because there may be more emergencies in the future and we built a structure that can quickly respond to community needs. The group members have also been working with the Vermont Council for Rural Development and the NEK Collaborative. We are keeping aware of how to make our community resilient. Hardwick has improved a lot over the years, but there is still poverty here.***
3. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on library operations and services. ***Unfortunately, there continue to be a lot of COVID cases. We did programming outside in good weather, in the cold months we did some online programs, the Hardwick Neighbors group did some programming and we helped. We are doing fundraising for our addition. The addition is taking up a lot of my energy. In a small library it is hard to do everything!***

I will be looking forward to commenting on the other topics that this working group will look at in the future.

Lisa

Lisa Sammet, Library Director

Jeudevine Memorial Library

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Library Programming

Lanpher Memorial Library, Hyde Park, VT

The Lanpher Library is led by the idea that as our community grows and changes, we will do what we can to also grow and change to meet the needs of our community. We are continually assessing our programming, reaching out to local organizations as community partners, and listening to our community members to learn more about what is important to them.

1) Children's Programs
The Lanpher Library holds 2 year-round, weekly story time programs. Night Owl Story Time on Monday evenings at 6:00 started 16 years ago as a 6 week program where children were invited to come to the Library in their pajamas and participate in a "bed-time story time". When the 6 weeks were over, the father of one of the kids said: "Really? This is the last one?" Since he worked during the day, he liked that he was able to join in story time with his kids in the evening. We've met almost every Monday night since.

Wednesday mornings at 10:00 is Story Time for 0-6-year-old. We have participated in Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) and VELI Stem and have incorporated these practices into our story time programs, so that we are intentional about planning our programs to help children gain the skills they need before they learn to read, and also to inform the adults so that they too can use early literacy skills in their daily lives with children.

Each winter we hold an 11 week "Red Clover Program". Each week for 10 weeks we explore a different book on the Red Clover list and on the 11th week, children vote for their favorite. We submit their votes to VTLib and hold a short "reveal" program after the state winner is announced.

Summer Reading Programs.
Using the annual Collaborative Summer Library Program theme, we hold a series of special programs for school age children throughout the summer to engage them in reading, goal setting and winning prizes when they set their goals.

Monthly Junior Naturalist Programs
Sponsored by a variety of local businesses, the Outreach Educator at the Lamoille County Conservation District comes to the Lanpher Library once/month to excite children on a different topic specific to the outdoors in Vermont. Snakes, Trees, Bees, Winter Adaptations, Tracks and Traces…

Annual Author Visits
A local family observed children coming and going from the Lanpher Library and wanted to donate money to support children using the Library. The donation is used to host an author visit each year.

Annual Mystery Ingredient Challenge
In February, March and April of 2021, we hosted a Mystery Ingredient Challenge" for students in grades 4-8, based on the Food Network TV show, "Chopped". This program was during a time when, due to Covid, we weren't holding in-person programming. It was so popular that we've made it an annual event to take place each year in February. The Lamoille Retired Educators group loved this idea and has sponsored the 2022 program.

Students who were interested signed up in advance. They picked up their bags of 4 "Mystery Ingredients" (for example, in February it was goldfish crackers, carrots, a Granny Smith apple and a beef stick). Students had a week to create an original recipe using the 4 ingredients plus any others from their own pantries or refrigerators. Their recipes could be "inspired by" an existing recipe, but students were asked to create their own version. We aided any family who wanted it (no questions asked) to purchase additional items to make their recipes.
In their mystery ingredient bags, each participant got a "recipe card" for them to write down their recipe and also a "score card" for fun.

Students had a week to:

- Send/email a photo of their original recipe
- Send/email the recipe they created and used
- For fun, if they wanted to, send in the score card so we could know how it tasted!

We are currently working with the Green Mt. Technology & Career Center's Culinary teacher to adapt this program for use with culinary students.

2) Adult Programs/Community Programs
Monthly book discussion. Free and open to all. Copies of the book are available in advance and obtained by the library through Interlibrary loan. Regular participants take turns working with the librarian to choose a title and facilitate the discussion.

Programming specific to Seniors:

- We host monthly programs at a local senior community center with topics of interest to the folks who attend. We've had everything from a visit from VINS with live raptors, Living Wills, Falls Prevention, Music & Memory, Fire Safety, Bird Identification, and more.

  We host 12 weeks/year sessions of Seated Yoga.

  We partner with Lamoille Neighbors, an organization that has built a network of volunteers to help folks age in their homes for as long as possible. We've co-sponsored author visits with Madeline Kunin and Bill McKibben; facilitated book discussions using the VT Reads titles; and co-sponsored virtual programs of interest during Covid.

  The services/programming for seniors is funded by an annual gift to the Lanpher Memorial Library from the Copley Trust in Morrisville, VT.

- Programs that evolve naturally…
  A local Civil War history researcher published two books of letters to home written by Lamoille Co. soldiers during the Civil War. She did a majority of her research in the Library and we hosted book launch parties with Civil War reenactors reading the letters and even a 90-year-old great grandson of one of the soldiers reading the letter written by his great grandfather.

The Hyde Park version of "Chronicling America" series was compiled and published. The Library held a release party for the book and a program called "Stories of Yesteryear" where folks who grew up in Hyde Park told stories and remembrances to all in attendance. This evolved into regular periodic "Stories of Yesteryear" programs and these evolved into a history walk along the Main Street of Hyde Park Village. We hosted "History Walk Tours" with a local resident who told stories of Hyde Park's past to those who walked along.

Often, a program is developed out of a conversation with a Library patron. Examples:
-A Hyde Park resident is co-founder of the Vermont Holocaust Memorial. The Library invited her to lead a program. This program developed into a regular partnership for programming, education and support.
-The Friends of the Green River Reservoir group has members who are regular library users. They provided a series of programs with photographers of the wildlife around GRR, a game warden telling stories about his work around GRR, history of GRR.
-A retired Biological Science professor at Johnson State College (NVU Johnson), lived in Hyde Park and led interactive programs on healthy soil and growing food.

Some programs are developed out of conversations about needs from community members. Examples:
-A group of women were talking about how they felt unsafe walking alone on a local trail. We hosted a women's safety talk with the Sherriff and a local victim's advocate. They listened to the concerns of women in attendance. Offered ideas, tips, and info. on laws. Out of this talk, the Sheriff had 2 police officers, myself and one of the women in attendance trained to teach women's self-defense classes through RAD.
-When the term "Fake News" first became a more prominent issue recent years, we hosted a talk with Professor of Journalism at Johnson State College (NVU Johnson) to inform folks how to find accurate information.

-We were hearing a pattern from community members wanting to have big community meals. We worked with a local chef and a local church to host "Stone Soup Suppers". Community members donate a soup ingredient and drop it off at the Library. The local chef looked at the donations and from them, and with assistance from volunteers, created 3 large pots of soup. The church provided the space, and we hosted annual Stone Soup Suppers for the general community. Often we'll have music, a group game, or other activity to bring folks together.

In similar fashion, we had a historical recipe pot-luck. Folks could take a look at a 100+ year old cook book from Hyde Park Ladies and create a recipe inspired by one in the book. We served them at a pot luck supper at the church.

- We partner heavily with other community organizations. Years ago, I organized quarterly meetings at the Library and invited leaders of local groups and organizations to come and share info. about their organization. Through these meetings, strong partnerships developed that helped us plan programming for the larger community:

  -Annual "sneak peek" performances. The Hyde Park Opera House is located just down the street from the Lanpher Library. Each year the Library gets to invite the community into the Opera House to a sneak peek at one of the shows. The performers will get a chance to practice a scene, or a musical number, or a sneak look at how the make-up for the show CATS is put on the actors…in front of a live audience, and the community gets a chance to see what they're working on.

  -When a Homeless Shelter opened up down the street from the Library, we started programming specific to fair housing issues in partnership with the "Lamoille Community House".

  -The Regional Solid Waste Management District does regular programs at the Library to help explain new laws re: recycling, composting, hazardous waste,etc. We also started a Composting book discussion series with them and other Lamoille Co. Libraries joined in. We now have sets of books for other libraries to borrow for similar partnerships and discussions in other areas of the state.

-The Clarina Howard Nichols Center, the local domestic and sexual abuse survivor shelter reached out to us to help them with a programming series. We co-facilitated a book discussion with them using the book "Know My Name", by Chanel Miller.

-The Lamoille Restorative Center is located near the Lanpher Library. In partnership with them, we held a 4-week program for mothers whose lives have been affected by incarceration.

Their JOBS program works with youth to develop employment skills. We're working with JOBS intern right now who are curating a community art show at the Lanpher Library called: "Waking Up to Social Change".

-We worked with the Racial Equity Alliance of Lamoille (REAL) to create a community reads program using the book "Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You", by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi.

-Global Campus, a post-secondary education opportunity for adults with disabilities meets regularly at the Lanpher Library to research topics they are teaching. Occasionally, we get to host one of the classes taught by the participants as an off-campus event. History of Whoopie Pies! All about Tim McGraw! The Art of U.S. Postal Stamps!

- Movie License
  With the VT Dept. of Libraries Public Performance Movie License, we've been able to show movies in the Library.
  School winter break movie days inspired a local family to donate a popcorn machine to the Lanpher Library.
  We have also sponsored books to movies programs and discussions over the years as well.

COVID IMPACT

Of course, many of our regular programs moved to virtual or outdoor format.
Attendance is lower.

"Take and Make" programming became popular. We put together a "Story Time" and parents could take it home to do with their children.
We aren't able/willing to hold large gatherings.

Quechee Library report for the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont

The impact of the pandemic has been huge on library programming as we have strived to maintain the discussions that are so key to our missions of community engagement (with the library and, equally important, leading to intersections of different community populations) and providing intellectual opportunities. We never ceased the discussions but rather worked around the limits (masks and social distancing) as we also embraced technology, initially with a simple Zoom-only platform, then through hybrid programming allowing for simultaneous in-person and Zoom participation. The hybrid option then became even more accessible through the purchase of the Meeting Owl Pro camera and audio system.

We are now at the point where it is hard to imagine that a hybrid format won't always be the preferred option for discussions as we can keep people involved who may have moved, have transportation or time constraints, etc. while keeping the dynamic of in-person conversations.

Every month we have four discussion groups (sci fi, mystery, historical fiction--all hybrid from the library) and a senior citizen group held at Bugbee Senior Center. We have recently started a film discussion group which in its second meeting drew over 30 participants of several generations and locations.

To these programs we add Vermont Humanities Council scholar-led book discussions (several of which we have originated here and take pride in the issue-focused topics which then go on to travel the state). They include most recently one on the pandemic, one on *American Mob Violence*, and one called *Fear No Labor*).   We also yearly create a series of programs linked to the Vermont Reads title; these too are issue-driven, meant to increase understanding of cultural diversity.

It is this adult programming that we believe creates the best outreach to the larger community, to bring more people into the library to benefit from available services of all types.

Attendance at most adult discussion programs averages 15. Occasionally, such as when we mounted a photo display and held a panel discussion called *Visible in Vermont*, partnering with other organizations to increase awareness of racial issues in Vermont---we have a full house of over 50.

Children's programming is less successful. Over the past few years attendance has diminished for almost every type of program and every age group. We attribute this to the busyness of children's schedules and to a high number of options in the Upper Valley and, for storytime, to universal pre-Kindergarten.   Once again, the pandemic has had a huge impact while children remain unvaccinated. Programs will continue to be offered, but it is discouraging.

Contact emails: kate@quecheelibrary.org and marieke@quecheelibrary.org

Marieke Sperry

Library Programming

Town Meeting, March 2018
Rochester School Auditorium

The Rochester Public Library set up a display table in the lobby prior to town meeting with examples of our offerings, copies of our annotated budget, and the librarian passed out copies of the March calendar of events.

For the first time in 50 years, the budget appropriation for the Rochester Public Library, a municipal library, was removed from the town budget and stood alone as a separate article. No explanation was offered to either the trustees or the public by the select board for the unusual article.

When the article came up for a vote, none other than the town clerk stood and criticized the library budget, line by line. Everyone was stunned.

Then from behind my left shoulder, an elderly gentleman stood with a library March calendar in his hand. The neon green flyer was held aloft and shaken by a man, known by most as a curmudgeon. My heart sank. This was a man who had in my tenure never set foot in the library.

Then he spoke in a booming voice while shaking the flyer at the audience. "Did you see this?" I thought to myself here it comes, thinking about the next event, the kick off for our Feminist Literature Book Club. "Look at all these programs coming up at the library, looks like something for everybody," and he continued praising the programs we offered the town.

As he sat down, another elderly gentleman whose wife occasionally visited the library stood and echoed the sentiments of all the programs he had seen advertised on the bulletin board at the post office every week.

The husband of a former trustee stood and lambasted the select board for their smoke and mirrors of removing the $46,600 library appropriation from the town budget and then claiming they level funded the town budget.

And one after another people stood and spoke about how much they loved the library. But interestingly no one mentioned books they checked out, our collection, or anything about reading. Each person, whether they had ever actually attended a program or not, spoke about all the interesting things happening at the library.

After several townspeople stood to urge support of the library appropriation the vote was almost unanimous.

Submitted by Jeannette Bair, Library Director, Rochester Public Library

To: Vermont Library Working Group
From: Meg Allison, VSLA Representative
Re: Testimony on the topic of Library Programming
Date: November 11, 2021

1. **Testimony from Susie Snow, teacher-librarian at Hiawatha Elementary School, Essex Junction, VT.**

   Throughout the school year, our K-3 library provides units of study connected to the AASL and Social Justice standards. I am currently working with another early elementary school librarian to improve our collection focusing on equity, diversity, and social justice.

   During COVID, my school library lost about $1,200 worth of library books. We are hoping to find funding to replace these books.

2. **Testimony from Katherine Hancock, Library Media Specialist at Newport City Elementary School, Newport City, VT.**

   Recently there have been questions among fellow staff members about how to implement quality equity policies when we have a very large racial majority in our school's community. Teachers and other staff wonder how we can prepare our students for what they will encounter and see in the wider world if they do not encounter racial differences as much in northeast Vermont as they would someplace else. I firmly believe that having a strong library program and a trained library media specialist can help remedy this issue. They can recommend books and resources to teachers that provide mirrors for students' lives, but also open new doors for them as well. The library can be a place to encounter new stories and find ways to empathize with them. Libraries are integral for so many reasons, but I find that this is one of the most important and pressing reasons why we need great libraries in Vermont schools.

3. **Testimony from Julie Altemose, School Librarian at Mary Hogan Elementary School, Middlebury, VT:**

   Our school library is a bustling place! So far this school year (Sept.-Oct), we have loaned out 5, 830 books! We are hosting our month long Read-a-thon during November. We challenge kids to read extra minutes and they can win some prizes for their success in meeting their target times. We are connecting with 5 authors

who will make virtual visits with our classrooms! We work with the Middlebury College students who are in the Page One Literacy club. They offer virtual story-times, family book club discussions, and free books for our students! In addition, we collaborate with the UPS Store and Bonnie's Book Foundation to make sure ALL students have books to read at home. We host Free Book Giveaways at least 2 times per year.

We collaborate with our town library to offer programs and book clubs for families. We also created a reading challenge for our 2nd-3rd graders so that all students are challenged to read new books. It's called the Midd Reads program and we encourage children to participate throughout the year. It's one more challenge students can do in addition to reading the Vermont Red Clover books and the Golden Dome Book List.

Throughout last year, students could not physically visit the library, but our circulation remained high! We delivered books on carts through the halls of the school and students ordered books online!

Last year, our PTO group donated $1,000 for books to be purchased that focus on cultural diversity and inclusion. We were able to put new books in every classroom!

With the librarian having a flexible schedule this year, students are receiving support as they work on inquiry projects in their classroom. They are learning how to use the Gale Online database and assess other credible sources. They are also learning how to properly cite the sources they use during the research process.   We plan to continue supporting children as they research different topics and learn important media literacy skills! The library is the hub of learning in our school!

4. **Testimony from Alyson Mahony, Librarian at Doty and Rumney Elementary Schools, Worcester and Middlesex, VT:**

School libraries have been an essential service and safe community for all during the pandemic. Librarians play a pivotal role in supporting learners in person and remotely. We see all of our students and faculty and customize information resources, technology integration, pleasure and academic reading. We work with administration on all levels, to create fresh, relevant professional development. We provide fixed, scheduled classes on media literacy, inquiry, STEAM, and the love of literature. We also pivot easily to integrate skills and resources into classroom projects. During this stressful, understaffed time, teaching librarians can bridge the gaps and holes in a professional way that supports student achievement and

belonging. There have been many studies done over the years that show that fully funded robust library programming can increase students scores and engagement in school. School and public libraries have always been the center of reliable information, public discourse and community which is essential to our democratic values. It is clear that Vermonters value both education and democracy and that is why we must advocate for a full time librarian and tech integrationist in every school, no matter the size.

5. **Testimony from Jill Abair, Teacher Librarian at U-32 Middle and High School, East Montpelier, VT:**

The library started as a way to provide access to knowledge for those that couldn't afford it. We still do that today, but that is just the beginning. We at the U-32 Middle & High School library provide services, support and safety for our community. Our space is used by our entire school community, both the Middle & High School as well as our alternative education students. We do more than just check out books. We provide access to thousands of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors to anyone willing to take some time to sit with a book and learn more. Either about themselves or others. We provide programming which gives students a voice through collaborative learning opportunities, open mics, facilitated discussions around relevant topics and the ability to connect with authors in real time. Our programming allows our learners to express themselves through making and exploring with 3D materials, virtual reality worlds, custom design software and more. Through these last few years of the pandemic our students have missed out on spending time in spaces where they can truly be themselves. This is a judgement free zone. No reading level restrictions or refusing access to resources. We are an open space this year, and it has been a blessing welcoming back our learners, and it's obvious they've missed us too. Today we welcomed over one hundred students to our small space within just an hour-long period. They come here during recess, not just because they live in Vermont and the alternative is to go outside when it's cold, but because this is where their friends are. This is where they belong. If we had a larger space, if we had the appropriate support and man power, the possibilities for the space and our students would be sky high. Imagine what you could do if you had the support to do anything you ever wanted. To learn anything your heart desired. What a better world we would be if we could explore our own curiosities with the guidance of qualified educators? Instead of getting lost in the rabbit hole of Google with misinformation, we could be guided down paths with clear boundaries and never ending greenlights. When our students feel supported they rise to the challenge. We've seen greatness here and are excited to see what happens next.

6. **Testimony from Meg B.Allison, Teacher-Librarian at U-32 Middle and High School**, **East Montpelier, VT:**

Every school in Vermont needs a full time library media specialist who is capable of providing instruction, collaborating with content teachers, integrating digital media into the curriculum, and curating inclusive collections for Vermont's public school children.

The praxis of educational programming and school libraries provides extraordinary opportunities, unbound by one's imagination or community needs. It is only bound by understaffed, underfunded, and uninspired school libraries. The potential is truly limitless.

A school library is the only academic site within a school where all identities intersect. Therefore, it is a powerful site to explore justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. School libraries are containers for courageous conversations, where all stakeholders are welcome to lean into dialogues that might not be possible elsewhere. For example, at U-32 Middle and High School, community dialogues, partially funded with a mini-grant from the VT-NEA, were integral to the campaign to eliminate hate symbols, like the Confederate flag. Stakeholders, such as parents and voters, were eager to participate in supported discussion protocols with one another, but especially, school staff and students.

Additionally programming opportunities are available with other community partners, such as the Vermont Humanities Council and their VT Reads programs. U-32 co-partnered with our Friends of Washington Central Education group to facilitate evening book discussions, via Zoom, to discuss The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas. Topics such as systemic racism, police brutality, and microaggressions were discussed, leading this librarian to conclude that our communities are hungry for these rich and valuable discussions with our young people. Additionally, funding for these programs to take place outside of school hours, to support the expertise of school librarians in the room, is something for serious consideration.

School librarians have core values tied to our national standards - at the heart of which is inclusion. Inclusion is more than just having inclusive collections. It is about embedding inclusion into every component of our learning spheres - having inclusive policies, curriculum, and spaces.

7. **Testimony from Eileen Vaughn, Library Media Specialist/STEM Teacher at Barnard Academy, Killington Elementary, Reading Elementary & Woodstock Elementary, Windsor Central Supervisory Union, VT:**

I teach 13 STEM classes each week in 3 schools (grades K-6, 184 students). I am also responsible for 4 elementary school libraries (as a "consultant" and teacher).
I like to use books as much as possible to introduce my STEM lessons. Right now I really don't have the time to do much book talking or literature enrichment.
I see WES students on Mondays, and only see classes every other week for about 20 minutes. (about 95 students each week) This allows me just a bit of time to introduce a story, vocabulary or a library lesson. I have been weeding the shelves and tidying up. WES has a library assistant who can check out books when I am not there.
I am the only Library Media Specialist for the WCSU elementary libraries. My endorsement is PreK-12. We have a 5th elementary, and the SU has sent the library assistant (a para) to take care of that library.
Since our schools merged, my library classes basically ended. I continue to take care of the students, staff, stacks and ordering (for all of my schools).
I am responsible for 375 students for my library piece of teaching. Again, whenever I can, I integrate books and STEM.

The effect of COVID: Last school year I was assigned as the K-3 remote reading teacher for our district. Because of that, my time with any library services was very limited. I ordered books, and some students were able to have a regular checkout if their teacher arranged that. WES has a library assistant, and he was present for checkouts. I sent home books to my virtual students.
Yes, I am focusing on selecting books that honor diversity. I feel that our Red Clover and Golden Dome books have always taken diversity into consideration. Our SU is offering PD on diversity.

8. **Testimony from Genevieve Gallagher, Librarian at South Burlington High School, South Burlington, VT:**

The SBHS School Library has programming both within the library and throughout the larger SBHS community. We bring library programming into classrooms by collaborating with teachers to deliver instruction in research methods and accessing digital resources. Students know that their needs for research and reading can be met in our library. We have an "ask a librarian" form where questions can be directed to library staff and they can receive assistance even if they can't make it into the library. The library also has a book purchase consideration form where students

and staff can request that specific books be purchased for our library. The library has monthly spotlight displays that share books by a wide variety of authors and in many student-interest subject areas. Along with the physical displays of books and materials in hallways and the library, we post our content/author spotlights on the library's Instagram (@sbhs_library) page that has 245 followers (many of whom are students). We've highlighted books featuring lgbtqia+ characters, books by Native American and First Nations authors, books by Black authors from around the world, books related to the anniversary of September 11th and the social and military consequences of that event, and all of these collections of books are featured not only in displays and Instagram posts, but they remain active as digital collections in our catalog for students and staff to return to at any time. The SBHS Library maintains a recording "studio" with a green screen, professional lighting, and microphones. This allows students to create multimedia content to demonstrate their learning. In order to serve students and teachers who may need to step away from the cacophony of their day, we have a do not disturb room and mindfulness space that allows folks to work in complete silence. On the other end of the spectrum, we have a group workspace called the Think Tank where student groups can meet to collaborate. Our library program is dedicated to providing instruction and materials to meet the ever changing needs of our community.

9. **Testimony from Cara Clopton, School Librarian at the Allen Brook School, Williston, VT:**

Choice and voice are at the heart of our Allen Brook School library program. We serve 325 students in PreK-grade 2, their families, our staff, faculty, administration, and student interns. We have no limits, no fees, and no fines to promote equity and build on young children's boundless curiosities. Story times center on social and emotional skill building, diverse author and illustrator study, and researching our natural world together. During remote lesson times when children and families quarantined, recorded read-alouds and opportunities to connect in real time for book talks were commonplace.

10. **Testimony from Peter Langella, Librarian at Champlain Valley Union High School, Hinesburg, VT:**

Two issues rise to the top when thinking about school libraries: 1) Equity of staffing and equity of budget, and 2) Social Justice.

1) From 2007-2008 to 2018-2019, librarian FTE statewide went from 220 to 197, or a 10% decrease. Unfortunate, but, other than a few schools that aren't in compliance

with the EQS language that says all schools with at least 300 students must have a full-time school librarian, it's mostly due to an overall decrease in student enrollment.

However, in the same period of 2007-2008 to 2018-2019, library support staff FTE statewide went from 136 to 71, a decrease of 47%. The implications for our profession are huge. And these numbers are before the pandemic. More support staff have likely been lost over the past two years.

That "and sufficient support staff" from EQS is being ignored in a big way. 47% of school libraries have lost support staff in a decade.

The data are on Table 1, rows 264-287 here:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16OVFkt6tRit8UZaF7JKQMhPVo9EHepzg/edit#gid=701982777

Similar discrepancies exist when it comes to budgets. Many have been cut deeply, and inequities abound.

2) School libraries are on the front lines of social justice in Vermont. Our libraries must work to create spaces where all students, and especially those from historically marginalized and oppressed backgrounds, feel welcomed, represented, honored, and affirmed in who they are and who they want to be. As an example, please take a look at the Vermont School Library Association's Statement on Intellectual Freedom: tinyurl.com/VSLAIF

11. **Testimony from Jennifer Hill, Librarian at Crossett Brook Middle School, Duxbury, VT:**

The Trish Feld Library of Crossett Brook Middle School serves 300 5th - 8th graders. The library offers access to a book collection of 14,186 middle grade fiction and nonfiction books. Since the start of this school year, we have already circulated 3,315 books! This is a big change from last year with our library being closed to browsing for COVID reasons. Last year between the start of school and November 10, 2020 we were able to circulate 1,166 books which was good considering we were not 100% in attendance for Mon-Fri. The other part of our circulation that was different due to COVID was the limitation to only browse books on our online catalog.

In addition to the book collection, the library focuses on supporting all students in quality research, source analysis and critical thinking. This is accomplished through

collaboration with all different teachers and classes from math and social studies to social emotional learning and sustainability. The library as a dynamic learning space offers lots of opportunities for students to explore and express themselves through green screen, book creation, storytelling and more.

The Trish Feld Library and the librarian play a key role in supporting the cultural diversity and inclusion of all different learners in our community. Learning about identity is a large part of our program as students read books about all different kinds of people and experiences. As co-advisor to the Crossett Brook Pride Alliance, the librarian is actively supporting the students of the LGBTQ+ and Ally community. The many authentic experiences in resiliency that span from the Advisory Group to the whole class instruction and individual connections happens every day as the library and librarian meets each learner where they are at.

12. **Testimony from Sarah Keener, Librarian/Tech Integrationist at Hazen Union School, Hardwick, VT:**

In the role of librarian in a middle and high school, I have a unique perspective because I work with students of all age levels, in all content areas and in diverse settings and programs. Likewise, I collaborate with faculty and staff from all corners of the school. My involvement with the local library and a broad network of community partners, and with the vibrant VSLA community, keeps me informed about opportunities outside the school's walls as well. As a result, I am able to identify needs and potential resources in order to facilitate connections to a wide variety of people, programs, services and resources.

Libraries offer accessible and inclusive physical and virtual spaces where all are welcome to "think, create, share and grow." Inspecting the AASL Learner Framework and Key Commitments, you see that librarians are responsible for - well, everything! While the scope and depth can be overwhelming, this means we have an exciting amount of freedom and flexibility in programming. In my own practice, I think about "assets'' in the broadest sense possible, and my reference and organizational responsibilities and tasks go far beyond the stacks. Beyond AASL, I look for guidance in the mandates and missions of my school and district; Act 173, MTSS and LREs; and Vermont Act 77, Flexible Pathways, "Portrait of a Graduate" and transferable skills. In letter and in spirit, all of these standards and principles help me feel confident pursuing programming in inquiry, literacy, social justice and advocacy, multimedia storytelling, STEAM, community service, entrepreneurship, SEL activities and more. All of this is helping our library grow into a school hub for engaging and authentic project-based, community-centered educational

opportunities. At the same time, it is a sanctuary for many, providing a safe, quiet space for reading, reflection and relaxation. We are already seeing evidence of the ways in which a "future-ready library" that casts a broad net in programming initiatives can reach diverse, often disengaged and marginalized/underserved, youth in our school system.

Libraries serve everyone in the school community: students, families, faculty and staff. Librarians see the big picture, but we also have our feet on the ground. Even through the isolating and challenging times of COVID, our schools have counted on libraries and librarians to disseminate information, share valuable resources and bring people together. School library programming (and the outside programming we connect our patrons to) plays a vital role in building and maintaining cohesive, healthy and equitable communities.

Specific examples to show the breadth of school library programming from our library:

- Audio storytelling, podcasts, ethnography and community interviews with Vermont Folklife Center and VPR (including teacher workshops)
- Health and wellness partnerships with Healthy Lamoille Valley - pilot for school version of "Live Your Why Passport Edition"
- Support of student wellness and advocacy committee
- Teach class (and additional collaborations) around community and food with the Center for Agricultural Community
- Facilitate field trips to the local historical society (Hardwick Historical Society)
- Vermont Reads with local library (Jeudevine) and supporting community partners
- Vermont book awards programming: Green Mountain and Golden Dome
- Partnership with local Makerspace (Spark)
- Support of student internships
- Career Cafe - guest speakers from various professions
- Vermont FIRST Robotics club
- E-sports club
- Student volunteer and student aid positions in library and makerspace

Programming Testimony
October 8, 2021

Jane Ramos, Director
Sherburne Memorial Library, Killington VT
802-422-9765

Killington has a very large senior community and we provide a variety of programming for this age group that includes:

Monday Movie Matinees
Art Programs
Take & Makes
Hosting Bone Builders
Book Groups
Author Visits
Trivia Challenges
Game Days

During the pandemic, we met them where they were. Meaning we knew that one of our local restaurants provided drive through meals one day per week, so we met them there with book reviews, puzzles, hand drawn crosswords, word searches, and anything we could come up with that would keep them sane and occupied during the pandemic. We also sent cards, letters, and made phone calls to keep them connected to the library. Book deliveries and curbside service were big hits. We hosted movies in the building social distanced on multiple days so that a good number of folks could participate without there being too many in the room at one time. What we do for seniors is what they have asked me to speak about at the ARSL convention in Reno this month.

I think it's also important to note that Vermont libraries get together to produce a Fairy Tale Festival that pulls in people from all over New England. We've had a consistent 1000 folks every year who enjoy seeing programming from a number of libraries all over the state. The festival remains free and open to the public. We also give away free books to both children and adults. The entire event is funded by donations from the public and takes about $10K each year to host.

Bree Drapa, Director
Westford Public Library
October 13, 2021 at 1:30pm

PROGRAMMING:

Programming is a vital library service, especially to small, pastoral communities. It provides enrichment and child care when the schools cannot. It offers equity and a sense of belonging to groups of varying ages and economic backgrounds. Older adults or people who live alone can find friendship and the opportunity for human interaction. People become emboldened to enter the library for a program, knowing they won't be expected to check out a book or use a computer.

Programming can be challenging for libraries with just one paid staff person, as was the case at Westford until very recently. Adult programs are typically scheduled for after hours. Children who attend programming after school are used to me helping them, then excusing myself to attend to patrons at the desk. Once COVID occurred, I informed my board that I would need to hire an additional substitute to cover the desk, while I conducted programs outside. I couldn't be expected to run across the street every time someone needed to check-out materials. This was an unbudgeted expense, but the board understands how imperative programming is to our rural community.

No other profession is more creative than librarians when it comes to stretching dollars. Our ability to knock on doors to find free or affordable experts in our own neighborhoods not only saves funds, but builds a sense of community. These home-grown resources also guarantee diverse programs sure to please the toughest of customers. It is this same Yankee ingenuity that allowed us to weather the pandemic with relative composure.

Having a small staff resulted in the ability to pivot quickly to respond to community needs in the face of the COVID shutdown. We were able to offer curbside service a week after closing our physical building. We expanded our digital presence to include book reviews on our YouTube channel, online library card registrations, additions to our digitals collections, as well as online programming for all ages. Our adult book discussion even prefers meeting online to meetings that require wearing masks. As a result, we have been able to have two Vermont authors zoom in to our discussions. Our partnership with the Conservation Commission has blossomed during the pandemic to include story hikes, poetry walks, and a passport program along the trails. Programming with the schools has evolved into after school snacks and hygiene products in the library restroom (the only public one in town)—not ideal, but we are keeping the lines of communication open.

Libraries are resilient, flexible, and creative allowing for equally fantastic programs.

Written Comments:
INCLUSIVE SERVICES
AND ACCESS

Platt Memorial Library
279 Main St.
Shoreham, VT 05770
802-897-2647

January 9, 2023

Hi all,

I'm not sure if this is testimony worthy, but I had some thoughts around these topics.

Many of our buildings have been redesigned over the years to support better access -- ramps have been added, sidewalks have been graded, bathrooms have been expanded. But I think a huge number of libraries are still lacking automatic openers for doors. In our historic buildings, this presents a big challenge. It would be nice to have some state-level resources to support this kind of access.

I also know that lack of transportation continues to be a challenge for most of the state. I think about the UK frequently, where every tiny town has a bus that runs through twice a day to facilitate trips to larger population centers. I know that part of our challenge is a small tax base, but we're going to be continuing to have conversations about lack of access due to transportation until we fix public transportation in our rural areas.

Thanks!
Abby

Abby Adams
Library Director
Platt Memorial Library

January 9, 2023

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

The subject of inclusive services and access to public programs and services in libraries is broad and deep, and I have no doubt the Working Group will receive a wide range of concerns and approaches on this topic. My own testimony will focus rather narrowly on inclusive internet access.

Ilsley Public Library provides access to free Wi-Fi twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. During non-library hours, Wi-Fi can be accessed from the library garden; from benches by the library's side entrance; or from the parking lot. The Sarah Partridge Library is a branch library in East Middlebury. Every year, the East Middlebury Prudential Committee contracts with the town of Middlebury to administer library services at this branch location. While library services and staffing are provided by Middlebury, the branch library building itself is owned and operated by the East Middlebury Prudential Committee.

Because the Sarah Partridge Library is governed by the same policies and procedures as Ilsley Public Library, the Sarah Partridge Library also offers Wi-Fi access outside the building during non-library hours. However, I have been approached several times over the past few years by members of the East Middlebury Prudential Committee, expressing their concerns about offering Wi-Fi during non-library hours. Their concerns generally center on the fact that if you offer free Wi-Fi at night, you are going to encourage "loitering." Some residents aren't comfortable having people gathered outside the library after dark, and believe it could lead to vandalism. There is particular fear that this gives teens a convenient place to congregate.

Thus far, I have been able to assuage these fears and put off any real confrontations by explaining that many people have legitimate reasons for needing internet access outside of library hours (even after dark!). I talk about the digital divide in Vermont, and the necessity of internet access to submit homework assignments or job applications. I point out that many community members simply can't get to the library during regular business hours because they are working, and that there are far worse places for teenagers to be after dark than accessing the internet on the steps of their public library. While these conversations have been successful, the persistence of the issue over the years is cause for concern.

One of the recurring arguments put forward by Prudential Committee is that East Middlebury is a very small community, and that the kinds of services appropriate for Middlebury aren't necessary, or don't translate well, to East Middlebury. I wonder how many other public libraries in small communities around Vermont have dealt with similar concerns when it comes to offering Wi-Fi service outside of library hours. The truth is that access to reliable, high-speed internet is absolutely essential to Vermonters, and many of them can only access it through their public library. In order to provide inclusive access to the internet, it is critical that public libraries offer the service outside of library hours.

A survey administered by the Dept. of Libraries during the pandemic indicates that of 53 libraries who reported the question, 47 offered Wi-Fi access 24/7, while 5 turned if off for some portion of the day. One thing that would help move Vermont public libraries towards providing equitable and inclusive internet services is enshrining it in an updated Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries. I know it would be helpful to me to be able to point to a standard when justifying the need to provide around-the-clock Wi-Fi access. While I fully appreciate that community needs must be defined locally, it is also true that once a need has been identified it must be met equitably. Consecrating inclusive internet service would be just one of many benefits of updating the standards, and would give librarians much needed support.

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of Vermont's public libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Hart
Director

January 27, 2023

Esbey Hamilton, Vermont Migrant Education Program

Library Testimony

My name is Esbey Hamilton, and I lead Migrant Education Initiatives for the University of Vermont Extension. Our main funding is a Migrant Education Program grant from the federal Agency of Education, and with that grant we serve approximately 300 children and youth a year who are involved with temporary or seasonal agricultural work in Vermont. We also work very closely with the Migrant Health team, which provides healthcare access support to more than 700 individuals annually. There's a general association of the term "migrant farmworker" with workers coming from Mexico and Central America (or, in the case of apple harvesting, Jamaica). However, migratory agricultural workers can be from any country, and speak any language. That said, I am pretty much here to talk about workers from Mexico and Central America and their families.

I love libraries, and I was taught that libraries are safe spaces that exist in most communities where I can go to read, rest, work, and get information. Whenever I travel, I look for the library. This is part of my culture as a middle-class person from the northeastern US. It's not so much part of the culture of rural Mexico. Our staff works to teach youth and families about the services offered at their local libraries. When it makes sense, we meet program participants at the library – we read books, we use the internet to study for the GED, we attend story times with new parents and their kiddos. We find that without our taking people and showing them, sometimes several times, Mexican and Central American farmworkers aren't likely to visit the library or access library services on their own.

Here are some barriers that we see to migratory farmworkers from Mexico and Central American and their families accessing libraries:

Transportation: People can't get to the library because they don't have driver's licenses or cars, and live on farms which are outside of walking or biking distance.

Schedules: People can't get to the library because they work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week.

Lack of technology skills and quality home internet: People can't access (or even learn about) the wide range of online library services

Language: Many of the farmworkers we work with have very, very little English, especially when they first arrive. People don't think there's anything for them at the library, and they don't want to put themselves in situations where they will have to converse in English

Fear of being in public: Because of language and because of immigration status, many of the youth and families we work with experience very high levels of stress whenever they need to be in public, and want to allocate that stress to essential trips such as grocery shopping and medical care.

High mobility: Each library is different, and even if people get into visiting their local library, when they move, they have to get a whole new library card and learn a whole new building, staff, and schedule of events. Getting a library card is usually a very easy process, but it still requires, usually, interaction in English and proof of address, which can be very challenging. It's quite common for farmworkers to not

have ID and to not receive mail at home. Easy transfer of library cards between libraries would be helpful in these cases.

Opportunities:

Outreach focus especially in Franklin, Addison, and Orleans Counties where farmworking populations are high.

Outreach to young children and parents (21 pregnant people) – bilingual story time, but make sure that it's significantly attended by native Spanish speakers. I've heard from people who have attended these only to report back "but it was all white families, and everyone was speaking English!"

Collaborations with schools to allow children to learn about libraries and bring that information home to their parents.

Offer English classes outside of Chittenden County, ideally with Spanish-speaking instructors or support people. Because many dairy workers are undocumented, citizenship classes are less useful and can be alienating if they are aggressively marketed because farmworkers will feel that they need to disclose immigration status in order to explain why they aren't interested.

Offer computer instruction *in Spanish* and library staff knowledgeable about language functions on library computers. This includes helping folks access the Spanish-language GED instructional materials available through the library.

Relationships with individuals is key, not just for this population, but very much so for this population. Employ Spanish-speaking staff at libraries and support them doing personal outreach to farmworkers as part of their work. Text / audio outreach in Spanish is useful, but not if that language access is not there in the library. It can be worse if people show up to something because it was promoted to them in Spanish, but they get there and no one else is there who speaks Spanish. I would be happy to work with local libraries to share information and assist with making connections.

January 24, 2023

Hello,

I am writing to provide public comment/feedback regarding inclusivity and general importance of libraries in Vermont.

Let me begin with who I am. My husband and I are Vermonters by birth, and for many generations. We currently reside in White River Junction with our two children. A number of people in our immediate and extended families are living with various "disabilities"; Autism, epilepsy, ADHD, PTSD/veteran, etc.

We are so very lucky to have multiple fabulous libraries in our town. My parents are elderly, disabled veterans, living on a very limited income. The West Hartford library has been their lifeline...they get internet access there (with a SUPER friendly and knowledgeable Director, Sandy, to assist them), they utilize the free books there, they also access the books, movies and TV/media there as well. In addition to this, they have a free library outside, and many activities that my children and family attend. This last fall, my children tried fresh kale and other vegetables from the library community garden.

The libraries in our town (and elsewhere) are critical and safe meeting places. They also provide internet services to the most isolated and at risk Vermonters (including the homeless--who often could be qualified as disabled). They provide for in person community engagement and enrichment (hosting farmers markets, providing book clubs, online language learning and audio resources, library passes, play groups, community bulletin boards, hosting community events, etc).

I am not sure that I was fully able to explain the critical role that libraries have played in our lives...I am sure that I missed the part about being a child in the Sharon Baxter library and thinking it was the very best thing in the world and challenging myself to read every book in the tiny library!

I just want to emphasize that libraries are sometimes the only or last safe place for the most vulnerable in our communities and should be treated as a critical resource for all (and funded accordingly).

Thank you,

Janet Potter

White River Junction, Vermont

Loren Polk, Director Aldrich Library in Barre, VT

January 20, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to share the work and stories of Aldrich Public Library with you today.

My name is Loren Polk and I am the director for the library. We serve the City and Town of Barre, a population around 17,000. This is a large library by Vermont standards – in population, collection, and size as our building is fourth largest in the state as of 2021 statistics.

Inclusion is and has been a must for Barre since its beginning. You've perhaps heard the myth of the name Barre being settled in a boxing match in a nearby barn over 120 years ago. I love this story because it is a wonderful reminder that diversity of ideas has always been here, and communication and collaboration are different for everyone. Since that time the granite of Barre brought some of the most diverse populations and peoples to Vermont through the beginning of the 20th century. Our library holds copies of anarchist and socialist newspapers published in that time, as well as Scottish, Lebanese, and Italian family stories that have named our streets, stores, and our library.

Barre today continues to be a granite center for the world, but we have also evolved to encompass some of the largest support systems for Vermonters in the county. Washington County Mental Health and the county's homeless shelter, Good Samaritan Haven, are located here, in addition to many low-income housing organizations such as Capstone, Central Vermont Adult Basic Education and the Learning Together Preschool Center, restorative justice, and the county's court services. This impacts our community, as we are a place to go for "help".

Today we still have a wide variety of people we serve, and our rooms, collections and programs all aim to encompass as much of the community as possible. Strong communities are a product communication, connection, and belonging, and our library aims to reflect and promote these ideals for the greater Barre area.

Because humans look for patterns in behavior in order to process information, we are susceptible to cognitive biases that can get in the way of communication and connection. One of the most successful ways we have found to support belonging in our shared space is to identify the intended use, set expectations of behavior to promote this use, and find ways to communication and enforce expectations uniformly, trying to recognize those cognitive biases in order to overcome them.

As an example of this strategy, we have witnessed and heard a wide difference of opinion regarding noise permissions and "problems" in the library. Our Vermont room, which is located in the center of the building, is a cozy and somewhat removed space, and perfect for small

groups to gather and catch up. The building staff decided this area is most used for "quiet conversation" and set up this expectation for activity in the room.

Over time, I noticed some patrons received more complaints than others, and some were reprimanded more often as a result. The solution came in the form of a $15 noise meter indicator. Any noise over a certain threshold and the machine would beep to notify staff and the group that noise was reaching levels that would impact other rooms. With this expectation, those "noisy teens" were given a clear expectation and were happy to use the space accordingly. And if the knitting group set the alarm off during their meeting, the expectation could be universally enforced.

Another example comes in the form of service and support animals visiting the library. The law is clear that we are limited on inquiring about the service an animal might provide, and public spaces have struggled with ways to ensure compliant building use and support equitable access. While other places of business stress the use of a service animal, we have decided to enforce expectation instead. Any animal that "breaks heel", is aggressive toward others, or is not house broken, can be asked to leave the premises regardless of their support or service animal status. For this reason, we created signage and expectations welcoming animals that comply with this behavior. Again, the expectations are clear, easier to enforce, and easier for our community to understand and agree to.

Finally, we create programs, collections, and uses for our building to support needs recognized in the community. Without a dedicated teen space in Barre, Aldrich was responsive to this need and incorporated a dedicated teen space in the library in 2014. This room is dedicated to middle school and high school kids during after school hours, and the expectations are established to consider this use. And during the COVID pandemic, as churches were unable to open their doors for people experiencing homelessness, we worked with Barre City Council to provide a before hours program in our Milne Community Room. This allowed for anyone seeking a warm space or needing help with applications for services to come in to the library as early as 8 am. Through this program we have connected with dozens of people in our community, and helped many of them to connect with the help that we have created throughout our city.

People experiencing homelessness – or even more broadly, poverty - will always be with us. Luckily, I am not here today asking you to solve poverty or even solve homelessness. Instead, it is important to serve people in these circumstances, and I know there are many people working on this service with you. I want to thank you for your work, and assure you that as an information center for my community, I will spread the word of this resource as best I can.

What I am here today to advocate for goes beyond service. People experiencing homelessness (and poverty) can not only be served by a community, they must be part of a community. They need to feel welcomed and missed, they need to be represented as a part of the whole, and this cannot come with the caveat that their welcome is temporary or unfairly conditional.

This is the great value of libraries – to welcome, represent and include all people within a community. I love and will always advocate for Senior centers, youth centers, and homeless shelters, but a library is where these groups can come together to make a strong community.

In order to help libraries with this work, I would ask three things from the Working group today.

1. Eliminate or reduce the use of and dependence on competitive grants to support our capital, operations, and programs. Help us to focus on providing a quality product to our communities, and eliminate the spent costs associated with grant applications.
2. Help us to recruit and retain qualified librarians for our community classroom.
3. Be a part of your local library's community. The best way to see a community's culture and to become a part of it is to go to the library.

Thank you so much for your time.

CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

vceh
Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

2022 VERMONT'S ANNUAL POINT-IN-TIME COUNT OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Presented by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance

VERMONT'S ANNUAL STATEWIDE COUNT OF

THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS 2022

CONTENTS

Report Released May 19ᵗʰ, 2022

SUMMARY

This report chronicles the landscape of and changes in homelessness in Vermont in 2022 and over a ten-year period with breakdowns by location of homelessness, household type, and subpopulation. The Annual Point in Time Count is a statewide count of persons experiencing literal homelessness[1] on January 26, 2022. The Count captures the most vulnerable population, those *literally homeless* and does not include those *at risk of homelessness*, *doubled up,* or *couch surfing*. Vermont's two Continua of Care (CoC) — the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (Balance of State CoC) and Chittenden Homeless Alliance (Chittenden County CoC) — are the lead organizers of this effort. These CoCs, along with 11 Local Housing Coalitions that are part of the Balance of State, are comprised of service and housing providers, state agencies, those with lived experience of homelessness, and other key partners in the work to make all homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Many thanks to our colleagues at the Institute for Community Alliances who manage the collection and processing of data from the Point in Time Count.

The Point in Time Count in January 2022 found a 7.3% increase in persons experiencing homelessness in the Vermont compared to the prior year (Chart A). This comes on the heels of a significant increase from 2020 (pre-pandemic) to 2021. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Vermont's homeless response network leapt into action to relocate people from congregate shelters to hotels and motels around the state and to expand non-congregate shelter options through the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. The expanded use of General Assistance Emergency Housing for non-congregate emergency shelter at hotels and motels allowed people who were vulnerable to COVID-19 and were precariously housed or at risk of homelessness to move into a hotel or motel room. The expanded eligibility for access to emergency housing in motels allowed for all households experiencing homelessness throughout the state to "stay home, stay safe."

In November 2021, the Vermont Department for Children & Families extended its Adverse Weather Conditions policy, which expands eligibility for GA Emergency Housing through the cold weather months, through to March 2022 and the Point in Time Count occurred during this period. Changes in the GA Emergency Housing eligibility impacted the Point-in-Time Count.

The Point in Time Count provides a valuable measure of Vermont's homeless population; the data is used to assess and identify housing service gaps and responses to these gaps. We encourage anyone

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[1] Staying in emergency shelter, transitional housing for homeless persons, a place not meant for human habitation, or staying in motel paid for by General Assistance Emergency Housing.

with an interest in this report and Vermont's response to homelessness to contact one of the advocates and service and shelter providers listed on the last page.

Note: Due to COVID-19 concerns a count of unsheltered households was not undertaken in 2021; an unsheltered count <u>was</u> conducted in 2022. A count of precariously housed youth did not take place in 2021 or 2022. A supplemental report with county specific data will be issued at a later date.

NOTABLE FINDINGS 2022:

- The count on the night of January 26, 2022, found 2,780 Vermonters experienced literal homelessness, an increase of 189 persons compared to the 2021 count (Chart A).

  - The decline in persons experiencing homelessness in Chittenden County *may* be due the extremely tight market for hotel rooms in the county which required people to relocate to shelter in other counties and the closure of at least one large hotel used for emergency shelter during 2021.

- A relatively few number of people (45) were counted as unsheltered, i.e. living outside or in a car (Charts B and C). This population is, by definition, difficult to count and is under-reported. However, Vermont's expanded Adverse Weather Conditions policy likely accounts for the decrease compared to prior years.

- The number of persons experiencing homelessness and in a household with children increased by 36% compared to the prior year, compared to 5% of people in households with adults only (Chart D).

- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) Vermonters disproportionately experienced homelessness in 2022 compared to the general population in both Chittenden County and Statewide (Charts E and F). Vermont's Continua of Care recognize the urgency of understanding and responding to the causes of this disproportionate experience.

- Chart D, Subpopulations of Homelessness, paints a complex picture about who is experiencing homelessness. First, not all people experiencing homelessness have a reportable condition that helps to explain their experience; in many cases homelessness is caused by poverty (may be a short-term setback) and lack of affordable housing. Second, the conditions reported in the chart are self-reporting and perhaps ill-defined and therefore the absolute numbers should be cited carefully. Lastly, our response to homelessness requires a broad-based effort involving several state agencies, mental health providers, substance use disorder supports, and more.

  - The Chart shows a decline from 2021 to 2022 in all subpopulations. There was a difference in how data was collected in the two Counts which *may* account for the change.

  - The efforts of the Vermont Veterans Committee on Homelessness leading into 2020 resulted in an all-time low number of Veterans in VT with a steady multi-year decline ending in 2020, which then shifted to a 45% year-over-year increase in 2021 and a slight decrease in 2022. Veteran's homelessness continues to decline in the overall population; Veterans
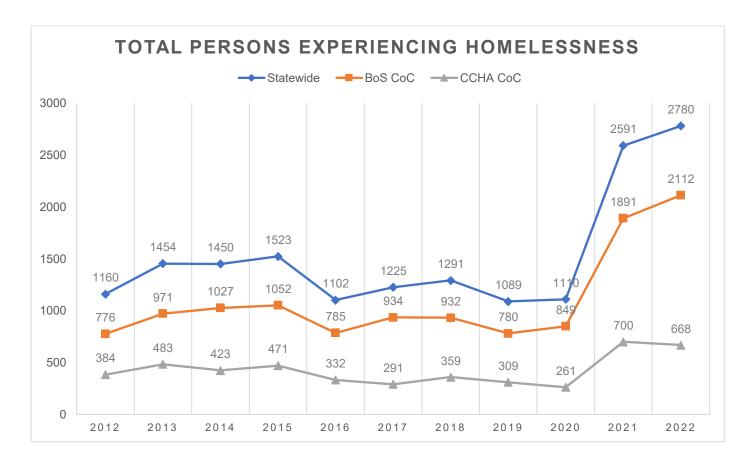
experiencing homelessness were 3.6% of the overall populations of households experiencing homeless in 2022 which is down from 3.9% in 2021. The changes from 2020 to 2022 can largely, if not solely, be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response.

WHAT THE PIT COUNT DOES AND DOES NOT TELL US

The PIT Count provides important information about the nature of unmet need in our community and shows trends over time. During the night of the PIT count we are able to gather a snapshot of insight into the demographics and characteristics of those who are unsheltered, living in emergency shelter, accessing Vermont's Agency of Human Services General Assistance Emergency Housing program, or residing in transitional housing for the homeless.

Due to its nature of only counting where someone slept on a given night, the PIT count does not reveal how many persons are entering and exiting homelessness in Vermont over the course of the year. The Count does not answer why people become homeless, how they leave homelessness when they do, or what barriers might be preventing them from returning to permanent housing. The Count cannot give explanations as to changes in rates of homelessness or different demographic groups, we must look to communities and people with lived experience for this information.

TOTAL PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

◆ Statewide   ■ BoS CoC   ▲ CCHA CoC

Year	Statewide	BoS CoC	CCHA CoC
2012	1160	776	384
2013	1454	971	483
2014	1450	1027	423
2015	1523	1052	471
2016	1102	785	332
2017	1225	934	291
2018	1291	932	359
2019	1089	780	309
2020	1110	849	261
2021	2591	1891	700
2022	2780	2112	668

BoS CoC = Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care (All VT counties EXCEPT for Chittenden)

CCHA CoC = Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Continuum of Care (ONLY Chittenden County)
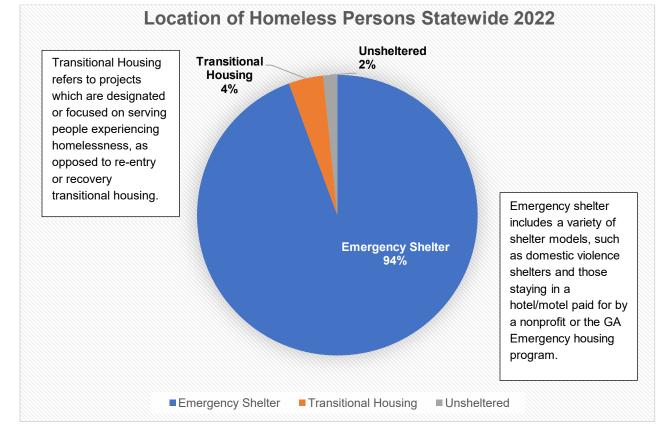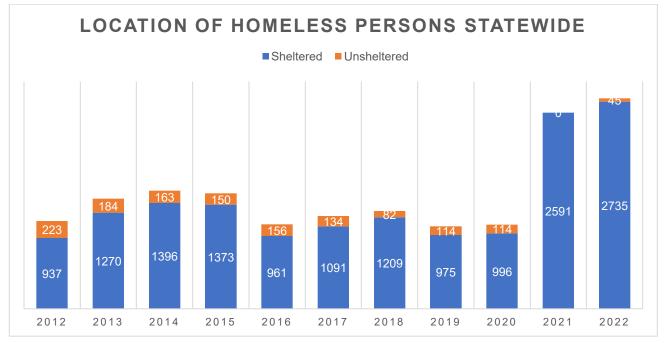
CHART B: LOCATION OF HOMELESSNESS

Location of Homeless Persons Statewide 2022

Transitional Housing refers to projects which are designated or focused on serving people experiencing homelessness, as opposed to re-entry or recovery transitional housing.

Transitional Housing 4%

Unsheltered 2%

Emergency Shelter 94%

Emergency shelter includes a variety of shelter models, such as domestic violence shelters and those staying in a hotel/motel paid for by a nonprofit or the GA Emergency housing program.

■ Emergency Shelter ■ Transitional Housing ■ Unsheltered

CHART C: LOCATION OF HOMELESSNESS

LOCATION OF HOMELESS PERSONS STATEWIDE

■ Sheltered ■ Unsheltered

Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered
2012	937	223
2013	1270	184
2014	1396	163
2015	1373	150
2016	961	156
2017	1091	134
2018	1209	82
2019	975	114
2020	996	114
2021	2591	0
2022	2735	45

*Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, No Unsheltered Count was conducted in 2021
*2012 – 2018 Data differs from reports presented in 2021 as data was previously incorrectly entered to only reflect the balance of state numbers.

Homeless Persons Statewide by Household Type

Year	Persons in Households with at least One Adult & One Child	Persons in households with Adults only	Persons in Households with Children Only
2012	507	627	26
2013	753	694	7
2014	732	837	9
2015	613	881	6
2016	462	654	1
2017	528	695	2
2018	511	775	6
2019	408	675	6
2020	372	736	2
2021	629	1833	1
2022	857	1921	2

■ Persons in Households with at least One Adult & One Child
■ Persons in households with Adults only
■ Persons in Households with Children Only

CHART E: 2022 POPULATION STATEWIDE BY RACE

Race	Homeless persons statewide	Vermont population*
White	88.00%	89.80%
Black or African-American	6.00%	1.40%
Asian	1.00%	1.80%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.00%	0.40%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.00%
Some Other Race		0.80%
Multiple Races	4.00%	5.80%

*Data United States Census Bureau, Census 2020
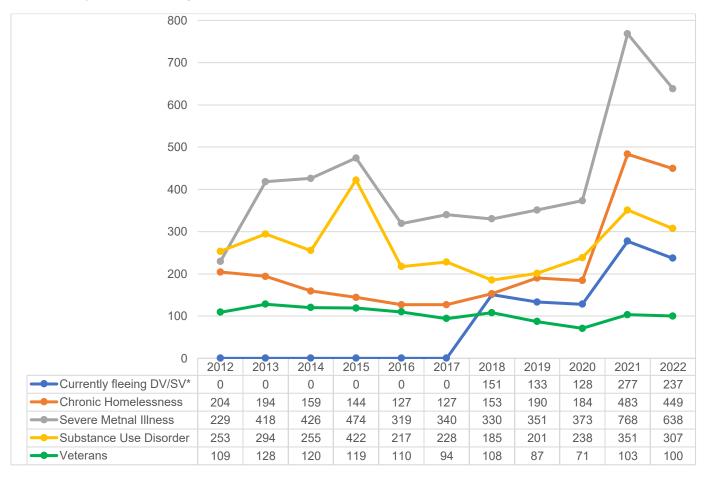
CHART F: 2022 CHITTENDEN COUNTY BY RACE

Race	Homeless persons Chittenden	Chittenden Population*
White	80.00%	90.30%
Black or African-American	12.00%	2.50%
Asian	1.00%	4.60%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.00%	0.20%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.10%
Some Other Race		
Multiple Races	5.00%	2.30%

*Data United States Census Bureau, Census 2020

CHART G: STATEWIDE SUBPOPULATIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

For the following data, people may be included under multiple subpopulation categories (i.e., they are not mutually exclusive categories). All data is based on self-reported information.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Currently fleeing DV/SV*	0	0	0	0	0	0	151	133	128	277	237
Chronic Homelessness	204	194	159	144	127	127	153	190	184	483	449
Severe Metnal Illness	229	418	426	474	319	340	330	351	373	768	638
Substance Use Disorder	253	294	255	422	217	228	185	201	238	351	307
Veterans	109	128	120	119	110	94	108	87	71	103	100

*In 2018, the DV (Domestic Violence)/SV (Sexual Violence) question was changed to Currently Fleeing instead of a Survivor of DV/SV.

A supplemental report with county specific data will be issued at a later date.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

Martin Hahn, Executive Director, mhahn@helpingtohousevt.org

Molly Shimko, CoC Program Coordinator, mdavisshimko@capstonevt.org

Kara Casey, Co-Chair, Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Jess Graff, Co-Chair, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance:

Will Towne, Co-Chair, Spectrum VT

Sarah Russell, Co-Chair, CEDO – City of Burlington

Addison County Continuum of Care:

Helena Van Voorst, United Ways of Addison County

Bennington County Continuum of Care:

Chandler Poling, Pathways Vermont

Caledonia & Essex Counties Continuum of Care:

Joy Ely, Northeast Kingdom Community Action

Franklin & Grand Isle Counties Continuum of Care:

Jess Graff, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity

Lamoille County Continuum of Care:

Sherry Marcelino, Lamoille County Mental Health Services

Kim Anetsberger, Lamoille Community House

Orleans County Continuum of Care:

Jenna O'Farrell, Northeast Kingdom Community Action

Suzanne Legare-Belcher, Agency of Human Services

Rutland County Continuum of Care:

Jessica Makela, Homeless Prevention Center

Cynthia Fortier, Homeless Prevention Center

Washington County Continuum of Care:

Casey Winterson, Capstone Community Action

Will Eberle, Agency of Human Services

Kathi Partlow, Family Center of Washington County

Windham South Continuum of Care:

Sue Graff, Agency of Human Services

Dan Handy, Groundworks Collaborative

Windsor-North & Orange Counties Continuum of Care:

Linda Anderson, Capstone Community Action

Windsor-South & Windham North Continuum of Care:

Sue Graff, Agency of Human Services

Lee Trapeni, Springfield Supportive Housing Program

Mona Tolba, Fletcher Free Library Commissioner

South Burlington, Vermont, 05403

January 27, 2023

Please accept this testimony as related to inclusive Services and Access to Public programs and services.

As an immigrant I found that The Fletcher Free Library is a very welcoming place for diversity, equity and inclusion. Fletcher Free Library welcomed me and my daughter for over 11 years, during these years we were able to attend early childhood programs for my daughter which helped her to develop beautifully as a strong reader, and a good student. It helped me personally connect with people, I felt library as a home for me especially as an immigrant who do not have family to rely on, I relied on the library for accessing resources, searching for jobs, looking for information. I found Fletcher Free Library is the most welcoming place that celebrates diversity and welcome all experiences and background of its members.

What the library offers, is the main backbone of support for refugees and immigrants, internet access, and assistance with Technology are few of many other programs these populations need when they first arrive to Vermont. The library hosts different languages learning classes including English, Arabic, French, and Spanish, monthly cooking book club, and many youth programs that are important in building and setting up them to positive and productive life.

The staff of the library are doing their best to serve the continually growing populations, I always hope that they have more resources allocated to serve the needs of refugees and immigrants, I always have hope one day, that the website is accessible in many different language and I wish that all other libraries follow the footsteps of Fletcher Free library, by having enough funding to translate the materials and become more welcoming and inclusive in their planning. It is important to think about refugees/immigrants needs as people of the community and the potential contributions that libraries can make in their life.

Thanks for your support and consideration of equity in all planning.

Sincerely,

Mona Tolba

Community member

City of Winooski
Vermont's Opportunity City

27 West Allen Street
Winooski Vermont 05404
802 655 6410
winooskivt.gov

January 27, 2023

Please accept the following testimony as related to Inclusive Services and Access to Public Programs and Services.

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries,

The Winooski Memorial Library celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion and welcomes the rich tapestry of experience and background among all members of the Winooski community. As the most racially and ethnically diverse city in Vermont - with nearly 15% of residents born outside of the United States and over 20 different languages spoken within our schools – the library serves a unique role as both connector and service provider for our new American, immigrant, and refugee populations.

We offer a number of programs in support of English language learners, including weekly ELL classes and technology assistance in partnership with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, as well as other programs that work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within our community. These include, or have included, Restorative Justice Circles in partnership with Spectrum Youth and Services, Arabic language learning classes and monthly bilingual storytimes, free veggie and produce distribution to address food insecurity in partnership with Interval Center, and weekly storytime visits to the Thrive Afterschool and Summer Program, a 3-STAR licensed childcare provider and enrichment program here in Winooski.

The library also provides a welcoming and inclusive space for community members and offers access to a diverse collection of print materials and online resources, translated vital documents such as library card applications (Arabic, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili),

after-hours space availability for community members to host meetings, and a dedicated staff committed to promoting open and equal access for all. Most recently, Kirsten Wilson, Youth Services Coordinator, has enrolled in a Swahili course in an effort to reduce language barriers among non-English speaking patrons.

And while providing these diverse programs and services is a great strength, the library also faces considerable challenges presented by space constraints, limited shelving and storage, and the number of individuals on staff. We are a small but mighty team of 2.5 FTE working in ~2000 SF of open floor plan and without access to separate meeting rooms, in-house storage, or office space - all of which make scaling to meet larger community needs and demands difficult. In comparison to other Vermont libraries serving similar size communities (population 5000+), we rank last in square footage of library space (2000 SF), square footage per capita (.27), total collection holdings (10,406), and second to last in paid staff hours per week (73), according to FY2021 annual reporting statistics compiled by the Vermont Department of Libraries.

These challenges are not new, but they do limit the full potential and position of the library within the Winooski community. It is my hope that as we continue to grow our programs and services, we can at the same time direct and allocate the needed resources and funding that will allow us to scale in both space and staff and maintain a welcoming and inclusive spirit for all.

Respectfully submitted,
Nate Eddy
Director, Winooski Memorial Library

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Accessibility Modification Grant (AM)

Provides funding, on a first-come, first-serve basis for projects that bring existing municipally-owned buildings that serve a municipal function and non-school-community libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Projects must be bid ready all decisions must be made that would impact the bid documents. Construction of new standalone buildings is not eligible for the AM program. The entire building that is open to the public must be brought into compliance with the ADA. ALL VCDP FUNDED PROJECTS MUST COMPLETE AN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PRIOR TO SIGNING ANY CONTRACTS RELATED TO THE PROJECT AND IN SOME CASES PRIOR TO GOING OUT TO BID ON SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES.

Grant Range: $5,000 to $100,000. A 10% match of cash or cash-in-kind goods or services is required for all AMs.

10% Match Requirement

Accessibility Modification Grants must include a cash or cash-in-kind contribution of goods and/or services of a flat 10% of the VCDP funds requested. The maximum VCDP request amount is $100,000. In order to qualify for the maximum request of $100,000, you must have at least $110,000 of ADA renovations.

Release of Environmental Conditions

You must secure a Release of Funds letter from the Agency prior to obligating any funds, such as offering construction contracts, and requisitioning VCDP funds. The exception is that general administration costs such as, preparing the environmental review, engineering work, or architectural work, may be incurred prior to the Release of Funds. Environmental Review forms will become available in the Online Grants Management System after your application has been received by the VCDP. For further information and guidance with respect to the Environmental Review Process, please contact Quin Mann in our Grants Management Division (802-828-1357) and review our online Program Guide.

Budget Considerations for General Administration

Every project budget must include funds related to General Administration. These are costs relating to the overall management of the VCDP grant. These activities would be common to any VCDP grant and include environmental review, financial management, progress reports, requisitions, procurement, and final program reports/closeout to name a few.

- Up to eight percent of the VCDP request (not the total project cost) for all grant types and projects, other than scattered site housing developments, may be budgeted for general administration activities. If this amount calculates to be less than $5,000.00, the grantee can request up to $5,000 provided it does not exceed 12% of the VCDP request. However, AM projects are limited to 8%, even if this results in an amount less than $5,000. More than 8% may be allowed, on a case-by-case basis, provided the applicant demonstrates that a larger amount is necessary for the project.

Please be aware that any unexpended General Administrative funds may not be used for other grant agreement budget line items, and must be returned to the Agency. An exception may be made by the VCDP under limited circumstances. See Program Guide for additional information on general administration.

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Budget Considerations for Program Management

Every project budget (other than those for Planning Grants) must include funds related to program management. VCDP funds or other funding sources may be used for what the VCDP refers to as "program management activities." Program management expenses are directly related to accomplishing program tasks specific to the project being funded. Program management activities differ from project to project. Typical program management activities include clerks of the works, compliance with Davis-Bacon requirements, permit compliance, engineering and architectural services to name a few.

See Program Guide for additional information on Program Management, Fair Labor Standards and Davis-Bacon Wage.

The amount of federal funds used for general administration and program management of the grant must be "necessary and reasonable" for the proper and efficient performance and administration of the VCDP award. In order to be charged to the VCDP grant, all general administration and program management costs must comply with OMB Circular A-87 and VCDP policies and procedures.

Pre-Award Costs

Applicants who receive an award may be reimbursed through the Grant Agreement for pre-award costs such as the fees charged by professionals (architects, engineers, archeologists, lawyers, etc.) in the preparation of the applications. Such costs will not be reimbursable to applicants who do not receive an award. These costs should be clearly identified in the application.

Other Resources

The VCDP expects all applicants to vigorously explore all funding resources including local capital campaigns. These efforts will bear on the competitiveness of an application. A revolving loan fund controlled by an applicant should be considered as a funding source. Applicants will be expected to explain why a municipally-controlled revolving loan fund is not a source of funds for the project in those cases where such a fund exists.

In addition, communities are expected to provide financial support in the way of donated general administrative or program management services, waiving or reducing connection or local permit fees, or other cash-in-kind contributions relevant to the project or explain why such support is not possible The application must include documentation for the status for every funding source included as Other Resources. There are several very important factors to keep in mind when providing evidence of the commitment of funds from other sources. These include:

- The commitment must still be firm when the money is needed.

- You must be able to comply with all conditions placed on the commitment.

- The commitment cannot be dependent on events beyond the control of the applicant

- Identify each resource individually and upload or mail its supporting documentation. Please note: All planning grants are required to have a 10% match for all VCDP funds requested.

Procurement Obligations

With public funds come the obligations to follow and document a full and open competitive process for the procurement of goods and services. Applicants should not hire any entity prior to completing the required environmental review process and receiving an award, and if a compelling need to hire exists,

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be certain to contact Grants Management of the VCDP first for guidance. Otherwise, you may create a situation where the VCDP cannot consider funding the project. Please refer to Chapter 6 of the VCDP Grants Management Guide for detailed guidance before you enter into any arrangements for the provision of goods or services for your project (e.g., architects, consultants, engineers, construction contractors). For instance, you must ensure and document that all prime contractors and subcontractors are not on the HUD debarment list by checking the following website: www.sam.gov.

In addition, the Grantee or Administrator must verify and document that the prime contractor has been certified and registered with the Vermont Secretary of State's Office website.

Fair Labor Standards and Davis Bacon Wage Rates
Any housing project of more than seven units or any other construction project of more than $2,000, where federal funds are all or part of project funding, triggers the requirements of the Davis Bacon Act, the Copeland anti-Kickback Act, and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act. These federal laws impose considerable record keeping obligations, and impose requirements on your contractors and subcontractors. Please refer to Chapter 7 of the VCDP Grants Management Guide. To ensure that workers receive no less than the prevailing wage rate for similar work in each specific locality, the communities if awarded must secure the wage rates at the following website: www.wdol.gov (prior to publishing any Request for Bids (RFB).

For further information and guidance with respect to the Davis-Bacon process, please contact Juliann Sherman in our Grants Management Division (802-279-4619).

Environmental Review Process
Normally the environmental review can be conducted after there is an award. BUT if the project is on a schedule that mandates the expenditures of funds, either VCDP or Other Resources, prior to or immediately following an award, the environmental review should be conducted sooner. Often it can be done in the time period prior to the Community Development Board meeting while VCDP staff is reviewing the application.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C § 4321 et seq. ("NEPA"), and related regulations, apply to all VCDP-funded projects. An assessment is required to determine the entire project's impact on the environment. All activities involved in a project must be assessed; those funded with VCDP funds as well as those funded with other resources.

This assessment and the Department's Environmental Release of Funds must be completed before any non-general administration project funds (excluding acquisition in certain situations) are obligated or expended. For instance, this means that a construction contract(s) cannot be executed prior to completion of the environmental assessment and release, and that construction cannot be commenced prior to the release. Only expenditures for administration, management and sometimes acquisition can be incurred prior to environmental release.

The assessment involves a review of the project under several laws, regulations and other authorities which become applicable to the project through NEPA. The types of projects typically funded through the VCDP trigger a more in-depth response in certain areas which may require hiring a consultant, and may take more time to complete. Specifically, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq. ("Section 106"), and related regulations, and the Flood plain

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Management Executive Order 11988, 42 FR 26951; May 25, 1977, may impact your project budget and readiness to go forward with your project.

(a) Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Under the environmental review process, an assessment must be made as to the impact the project will have on historic resources. This assessment includes both architectural and archaeological historic resources. To determine the applicability of Section 106, please review the following questions:

- Does the project involve any structure that is 50 years old or older?

- Will there be an activity that may cause any disturbance of the ground?

- Is your site eligible for or on the National Historic Register or located within an historic district?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, please refer to Section 106 Review (doc) and Authorized Consultants (doc) for further guidance. Specifically, refer to the sample memo for obtaining input from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (DHP). It is important to submit all the information listed on the memo to ensure accurate input from the DHP and allow for appropriate budgeting for the project. The memo to the DHP and all accompanying documentation should be submitted at least 45 days prior to the application deadline.

NOTE: Hiring an authorized Historic Preservation Consultant is a grant-eligible expenditure and should be included as a line item in your program management budget in the application.

(b) Flood plain Management. Under the environmental review process, an assessment must be made as to the impact the project may have to a designated flood plain. Contact the relevant municipal clerk, regional planning commission, or the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (241-3770) to obtain a copy of the flood plain map covering your project area. If the project is located within a designated flood plain, you will be required to demonstrate that there is no practical alternative to the location of the project (See 24 CFR 55.10).

To demonstrate that there is no practical alternative, an eight step process must be completed prior to submission of an application to the VCDP for funding. The process that must be followed involves an early public notification with a fifteen calendar day comment period, evaluation of alternatives, identifying direct and indirect impacts to the flood plain, and an additional public notification of determination of "no practicable alternatives" with a seven calendar day comment period.

For further information and guidance with respect to the Environmental Review Process, please contact Grace Vinson in our Grants Management Division and review our online Program Guide.

MEMO

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
Northeast Correctional Complex
1266 - 1270 US Route 5
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
 802-748-8151

To: Working Group for the VT Libraries

From: Karen Holmes, Volunteer Services Coordinator

Date: 01/20/2023

Re: Testimony

At Northeast Correctional Complex in St Johnsbury, we have two buildings that house around 175 (+/-) individuals, who identify primarily as male. The smaller distribution of the population (60+/-) resides in Building 1. The library for this building is comprised of a set of bookshelves and is open/unmonitored circulation. The books in this building are supplied primarily through community donations. Our medium security building (building 2) has the larger distribution of the population (115 +/-) and a separate building that contains the library. This library is "staffed" by an incarcerated individual who is supervised by DOC staff. Books are checked in and out by the incarcerated population using a simple excel spreadsheet. They are allowed a maximum of 3 books out at a time and have two weeks to return them.

After receiving a recent gift of 800 new books from the VT Dept of Libraries using ARPA funds, our library is not only more current, but the books are (anecdotally) more circulated. Individuals access this space by submitting a request to DOC staff for an appointment. Browsing appointments are typically granted within a week of the request. This appointment system helps regulate the flow, which, in this setting is desired and limits disruptions to the CHSVT classes that take place in the same building. Additionally, the library inventory is posted on the tablets issued to everyone so they can request specific titles.

One of the biggest hurdles to maintaining our inventory is the return rate. Vermont's prison system is unified (we do not discern between prison, jail, county lock-up, etc.) and our population moves between facilities often and for a variety of reasons – frequently taking books with them. There is also no consistent oversight regarding what people are leaving the facility with upon final release. Because of that, we will always be fighting a dwindling inventory. In an ideal world, we would love to see our library function more like a community public library in the following ways:

- Library staff who are trained in basic library services, both as a job within the facility, and a potential vocational skill post-release.

- Software to help track overdue books (increase return rate), inventory, and loss.
- Access to interlibrary loan materials (as appropriate) to support book discussion groups and special interests is an interesting concept but may be logistically difficult.
- Updated reference books in paperback would be a nice addition. We cannot send hardcover books into the units and there is rarely time for individuals to sit in the library space and study a reference book.
- An annual (not one time) injection of new books. The most popular genres are fantasy and mystery, but there is a wide range of preferences from westerns to real adventures.

Our hope, in the ideal prison library scenario, is to find practical ways to increase the similarities to a community library. In so doing, the goal would be to shift the culture to one that values this resource and shows it through a higher circulation and return rate.

Comments on Inclusive and Accessible library Service for the Working Group on the status of Libraries in Vermont
Ruth Shattuck Bernstein

January 18, 2023

Libraries today are increasingly central to our communities' vitality. Given all the many challenges and changes of this time, the need for the very things we provide so well is increasing. We offer programs, services, and resources to often hard to reach populations. Libraries are community centers, a space where everything is ALWAYS FREE for EVERYONE; clearly one of the most equitable spaces of society. We fill the void for community togetherness everyday and at special events; we share connections to resources of all sorts; provide the most personal service you will find; and are an environmental and economical way to share resources between all community members. Perhaps most importantly; we are always here, whatever you need or whoever you are, we are here to help or chat anytime. For the community members who might not see or talk to another person all week, or feel isolated raising kids through a pandemic, or have lost a loved one, or love learning and books, or not have access to the internet, or need to save money on movie streaming, whatever else; we are always here for you!

Here at the tiny (but-tons-of-heart!) Salisbury Library, we offer 24/7 wifi, computer use, physical books, movies, games, puzzles, ukuleles, snowshoes, game cameras, seeds (very popular!), a 'Little Free Library' out front, and much more. E-books, audio books, movie and show streaming, and more are available virtually. And to access all of this we offer stepside anytime pickup, delivery (including to child-cares and residential living facilities in town), interlibrary loan, and general technology support and troubleshooting!

This summer we also partnered with a number of local agencies to really expand on our mission of providing equitable access to resources. With HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects) we were able to offer free produce to anyone! This was hugely popular and very well used by our community. When I first contacted HOPE to set this up, they were immediately enthusiastic. I see libraries as great satellite locations for service agencies to provide resources to rural communities. HOPE indicated they have been looking for ways to reach more people in our community and the partnership benefited everyone and potentially serves as a model of what a central role libraries can and should play. Another local nonprofit ended up joining us too with a FREE snack truck and wonderful company.

We offer many other events; performances and shows, an annual (hugely popular) local photo contest, programs with the school, book clubs, storytimes, StoryWalks on town trails, wild edibles and foraging walks, holiday parties, author events, and much more. Without a town library these services, programs, and resources would all be further remote and mostly inaccessible to our small, rural community, with many people living in poverty.

We are thankful for your support.

Ruth Shattuck Bernstein
Librarian
Salisbury Free Public Library
802-352-4198
https://salisburypubliclibrary.wordpress.com/
www.facebook.com/SalisburyLibrary
https://www.instagram.com/salisburyfreepubliclibrary/

Open:
Tuesdays 10-6pm
Thursdays 1-4pm
Saturdays 9am-12 noon
Step-side pickup and delivery available

PO Box 59
918 Maple St.
Salisbury, VT 05769

January 17, 2023

To the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

As a visually impaired Vermonter, many of the services most readers take for granted are not accessible to me. Shelves of books are interesting and reminiscent of times long gone when I could check out a book and read it from cover to cover. However, all is not lost. As a matter of fact, I probably read more books now than I did when I had 20/20 vision.

Through Vermont's ABLE library, I am able (We changed the name three years ago to represent Audio, Braille, Large-print, and Electronic) to participate in four book clubs and keep up on numerous topics of interest. The ABLE library with its limited staff provide talking and large-print books to print disable Vermonters statewide. On the other hand, the ABLE library should not be the sole source of accessible materials to persons with disabilities. All 185 local libraries need to step up and make sure their buildings and programs are available to all. For example, are their computers accessible to persons with physical, visual, or cognitive disabilities? Probably "yes" since the latest Microsoft Windows operating system includes numerous accessibility features that I am sure most library staff are not aware of.

In summary, with a few exceptions Vermont libraries are willing and able to physically meet their patrons needs. However, we all need to step up and ensure training is provided to library staff to recognize when a patron may be having difficulties accessing books and other programs available to their communities. Let's make it possible that all are 'able' to read.

Full disclosure: I am the current chair of the ABLE Advisory Committee and the Vermont Board of Libraries.

Tom Frank
Tom.Frank@partner.vermont.gov

Written Comments:
INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Amy Olsen, Director
Lanpher Memorial Library

April 4, 2023

In **2022**, the Trustees of the Lanpher Memorial Library updated the Collection Development policy. Among small edits, they removed the language: "Potential Problems or Challenges" and replaced it with a new policy: "Intellectual Freedom Policy and Request for Reconsideration of Materials".
The process of reviewing, changing, and updating the policy, also served as a time for the Trustees to be made aware of the issues and trends regarding book challenges, and to be reacquainted with the Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement.
It gave all of us an opportunity to imagine what it might be like if someone did come into the Library with an expression of concern and to have a plan in place if we needed it.

The Lanpher Library highlights Banned Books Week each year as a way to celebrate the freedom to read with displays throughout the building and on the Library lawn. This year, we included a "Banned Books Day" on the last Saturday of Banned Books Week. The local chapter of Amnesty International had a table, and we had games ("Match the title to the reason it's challenged or banned") and anyone wo participated got a "Freedom to Read" pencil. We also gave a way copies of "The Hate U Give" (leftover from when that title was the VHC Vermont Reads title), and had a StoryWalk® of *And Tango Makes Three,* a frequently challenged/banned title by Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell, Illus. by Henry Cole.

When I see any professional development opportunity, whether at a conference, or online workshop about book challenges, bans, and Intellectual Freedom, I try to attend. Each time, I learn something new: ways to improve our policy and procedures (Only allow a title to be challenged once in a certain amount of time) new ways to phrase things ("Expression of Concern" as a first step, rather than "Potential Challenge"), soft censorship fears, the idea that if our policy is in a really accessible place, and that if the public knows we have a policy in place for book challenges, it's less likely that someone will take the step to formally challenge materials.

Vermont Libraries value Intellectual Freedom. When I was elected Vice President of the Vermont Library Association in 2018, the VLA board had been in the middle of working on an organizational chart. Among other reasons for having a formal organizational structure, there were so many voting members of the Board that it was difficult to achieve a quorum. In the draft chart that went before the VLA membership at the 2019 Annual Meeting for a vote of approval, the chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, while still a VLA Board member, would not a voting member of the Board. Our membership spoke out against that. They (rightly), maintained that the chairperson of the committee that upholds the core value of librarianship should definitely be a voting member of the VLA Board. An amendment was made, and

ultimately, when the final organizational chart was approved by the VLA Membership in 2020, the Chair of Intellectual Freedom Committee was a voting member of the VLA Board.

In the months that followed that final vote, I think about how many times I reached out to the Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair for help in wording our new policy, or to pass along new information that I thought would be important for them to have, or attended the John Swan Intellectual Freedom lecture sponsored by the VLA Intellectual Freedom Committee. I think about the record numbers of books that are challenged and banned in the U.S. right now, and the legislation around the U.S., that if passed, will not only infringe on First Amendment Rights, but some will penalize Librarians and other Educators, and I am grateful to the Members of VLA for insisting that Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair have voting rights on the VLA Board.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Tj5WQVBmB6SQg-zP_M8uZsQQGH09TxmBY73v23zpyr0/edit#gid=1505554870

When looking at this spreadsheet, put together by PEN America, I am proud to not see Vermont listed as a state considering similar legislation. I also wonder, if there is not already legislation confirming First Amendment Rights of Intellectual Freedom, or at the very least a legislative proclamation affirming the importance of the Freedom to Read Statement by the VT Legislature, that the State of Vermont lawmakers, should consider passing something.

Sincerely,

Amy Olsen

Amy Olsen
Library Director,
Lanpher Memorial Library

Jeannette Bair, Director
Rochester Public Library

April 10, 2023

Testimony of Jeannette Bair to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Intellectual freedom is under attack at Vermont State College Libraries.

Most of us have been watching censorship in school and public libraries in some states around the country with alarm. Banning books, criminally charging librarians for circulating pornography to children, and more.
We think that we enjoy protection of intellectual freedom here in the great state of Vermont. "That's not happening here," we smugly think.   Here in Vermont individual books or authors are not being attacked and removed from libraries.
I was gobsmacked with the announcement that the state college libraries are simply removing the majority of the books from their libraries. In one fell swoop, eliminating student's access to tens of thousands of volumes now held in college libraries.
While the move to remove print books is a foolhardy attempt to save the colleges money, this is certainly a wholesale attack on intellectual freedom. There is no replacement for browsing the stacks to stumble upon the amazing book you never knew existed. Once gone, these collections can never be replaced.
The Chancellor, the board of trustees of the VSC, state legislators, and the governor all need to act to stop this attack on college libraries and the intellectual freedom of students.

The University of Vermont

Luis A. Vivanco, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Anthropology

21 April 2023

Dear Working Group on the Status of Vermont Libraries,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony about intellectual freedom. I am Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Vermont. My research and teaching focus on the cultural and political dimensions of sustainability-related social movements. This work is ethnographic, historical, artistic, and often public facing. I am very much on the humanities end of the spectrum within the social sciences, as I am deeply interested in questions of cultural meaning, values, sense-making, and the relationship between knowledge and power. This orientation has led to my active involvement and leadership in humanities spaces, including serving as Director of the UVM Humanities Center for eight years, as a current board member of Vermont Humanities, and as co-founder of the New England Humanities Consortium, a network of sixteen regional university-based humanities institutes that works to facilitate collaborations across campuses and in the public sphere.

As a tenured professor, I can take for granted two things: the special privilege of a high level of intellectual freedom to pursue consequential and at times controversial research and teaching, but also the necessity of constant vigilance against political-economic interests and agendas that seek ideological suppression and conformity, increasingly in the name of narrowly-construed—if not also cynically deployed—notions of "intellectual diversity," but also in efforts to reduce the range of those who are entitled to represent cultural dynamics and other peoples' lives in our highly polarized moment.

The work of cultural anthropology tends to be inconvenient to such agendas, and we push much harder than other fields I know in our demands for intellectual freedom. As the great 20th century anthropologist Clifford Geertz once asserted, we are "merchants of astonishment" and he declared:

> "Looking into dragons, not domesticating or abominating them, nor drowning them in vats of theory, is what anthropology has been all about. … We have, with no little success, sought to keep the world off balance; pulling out rugs, upsetting tea tables, setting off firecrackers. It has been the office of others to reassure; ours to unsettle."

These words could serve as, in contemporary parlance, a trigger warning, because the goal here is to challenge comfortable truisms and universalisms about what it means to be human in order to forge deeper appreciation of the fundamental plasticity, variability, and plurality of the human

condition. In this regard, Anthropology can be inconvenient to all kinds of political agendas, conservative *and* progressive.

I recognize that libraries would have a harder time making a similar declaration of their own, because they straddle complicated lines here. On the one hand we expect them to occupy positions of civilizational reassurance in their collections and programming. We count on them as repositories of important historical, intellectual, and cultural benchmarks foundational to American life that extend back thousands of years before this country's foundation.

But at the same time, it is clear they are also close allies in my discipline's efforts to unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions, challenge ethnocentrism, address blatant injustices, and promote cultural diversity. Librarians are deeply involved in efforts to decolonize collections and archives, and to incorporate anti-racist pedagogies into their programming. Through these practices, they play a critical role in legitimating more complicated—and disquieting—stories of that civilizational past that claims exceptional status and minimizes or outright excludes cultural others who also shaped that past.

My own career has been deeply bound up with libraries—one could even say totally dependent on them—as a habitual user of academic libraries and special collections archives, and as a participant in Vermont Humanities Speaker's Bureau and its First Wednesdays series, through which I am a regular presenter at town libraries throughout our State. And increasingly I find myself called to help defend librarians against modern-day challenges to their cultural diversity-related programming and collections. These challenges overwhelmingly target works about and by BIPOC community members and others from traditionally marginalized groups. These challenges are based on pernicious and contradictory ideologies that invoke rhetorical claims of defending "intellectual freedom" as they radically reduce the range of those who are deemed eligible—authors, creators, readers, and other interested parties—to actually exercise that freedom.

In higher education we see these attacks increasingly couched within broader efforts to delegitimate and eliminate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice initiatives and offices. In numerous states, we are seeing Orwellian proposals emerge under the banner of "Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity" that require campuswide surveys to ensure "competing ideas and perspectives" are represented in classrooms. I chuckle at the very basic misunderstanding of the yawning epistemological gaps that exist in universities and colleges that I navigate all the time, not to mention how, as extremely conservative institutions, universities and colleges perpetuate structures of power and privilege. But that, of course, is not their point. It is, quite simply, to insert narrow ideological and political agendas into classrooms.

We also are seeing the chilling effects of a form of academic vigilantism, in which students are empowered and encouraged to make audio recordings of professors' lectures without permission to ensure "fair and balanced" coverage. This practice undermines not only the intellectual property rights of faculty, but also their discretion to shape and control the academic environment where one of our central goals is often to deliberately cultivate the very practices of respectful and compassionate discourse on which intellectual freedom, not to mention our country's democratic aspirations, greatly depend.

Of course, these are matters of tremendous consequence to librarians as well, as their collection and archiving practices are—or soon will—come under increased scrutiny from politicians and their allies seeking ways to eliminate freedom of thought in the name of "intellectual diversity." I would simply say that librarians have natural allies in my discipline where—trigger warning!— we're ready, and well-trained, to upset tea tables and set off firecrackers.

But I did also say that anthropologists can be inconvenient to other agendas that limit intellectual freedom. An area of concern for me emerges from within the very communities fighting for a more inclusive and just society, often expressed through the practice of "calling out," or public shaming for words or behaviors deemed unacceptable or harmful in the midst of discomforting conversations about privilege, race, identity, and other sensitive matters of culture and politics. If you've ever been called out you will know it has an alienating effect, but this is more than just a form of communication: embedded in it are often essentialisms and problematic purities about who is entitled to talk about or represent the social worlds and experiences of others. As a middle-class American male, descendant of a Chilean immigrant, what right do I have to represent the lives of rural Zapotec Indians from southern Mexico?—something I've been called out on. Calling out can be justified to challenge provocateurs and those who hold the levers of political power, but when divorced from context and complexity, and the often rich collaborations and compassionate relationships, encompassed in cultural research and work, they narrow the kinds of explorations that are possible. They make people hesitant to speak up, ask questions, test their learning. "Calling in," as the great social justice activist Loretta Ross calls the alternative, is not about policing and weaponizing suffering, but about bringing people in to create space for listening and dialogue across differences. This, of course, is another place where libraries straddle a difficult line, no less challenging given the political polarization affecting our country. But libraries, in their best form, have always been spaces for calling in, and I hope they remain that way.

In conclusion I'd like to share with you a summary of how I think about culture after 30 years of thinking, research, writing, and teaching about it, and it is this: Across the world, different societies have variable levels of tolerance for change and ideas about what makes them thrive. These ideas are influenced by many factors, involving their belief systems, how they organize social relationships, how their institutions work, among others. When I think about it, the notion many of us have about what makes our culture thrive is the freedom we have as individuals and as members of social groups to explore worlds, lives, experiences, and ideas that include our individuality but also transcend it, a freedom that libraries play a central role in protecting. I can tell you that my own ability to set off firecrackers completely depends on it.

Thank you.

Niharika Kayal
Rochester, Vermont resident

April 5, 2023

To State Librarian Catherine Delneo,

I am writing to provide testimony on the subject of removing physical books from college libraries. There are of course numerous points to consider; and, I would like to comment on the point that there is value in stocking physical books at libraries in ways that an online-only catalog lacks.

Moving to a digital-only space reduces the ability for visitors to browse content. When I visit a library, I will often look through the shelves, pick up a few books, and look through their pages and maybe read them while at the library or maybe check some of them out. This is especially key in the context of image-heavy books--art books, for example. If I only have a digital library, I have to check out each book I am interested in to even read or view a few pages. This reduces the accessibility of content.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Niharika Kayal

Randal Smathers, Director
Rutland Free Library

April 13, 2023

Comments for Working Group on Intellectual Freedom

Thank you for your work, and for the opportunity to address you.

I'm going to discuss book challenges, as I suspect most of your commenters will.

There are well-established best practices to deal with book challenges: Have a written collection development policy, and a procedure with a form that asks for specific input (i.e. page number, what passages are of concern and why, respond quickly & respectfully, don't have the staff member responsible for choosing the book be the first point of contact, etc., etc.). Libraries that don't have these should run, not walk, to get these in place.

Two years ago I would have presented these as my comment. I find they are not sufficient in 2023, due to libraries being pulled into the culture wars.

The Intellectual Freedom Committee of the VLA has an emergency email contact in case of problem challenges. It was used once in 2022, to deal with a library board publicly undercutting its own staff for scheduling Drag Queen Story Hour. The possibility that our boards are not among the "good guys" is a distressing reality, and in the case in question, led to one of the two staff members quitting, followed by multiple threats of legal actions for speaking in public meetings, newspapers reporting on the issue, or in the case of the IFC, saying "there was a challenge" in a newsletter.

These are not theoretical issues. They are rare in Vermont, but it would be naïve to think we are somehow immune to nationwide tactics, which include online form letters, obstructing access to buildings, harassment of staff, disrupting library business including board meetings, and even threats of violence.

So here's a first draft of what I think we need in Rutland … which might inform other libraries moving forward:

1) Yes, have a collection development policy that says the librarian is in charge of the collection (modified to fit each library of course). Ditto assigning agency to the professional staff for programs.

2) Also have a policy that says *the board will support the librarian as long as they have acted professionally* in addressing any complaints, and that the board's oversight role is not adjudicating content but the librarian's response to a challenge to that content.

Anything else risks having library boards becoming the next battleground (see school boards) for control of materials. Library trustees don't get much vetting, and a trustee seeking to censor materials could cause havoc to an institution that is operating on the margins, as many libraries in the state are.

The state required me to take a free, 20-minute online course on not serving alcohol to minors before we could have a champagne toast for our newly-renovated meeting room. Can / should there be a similar training required before seating a library trustee?

3) Challenge procedures need to have a mechanism built in for duplicate challenges, to address copy/paste complaints from the internet, and to specify the challenger must be an active cardholder of the affected library.

4) VTLIB needs to put its weight behind new best practices once they've been identified. Is there any way for the state to grade libraries in terms of doing things correctly? Class A / B / C as a way to recognize & encourage professionalism?

There is still time to get out in front of these concerns, but we should not wait for a crisis to address them.

_____

Finally, and on a completely separate tack, is the issue of the freedom to share resources online.

There's an excellent (paywalled) article on The Atlantic website entitled "The Ruling that Threatens the Future of Libraries," by Adam Serwer. In it he argues that the threat isn't the specific decision: Whether The Internet Archive broke the law by briefly creating an online library; rather the concern is that the judge ruled that sharing copyrighted materials online is illegal in pretty much all cases. Affirmation of this decision would force us to fit our old role – book depository – and not adopt new, online ones to meet patron demand.

Cost also threatens libraries.

It would behoove VTLIB to have a chat w/ the attorney general about a class-action lawsuit against the major publishing houses for differential library pricing. All the biggest publishers – within months of each other -- arbitrarily raised prices and put restrictions specifically targeting libraries' electronic borrowing. When an entire industry acted in concert, they used to call that collusion or price-fixing. "Libraries" as independent organizations are too diffuse to change these predatory financial practices, but concerted pressure from a collection of state AGs might have an effect – and get some revenue for the general fund from a settlement.

Thanks,

Randal Smathers, BA, MA, MLIS

Director, Rutland Free Library

Chair, Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Vermont Library Association

Stephanie Sherman
Middlebury High School Librarian

April 17, 2023

I am the School Librarian at Middlebury High School and the Advocacy Co-Chair for the Vermont School Library Association (VSLA). Last school year (2021-2022), the VSLA Advocacy and Intellectual Freedom committees worked with the Vermont School Board Association (VSBA) to develop an updated model Selection of Library Materials Policy which you can read here:
https://www.vtvsba.org/_files/ugd/b44bfd_08b5bcd1684c41eea1c23f7eb6126302.pdf
VSBA also agreed to move the Selection of Library Materials policy from the "To be Considered" category to the "Recommended" category. However, we feel the policy belongs in the "Required" category, which we understand must refer to legislation. VSBA also provides model *policies*, not model *procedures*. We asked that the Model policy state that library collection, selection and reconsideration procedures adhere to the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights and intellectual freedom documents. VSBA did not agree to include this and it was suggested that Vermont libraries formally adopt a statement that Vermont libraries are guided by the American Library Association.

I would like to see Vermont legislation that includes language, such as the following, enacted to protect our students' access to information and their right to read.

All libraries in Vermont including public, school, academic, and special libraries, will have a library collection development policy that includes selection of materials and reconsideration of materials procedures. These policies and procedures will adhere to the American Library Association intellectual freedom documents, including the Library Bill of Rights.

Stephanie Sherman, MLS, MAT (she/her)
Middlebury High School Librarian
Library/Learning Center
73 Charles Ave., Middlebury, VT 05753
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Testimony to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont on Intellectual Freedom
T. Elijah Hawkes
ElijahHawkes.com
April 21, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Working Group at this special meeting focused on Intellectual Freedom. My testimony concerns "the importance of diverse collections in libraries" and "impacts to the community – and to particular groups of people within the community – when library collections are limited."

More specifically, I will speak to how these topics relate to the work of educators in our public schools. As noted in the American Library Association's press release' of March 22nd, it is in our "school libraries, classroom libraries or school curricula" where a majority of recent book challenges have found their targets.

I've worked in public schools for the majority of my career, first as a teacher, then as a principal of New York City's James Baldwin School, and more recently as principal for 10 years at Randolph Union Middle/High School in Vermont, the state where I was born and raised. After more than two decades as a school-based practitioner, I'm now in my second year as Director of Leadership Programs at the Upper Valley Educators Institute (UVEI). UVEI is a small graduate school of education that offers certification programs for people seeking teacher and administrator licenses in Vermont and New Hampshire.

My work is about preparing people to become school leaders, and about how those school leaders support the professional learning of educators at their schools.

We all want our schools to improve, and this involves the ongoing learning of educators. Let us consider how book bans might impact the learning - of educators.

Earlier this year, I taught a class to the principal candidates at UVEI. I gave them choices of texts to read and discuss in small groups, similar to the work I used to do as a principal working with the school faculty.

One text was an essay written by a young person with disabilities, about his experience in elementary, middle and high school. The future school leaders were asked to reflect on how the story connects to their own experiences as students or to students and schools they have known. It is useful for educators - many of whom didn't struggle in school as students - to read the perspectives of those who have.

A second text was "Indian Camp," by Ernest Hemingway, a story about a divided society in which a white doctor's son watches a Native American child be born into the harshest poverty. I asked the educators to imagine both children attend their school - the white doctor's son and the native american child - and I ask them to consider what our society needs each

child to gain from their schooling. Stories like these can help us see our students and society in new ways.

A third text is by Audre Lorde called "Every Traveler Has One Vermont Poem."   In this poem a Vermont boy on a tractor shouts a racial slur at the Black woman passing on the road. A second boy on the tractor watches. I tell the future school leaders that, in their school faculty, there are probably adults who have, at some point in their lives, used a racial slur. There are probably people on their staff who have been bystanders and heard such slurs. There are probably people who have been the target of slurs - maybe racial slurs, maybe slurs that dehumanize other groups. I ask school leaders to consider the diverse backgrounds of their colleagues. I ask, how will you do work with a faculty like this when you are centering matters of equity and democracy in your schools.

Each of these texts - like countless others - offers opportunities for learning, reflection and growth. They raise questions about race, gender, disability, and power. These are matters that come up in the school curriculum. These are matters that come up in our communities.

Whether it's an investigation into a harassment allegation or teaching classes about our nation's past and present - such topics are part of our work, and educators must engage in professional learning and reflection to do that work well. The intellectual freedom to access a rich and varied world of ideas is essential to an educator's learning and to educator's work with students.

Of the authors I mentioned, which of them is most likely to be the target of a book ban request? Audre Lorde identifies as a mother, a Black woman, a poet, a lesbian. Her poetry could be targeted.

The organization that published the essay by the young person with a learning disability also frequently publishes the voices of LGBTQ youth and BIPOC youth. Their resources could be targeted.

Hemingway's stories could be too. In the same anthology where I find "Indian Camp," Hemingway has a story called "The Sea Change," about a woman who tells a man she's leaving him to be with a woman. He has a story called "A Simple Enquiry" about a man propositioning a younger man in a remote military outpost in the alps. He has a story called "Hills Like White Elephants" in which a man and woman discuss abortion.

As Heather McGhee writes in her book, *The Sum of Us*, when a community drains their public pool to limit the access of some people, you end up draining the pool for all. What's true of the segregation or repression of races is true of the segregation or repression stories: some are impacted more gravely, and yet no demographic goes unharmed: the civic and intellectual freedoms of all are eroded.

As I looked to my newsfeed earlier this week, I saw on Monday morning reports about a so-called "[Teen Takeover](#)" of downtown Chicago. According to Fox News and other outlets, there were gunshots, arrests, fights and the destruction of storefronts and cars. Video shows scores of children running about in the streets, fighting each other with fists, climbing on top of vehicles. One racist commentator - with a following of close to 100,000 - called the mostly Black and brown teenagers "human animals." These are middle school and high school students.

Discussing and confronting racist discourse about Black youth is the work of educators. Likewise is it the work of educators to understand the energy and aggression of youth and work to channel it in productive and not destructive directions. Were I in schools this week, I would remind my colleagues that James Baldwin has something to teach us about the energy of youth and the health of our cities and nation.

In his essay, "A Talk To Teachers," he writes of the needs and potential of Black children, and what he says of these children is relevant to others.

"If America is going to become a nation," Baldwin writes, our country must "find a way" to use "the tremendous potential and tremendous energy" of our youth. He then warns that "if this country does not find a way to use that energy, it will be destroyed by that energy." Baldwin is an artist who tells important truths. His books, too, have been banned before. They may be targets again. I don't know what I'd be, myself, without James Baldwin's work as part of my learning as an educator, man, person, US citizen.

Educators need access to the truths of poets and writers of all genres who shine light on who we are as people, as a nation. Agree or disagree with an author, the intellectual freedom to wrestle with their vision and consider their story is essential to the learning and growth of educators, which is essential to our capacity to support the learning of students in a pluralistic democracy.

I have two recommendations for this working group and other entities to consider:

First, Vermont has [proficiency based graduation requirements](#), which align expectations K-12, which require learning from and about a diverse array of people and perspectives. School and district leaders, as well as librarians and teachers, should know that these expectations are in place. For instance:

- One of our proficiency-based graduation requirements in social studies, grade five, expects students to "Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues."
- Our proficiency-based graduation requirements in English Language arts require students to "Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible;

and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task."

In addition to reminding schools of what the state already expects schools to be doing, we can prepare educators, school boards, librarians with strategies for hearing complaints or concerns from members of the community about what we teach and what is in our book collections. In today's polarized society, there are worse and better ways to respond to such concerns or complaints.

The American Library Association has a lot of useful resources on their website that could be shared across the VT education community - with the professional associations of school boards, superintendents, and principles, as well as school librarians and others.

ALA general preparedness tips:
https://www.ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship#challenge-preparedness

How to respond to concerns:
https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/respond

Prepare school boards who might receive book ban requests ALA resources:
https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/hearing

Resources to help librarians and admin respond to questions about their collections from parents, others: https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/youthresourcesFAQ

So, in summary, my two recommendations are: support educators in doing what is already expected of them when it comes to valuing a diversity of perspectives in our libraries and other contexts for learning; second, help schools and libraries thoughtfully prepare for concerns that may arise, using the solid resources from the ALA and other sources.

Written Comments:
LIBRARY STRUCTURES

Abigail Adams
Director, Platt Memorial Library, Shoreham

May 8, 2023

Dear Working Group:

One of the structures in place in our community is a reciprocal borrowing agreement between Platt Memorial and Orwell Free Libraries. This allows residents of Orwell to sign up for cards at the Platt Library and vice versa. It has been signed by both boards and is a nice model of resource-sharing that does not require shared funding.

I have included a write up of the various partnerships we have undertaken prior to COVID. Post-COVID, some of these projects have not yet started up again.

Current and Past Collaborations

1. Reciprocal borrower agreement
2. Alternating days open
3. Marika McCoola
4. Speaker's Bureau
5. Book Discussion set sharing
6. Professional Mentoring (which has evolved into a collaborative professional relationship)

Opens the door for lots of other collaborations-- Joint programs, collections sharing, collaborative and complementary planning.
Promotes cooperative spirit blah blah blah and extends collaborative opportunities by increasing awareness of what is available

Goal: allows two libraries to provide more full-time services for two communities, while maintaining current staffing and funding level

Our communities' long history of sharing the 'burden' of bettering our local quality of life...

Over the past 2 years the Orwell Free Library and Platt Memorial Library in Shoreham have worked to broaden and deepen the relationship between the two institutions. Our communities have historically been very close-- many families go back and forth between our towns, for business and pleasure. This work has been spearheaded by Kate Hunter and Abby

Adams, the librarians in charge of the respective libraries. During Kate's work towards certification, Abby acted as a professional mentor. As Kate has moved towards building the program at Orwell Free Library, the relationship between the librarians evolved into collaborations of equal counterparts.

Where the relationship between the two organizations will go in the future is yet to be seen, but we have had many successes in the past two years to highlight.

Residents of Orwell and Shoreham can get library cards at both institutions, almost doubling the number of titles available locally. Though this has been an unofficial policy for many years, it is now an official agreement between the two library boards.

By working together, we are able to share the cost of bringing best-selling authors and illustrators to our region like young adult author Marika McCoola who spoke at the Platt Memorial Library in between her workshop at the Orwell Free Library and her talk at the Bixby Library in Vergennes. Our Keynote Speaker's Series for 2017 is also a great example of high-quality speakers and authors coming to the 22A corridor, with the help of Vermont Humanities Council.

Sharing advertising locations like bulletin boards, social media outlets and print materials extend event reach and potential audience.

Book discussion sets and events shared between our communities allow us to submit strong applications to the Vermont Humanities Council and receive more copies of the Vermont Reads book(s) than possible as a stand-alone institution. Taking turns applying for the yearly grant allows more staff time to be dedicated elsewhere.

These and other less formal collaborations happen often between OFL and PML. Providing full-time services for our rural communities, while maintaining current staffing and funding is the goal. We look forward to many more community-oriented collaborations in the future.

Thank you,

Abigail Adams
Library Director, Platt Memorial Library
Shoreham

Almy Landauer
Adult Services Specialist
South Burlington Public Library

May 8, 2023

To the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

Please accept the following testimony for your May 26th meeting.

Members of the public across the State of Vermont would greatly benefit from a state-wide or regional structure which gives them access to all Vermont libraries with minimal barriers. For decades, librarians have been asking the Vermont Department of Libraries to establish a state-wide library card system. Indeed, the genesis of Homecard in Chittenden County was a result of this void. Patrons love it.

Especially in our many small towns, but truly almost everywhere in Vermont, library staff are often thwarted in providing all the services, robust resources, and hours their residents need due to their limited local funding. Think of the patron who needs materials in languages other than English and has nothing to browse locally, the patron who uses public transportation and their city/town library is not on a route, the patron who works non-traditional hours and cannot get to their local library during its open hours, the patron who needs home delivery and their nearest library cannot provide it. A regional or stare library card would empower Vermonters in using the libraries located close to where they work and where they live, or easily and without cost use a library that has a collection they need.

We have some structures in place that help broaden the resources and accessibility for patrons, such as Inter-Library loan and in the Chittenden County area, Homecard. These are limited in their reach and scope. I recently had a conversation with a patron who wanted to use our Library here in South Burlington because we offer Mango Languages as a digital resource and her home library does not. Due to the limits of the Homecard system, she could not do so.

Shifting to a regional or statewide library card system must be accompanied by state financial support for libraries to offset lost revenue for the nonresident fees that some libraries charge, and for the increase use of resources by new patrons. Inter-Library Loan and the courier system that supports it will still be a critical service and must continue to be supported by the Vermont Department of Libraries.

When people move to Vermont from just about any other state, they are often shocked that there is no county or regional or statewide library card. We are woefully out of step with modern library services in this regard. For a rural state where many people commute long

distances, a regional or state wide system makes sense. For Vermont it would mean a remarkable increase in access to critical library services.

Almy Landauer
She/Her
Adult Services Specialist
South Burlington Public Library
180 Market St.
South Burlington, VT 05403
802-846-4140 x5535

**Barbara Ball
Director, Windsor Public Library**

May 4, 2023

Hello Working Group,

In Windsor, we have a very supportive community and a decently funded library. (I won't say wonderfully funded since we can't offer any staff benefits and we spend a ton of time fundraising as the town covers 2/3's of our budget.

We appreciate VTLib and all the trainings and connections you all offer. VTLib was such a comfort during the early days of the pandemic too, with then State Librarian Jason Broughton offering a voice of reassurance and direction with everything going on.

Pooling of Resources....
The courier service is a huge help for ILL. It is frustrating that all Vermont libraries don't participate.

Could there be a way for VT incorporated libraries to join forces in offering benefits? Or under VTLib's umbrella get a better deal on being able to offer benefits?

Technology - Josh Muse is sometimes very helpful answering an occasional tech question on the listserv. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was an actual tech person at VTLib who could provide support? Maybe not in-person, but phone consultation could be totally helpful. For those of us in smaller libraries without a tech department, it would be wonderful to have someone to ask questions of, etc....

I'm involved in VLA. It's such an important association, but it feels hard to get anything done when the years go by quickly and positions transition. I think of my own library's board of trustees -- all volunteers, but in my paid role, I can support them and often provide some paid grunt work that helps them move forward more easily with their goals. I I wonder if that could be a possibility for VLA. Maybe one paid worker who could provide continuity, support, organization?

I lived in California for a while where -- I think -- libraries were organized on a county system.Maybe that system offered more funding and support, but perhaps, too, less local ownership and love?

Thank you so much for all your work this past year.
Barbara

--
Barbara Ball, MLIS,
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Charles Dabritz, Vermont School Library Association

May 16, 2023

The Vermont School Library Association offers the following comments to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries's May 2023 meeting on Library Structures and Organizations in Vermont.

The Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) is the professional organization for Vermont School Librarians. Its members include current and retired school librarians, as well as affiliated individuals who support Vermont school libraries. Current membership is around 200. The VSLA is a state affiliate of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). Our members pay yearly dues of $15-$35 on a sliding scale based on their professional salary. Often school librarians are the only professionals in that role in their schools or even their districts. VSLA is critical for mentoring and supporting school librarians in all aspects of their work. The yearly dues support our advocacy, leadership and professional development efforts for Vermont school librarians. The VSLA supports members in a number of ways, these include, but are not limited to:

- Advocating for school libraries with the Agency of Education
- Providing mentors for newly hired school librarians.
- Providing professional development and conferences for teacher librarians
- Supporting members around issues of intellectual freedom, including book challenges
- Advocating for and supporting members facing elimination of library positions
- Advocating for library related issues on a national level
- Connecting and working in partnership with other state education advocacy groups such as VITA-Learn and Vermont Humanities Council.
- Connecting and supporting Vermont school librarians via a robust listserv

What is going well?
Despite the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic upon public education, the VSLA has had several important successes the past few academic school years.
- Recognizing the unique role that school librarians play in each school, and the lack of a formal program to support new librarians in our state, the Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) and Vermont NEA applied for and received a three year $157,00.00 Great Public Schools Grant funded by the NEA (2020-2023). The "Mentoring School Librarians Matters'' grant was awarded to develop a statewide network of trained school librarian mentors who would be available to support new librarians hired in Vermont schools, preK-12. Over the past three years 46 experienced librarians have been trained as mentors and 67 novice school librarians have been mentored through their first year. In March of 2023, VSLA and VTNEA hosted Dr. Christopher Johnson, a Senior Grant Specialist from the National Office of NEA. Dr. Johnson recognized the "Mentoring Matters" grant as exemplary, the highest honors possible for awardees. With the creation of a new Mentoring Coordinator position the VSLA plans to

sustain the work of this grant and offer formal mentoring as part of our statewide advocacy work.

- The VSLA worked in partnership with the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) to update model school board policy around materials selection and move the updated policy from a policy to consider to a recommended policy. This collaborative effort took several years to complete, ending with formal adoption of Model Policy D22 in May of 2022. The new policy states that it exists, "…to ensure that the District provides access to a diverse library collection, that supports students in the curriculum, their personal research, and recreational reading, and that sustains students' First Amendment Rights to access information and to read freely."[1]
- Successful partnerships between the VSLA and the Vermont Humanities Council have brought some of the biggest names in YA literature to our state to meet with and talk to our students both in person and virtually. Visiting authors since 2018 have included: John Lewis, Angie Thomas, Sarah Henstra, Andrew Aydin, and Jason Reynolds. Most of these events involved the VSLA working to empower small groups of students who interviewed the visiting authors.
- Continued partnerships with our public library colleagues in the Vermont Library Association. Including hosting a joint, in person, Vermont Library Conference in April, 2023.

What are your organization's pinch points?

Some challenges facing the Vermont school library community include:

- While the requirement for librarians in schools is included in the state Educational Quality Standards, there have been times when these requirements are not met by local school districts - meaning that there is either no certified school librarian available or inadequate staffing.
- Local and state funding for schools has had significant staffing impacts. From 2007-08 to 2018-19 (the most recent AOE data available), school library support staff FTE statewide decreased from 136 to 71, a decrease of ~47%. Our school librarians are being asked to do more work with less support than in the past.
- Access to school library materials and staffing is not equal across the state. There are great discrepancies in VSLA member salaries and library budgets. A recent survey of VSLA members found, "On average, our respondents from small, rural, and/or economically disadvantaged schools report making less money, working with smaller library budgets, having more assigned duties outside the library, having a less flexible library schedule, living with lower household incomes, and being more likely to have more than one job."[2]
- Vermont school libraries are also not immune to the pressures facing public education nationally. As it has become politically advantageous to attack libraries, we have seen a rise in informal book challenges in Vermont schools, and anticipate this continuing in the future.

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[1] VSBA Model Policy Manual https://www.vtvsba.org/copy-of-model-policy-manual
[2] VSLA Identity and Professional Values Audit: Executive Summary
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iXnswsEUQfHAZjaNlIxj5D-2kMwuCJO0/view?usp=sharing

- The demographics of Vermont school librarians reflect those of the state as a whole. We recognize a need to recruit and support a more diverse teacher workforce.

What do you see on the horizon for your organization in the next 10 years?
- The VSLA continues to advocate for the statewide adoption of our National AASL Standards for Learners. We are currently working with the AoE on the steps for formal adoption.
- With large numbers of teacher turnover we foresee a continued importance of providing experienced mentorship to new librarians.
- As technology continues to drive changes in both education and our society at large, the need for Information literacy will become increasingly important. This need will begin at the earliest levels of education as we strive to graduate informationally literate students who know how to navigate a world increasingly filled with AI and human generated disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation. We believe that this can best be accomplished by embedding information literacy within all parts of our K-12 system and having our school librarians work in partnership with other K-12 educators. VSLA hopes to be at the forefront of state initiatives to address these needs.
- An increase in challenges to our student's intellectual freedom via book challenges and as a result an increase in the organizational support we provide to members around the state.
- Providing more support for members around advocating for staffing positions, adequate budgets, and library resources.
- A continued emphasis on working together to support the success of Vermont students.
- An investment in transforming school libraries in ways that enhance social connections and public space design to counterbalance the epidemic of loneliness and isolation facing our youth.

What improvements in statewide structures would help the libraries and library staff your organization supports? (Please note that this question is *not* limited to asks of the Department!)
- Increased communication/cooperation between AoE and DoL to support school librarians better. This could be achieved with:
  - The restoration of a School Library Media Consultant position (removed in 2003), or a new position created within the AoE that can lead and support library media educational initiatives including information literacy.
- Clear guidelines and consequences from AoE on what happens if a school district is not following the EQS staffing levels for school libraries.
- It would be great if the state took a larger role in supporting teacher mentoring by creating and providing training for mentors across academic disciplines - keeping in mind that some things are universal while other needs are unique to each discipline. This is a partnership that the VSLA would welcome.
- Clear ways for Vermont school librarians to support and give input on DoL initiatives that impact schools, such as Vermont Online Library resources.

- Updates and support from DoL around how to access, use, and benefit from DoL initiatives, such as the MHEC program, Vermont Online Library, movie licensing and other shared resources for schools. This can impact our new librarians and other new school staff who have access to these programs and discounts but may not know how to access them.

Charles Dabritz
VSLA President

August 15, 2023

As director of the Quechee/Wilder Libraries in the town of Hartford,
I, along with trustees, have been through many fraught budget
presentations before ever-changing Selectboards and town managers
(which, unfortunately rarely include library users). The complexity is
in no small measure due to the fact that Hartford has four libraries
for a population of 10,000, and those are a mix of one municipal and
three incorporated entities, a distinction that is incompletely
understood, if it is understood at all, by municipal office-holders
and residents alike. Sadly, but perhaps inevitably, the libraries are
somewhat pitted against each other for funds even though for the past
several years, there has been a single card library system in town and
all four belong to VOKAL and the area One Card library system.

The budgetary piece is without question the most frustrating part of
my work and reached a nadir last year when the Selectboard removed
funding for the incorporated libraries from the budget and placed it
on the warning for town meeting as an individual ballot item without
even explaining that the proposed appropriations were for normal
operating expenses. Voters overwhelmingly approved the funding after
our time and energy-consuming campaign, but the Selectboard's actions
conveyed to many that it did not regard library funding as an
essential service but an optional one at voters' discretion.

Particularly when funding is locally based and competitive, losing an
individual library's distinct character and identity to larger
entities that share resources broadly is a deep worry — because like
it or not, statistics provide important data points for garnering
funds and support.

 Here in the Upper Valley, residents have a wealth of choices of
places to go for programs as well as for library materials. As we all
struggle to provide the multiple formats people now want materials to
be available in, we also try to emphasize maintaining thoughtfully
curated choices on the shelves and encourage patrons to browse rather
than relying solely on what's trending or recommended to them by third
parties. We are happy to be a net lender, but it must be said that
having recent books in-house rather than borrowed for weeks at a time
by another library is essential to our overall project. E-books have
their own set of issues well-addressed by others in the Collections

section.

The comments from Lawrence Webster are particularly intriguing, as he suggests New York libraries have managed to retain local identities within impressive systems. Some of my concerns may be exaggerated, but they are real. Much of my career satisfaction has been in building the collections, creating distinctive programming and attracting a strong and diverse immediate community. What I am most interested in now is reconciling the imperative to share with the equally compelling need to maintain our individual identity.

An important note of concurrence: (1) the request for group purchase options for library benefits, especially for health insurance

Finally, as much as I cherish the individual character of our libraries, I value what various larger entities have long meant to the strength and quality of that character. Particularly deep gratitude to the Vermont Humanities Council, the Vermont Department of Libraries, GMLC, and the Vermont Arts Council.

Thank you to all for this Working Group.

Kate

Kate Schaal
Director,
Quechee/Wilder Libraries

TO: Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

FROM: Katie Buckley, Director, Federal Funding Assistance Program

DATE: May 26, 2023

RE: Library Structures and Organizations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for the "Library Structures and Organizations" Working Group meeting on May 26, 2023. Below you will find general information about the Vermont League of Cities and Towns as an organization. Comments regarding VLCT's relationship to public libraries in Vermont are from the perspective of my role as the Director of the Federal Funding Assistance Program, not the broader organization. If questions arise during my testimony that I am unable to answer, I can point you to others on the VLCT team who can. If questions arise during future Working Group meetings that you think VLCT might be helpful in answering, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Who makes up your membership?

Full membership: All 247 organized Vermont cities and towns are eligible for full municipal membership. This membership allows voting privileges and input on policy development and adoption, as well as access to all the League's services.

Associate Membership: Available to Vermont villages, counties, housing authorities, solid waste districts, fire districts, regional planning agencies, communications union districts, and other political subdivisions of the State of Vermont. Associate members are entitled to the same services provided to full members except voting privileges at our annual meeting.

Partner Membership: Available to businesses and non-profit organizations. This membership is part of our Business Alliance Program and replaces Contributing Membership, inheriting all of its former benefits while adding many new benefits, including access to our sponsorship programs.

What is your organization's role?

VLCT is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that was founded in 1967 with the **mission of serving and strengthening Vermont local government**. It is owned by its member municipal governments. A thirteen-member Board of Directors is elected to represent the general membership and govern the organization. Board members must serve as a selectperson, mayor, manager, or clerk in a member municipality. All VLCT member officials are welcome to attend board meetings. An executive director, appointed by the board, manages the league's day-to-day operations in assisting members.

VLCT provides a range of support, services and assistance such as:
- Educational workshops and consulting advice for municipal officials so that they can deliver excellent service to their residents
- Support for legislation that strengthens local government
- Comprehensive insurance coverage for municipalities
- A Municipal Assistance Center for consultation on a wide range of municipal issues

VLCT has contractual arrangements in place with its sister organizations – the VLCT Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF) and the VLCT Employment Resource and Benefits Trust (VERB).   PACIF provides property, casualty, and workers compensation insurance to 354 municipalities in Vermont. VERB provides unemployment insurance services to 210 municipalities in Vermont.

VLCT's Member Guide helps members understand all the benefits available to them as members.

VLCT posts a short annual report for 2021 for the organization on its website.

What is the cost structure for membership?

As a member organization, VLCT charges dues for membership. Full members are charged a flat fee plus a cost per capita. For example, VLCT dues in FY23 for a town of 2,500 people would be $4,245. Associate members pay a flat fee (different than the full members' flat fee); for FY23 it is $997.50. Partnership members' "dues" are tiered, depending upon which level of benefit a partner organization wants to have.

What support or service does your organization provide to members/libraries/the Vermont public?

VLCT only provides support and services ("Programs") to its members (full and associate memberships); it does not serve the private sector (non-profit or for-profit) nor the Vermont public. Since municipalities are full members, municipal libraries are eligible to use VLCT's services which range from education and trainings to insurance coverage, human resources issues, advocacy in the Vermont legislature, to legal inquiries, and much more. More information and details about VLCT's "Programs" can be found on our website.

What is going well with regard to your support for libraries?

VLCT received funding through the State of Vermont to assist Vermont's municipalities accept, administer, and expend $200M+ in local ARPA funds as well as access the trillions of dollars through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law") and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). This funding has allowed VLCT to broaden the scope of its traditional support and services to municipalities to help them advance local initiatives, most of which are capital projects. It stood up the Federal Funding Assistance Program (FFA) and hired staff with expertise in working with and for municipalities and carrying out local projects with complex capital stacks involving multiple federal programs.

FFA assists all VLCT's full members, **which includes municipal libraries**. One of the most valuable services offered is *Consults on Call*. This allows members to self-book a 30-minute appointment with FFA staff to discuss their local project or initiative. Whether their project is just in the idea phase, has started to gain momentum, has stalled completely or the member just needs help prioritizing projects before getting started, the *Consults on Call* service can provide useful information, connections to resources, funding recommendations, suggested action steps, etc. FFA staff are seeing a growing awareness to this service with municipalities asking about library improvement projects.

What are some pinch points with regard to your support for libraries?

VLCT's Federal Funding Assistance Program staff assist municipalities throughout Vermont on capital projects, **libraries** among them. We work with local officials to strengthen their project and help them access the massive amount of grant funding that will be available to implement it. For a library project, the first and most important question we ask is "who owns the building?" Most often the answers are "we are not sure" or "I *think* we do?" (posed as a question, not a statement). Clarity of ownership is critical relative to the funding sources needed to advance a development project. Given the large amount of grant funding that is and will be available for library capital projects, both through the VT Department of Libraries and other agencies, resolving issues around ownership, authority, responsibility, and accountability with crystal clarity is essential for success. This can only be done through strong collaboration and a sense of partnership between legislative bodies and library trustees that includes effective communication, coordination, and documentation. Handshake or anecdotal agreements need to cease and be replaced by written and recorded agreements. If libraries could worry less about the real estate they occupy, it would allow them to focus on their purpose which is to serve the public.

VLCT welcomes the opportunity to create a suite of specific resources to help resolve library real estate issues and advance library capital projects but lacks the staff capacity needed to dedicate themselves to this niche of municipal government.

What do you see on the horizon for your organization in the next 10 years?

In 2021, VLCT hired a new, dynamic Executive Director, Ted Brady. Ted is the former Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, State Director for VT and NH for USDA, and longtime staff member of Senator Patrick Leahy. He brings a fresh, different perspective to VLCT. Upon his arrival, he and his leadership team quickly created a bold 5-year strategic plan (summary found HERE). Its four cornerstone goals are:

1. Grow a sustainable and relevant member-focused organization
2. Strengthen the capacity of local government
3. Develop and attract outstanding talent to local government
4. Champion inclusive and resilient communities

Implementation of the strategic plan brings changes to VLCT to help municipalities govern in the 21st century. Among them is building and growing partnerships with organizations that support local government to broaden the reach and impact of VLCT's work. This can be seen through VLCT's strengthened relationships and collaboration with Vermont's eleven regional planning commissions, twelve regional development corporations, State agencies (ANR, AOA, AOT, BGS, DHCD, PSD/VCBB, etc.) and statewide entities (REDI/VHCB, VCRD, VHFA, VECAN, VAC, VTGFOA, VT AARP, VCUDA, etc.).

What improvements in statewide structures would help the libraries and library staff your organization supports?

VLCT would welcome a more intentional and collaborative relationship with the Vermont Department of Libraries, especially as it relates to the work of the Federal Funding Assistance Program and the forthcoming $26M+ of capital funds to be administered by the Department. The League sees this moment as a tremendous opportunity to resolve the longstanding issues mentioned above - ownership, authority, responsibility, and accountability – and educate and train legislative bodies and library trustees on topics that include improved communications, long-range strategic planning, formalizing relationships with agreements, budgeting and capital planning, etc. With more intentional structure and clear expectations town officials can work together harmoniously to achieve their goals. The municipalities that can do these things well are the ones that are most vibrant and successful. For the others, there is a capacity gap (skills and bandwidth). A partnership between VLCT and the Vermont Department of Libraries could help fill this gap now and build the foundation for it to continue long into the future.

Laura Richardson, Branch Librarian
Washington State Library, Washington Corrections Center

May 26, 2023

<div align="center">

Response for Vermont

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It would be helpful for the Working Group to understand the following about ILS:

Who is ultimately responsible for library services in your state's correctional facilities?

- According to the Washington State Administrative Code the state librarian is responsible for "Providing for library and information services to residents and staff of state-supported residential institutions". Sara Jones is the state librarian for WA State.

What is your organization's role?

- Institutional Library Services (ILS) is a program of the Washington State Library which is a division of the Office of the Secretary of State in Washington. This program locates branches of the state library in nine major prison facilities, 2 in psychiatric state hospitals, and 2 juvenile detention centers across the state. The program also supplies interlibrary loan services to these facilities and the nine minor prison facilities across the state. Laura Sherbo worked for ILS for over 40 years and has been the program manager for ILS for the last 20 years.

If possible, what is your budget – or approximately how much does it cost for the state library to provide services in each facility?

- The total 2023 budget for the Washington State Library for the DOC portion of the program is $2,557,938.
- These funds come from a combination of state and federal sources with about 35% coming from LSTA funds (Library Services and Technology Act) 52% coming from the WA State General Fund and 13% from other state special revenue funds
- These funds cover library staffing and personnel management, materials for circulation, OCLC subscriptions, hardware and software used for circulation and other business functions, IT support, library specific supplies for processing and other library requirements.
- The Washington state department of corrections provides the physical space and maintains the space in good working order, as well as DOC IT equipment and support, furniture, operating and general office supplies, postage, and janitorial services.

How does the Washington State Library work with your Department of Corrections?

- The program is managed through an interagency agreement/contract. A program manager is identified for each agency, and they meet monthly to address issues and insure the successful operation of the libraries. Each branch librarian, in coordination with the program manager, meets on a monthly basis with a facility liaison for support and address issues to insure the successful operation of the branch library.

What kinds of library services do you provide in correctional facilities (collections, programs, classes, etc.)?

- The WA State model for providing library services to state prison populations is unique because it locates branches of the state library inside the state's 9 major prison facilities. Through the research related to our IMLS grant project we have found that in most states that have prison libraries, the libraries are staffed by DOC employees who may or may not be trained librarians or even have a background providing library services. Each ILS branch has a certified librarian, and the DOC branches also have a library associate, and our branches provide the same basic services that

public libraries in WA State provide except for internet access. Although ILS staff work to ensure that each branch provides the same level and quality of service to patrons in each facility, each branch librarian develops its collections, programs, and information services to serve the specific needs of the facility population. (WCCW example, WCC example) ILS branches are like the branch libraries of any library system serving their community – our community just happens to be incarcerated.

What is going well with regard to your support for correctional libraries?

- The Reentry services provided by ILS branches are particularly robust. ILS has an institutional librarian who has developed our collection of reference and material resources as well as a website that is available online to the friends and family of incarcerated individuals and a downloaded version of the website for our patrons.
- Laura Sherbo has developed a Library Card Program consisting of agreements with public library systems across the state whereby library accounts are created for individuals preparing to go back to their communities. The public libraries provide a means for ILS Librarians to set up accounts, and we provide physical library cards patrons receive the day they leave their facility. (Releasing homeless anecdote.)
- ILS services underserved and marginalized WA State residents who are at high risk for homelessness and recidivism.
- The library professionals working in ILS branches believe that our libraries should be just like any other library. We serve our community in the best way possible. It just so happens that our branches are located in prisons and patrons are incarcerated.

What are some pinch points with regard to your support for correctional libraries?

- Tensions occur because the state library and the DOC have very different purviews and objectives. On a basic level departments of correction set limits on access to information of incarcerated populations whereas libraries are committed to providing access to information needs of patrons who are incarcerated. ILS recognizes that safety and security are fundamental to corrections and corrections understands that information and recreation can contribute to successful outcomes for incarcerated populations. Restrictions on materials is an example of this tension. The DOC limits access to materials based on safety and security concerns and sets policy to support this need. The state library works to ensure that access to information is as unfettered as possible in a carceral setting. ILS complies with DOC policy, but because policy can be interpreted differently Laura Sherbo sits on the review committee that makes decisions about what will ultimately be restricted. She works very hard to insure there is a commonsense interpretation of DOC policy when it comes to restricting materials.

What do you see on the horizon for your organization in the next 10 years?

At present our circulations systems are offline and our patrons can only locate materials for the branch at their facility using our OPACs. We hope to network our circulation system soon so a patron can request materials from any of our branches.

We also hope to add limited internet access to the services we provide so our patrons can become more invested in designing their own reentry plan and resources that will best suit their needs. We would be able to add digital literacy to the information services we provide.

We recently added the 9 library associate positions to the DOC branches, and we are hoping to add associate positions to our juvenile and psychiatric hospital branches as well.

For the first time in WA state our juvenile detention centers have libraries with dedicated and trained library staff who can provide high-quality library services to the youth population at these centers. Again, the opportunity to develop their own return to their community or just prepare for the future in general is critical for this population.

What improvements in statewide structures would help the libraries and library staff your organization supports?

This response is from our state librarian Sara Jones.

The service to Institutional Libraries should be entirely supported with state funding. The Washington program relies heavily on LSTA funds. If state funding supported all the positions, the materials, and operating basics then LSTA could enhance the service with innovative programs supporting reentry, education and skills development. The partnership with the Department of Corrections is essential and ensuring the two entities remain in partnership status is key to the program's sustainability and success. Finally, our salaries are simply not competitive, this is true for all positions in the State Library, but the ILS library positions feel this lack of competitive pay directly, as they are in remote locations, with inherent challenges and isolation. Incentives and overall better compensation are needed to keep the program thriving.

IMLS Grant Project – State Prison Libraries Performance Initiative

This is a two-year project lead by the Washington State Library's Institutional Library Services program, in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Corrections. The project is an effort to develop strategies and tools designed to address disparities in the service standards and capacities of general services libraries located in U.S. state and territorial prisons. The project will bring stakeholders together to identify and discuss current policies, best practices, performance standards, and outcomes of prison library services, develop adaptable models for improving and providing services, and create an online workspace for these activities.

https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/lg-252319-ols-22

Lawrence Webster, M.A., M.L.S.
Montpelier

May 16, 2023

Library Structures and Organization - Overview and some resources
Prepared for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries, May 26 session on
Library Structures and Organization

Introduction

  First, a personal note. I'm something of a library evangelist. Libraries have been woven into the fabric of my life since before I learned to read, from my first storytime some time in 1950 through college and graduate school, up to just this morning, when I downloaded an ebook thanks to Green Mountain Library Consortium. Much of the following text is written with public libraries and their constituents in mind, but academic and special libraries share a set of values and I'll touch on them.

  Before I retired, I worked in public, academic, and special libraries and was a consultant, first on the staff of two state libraries, then independent. As I worked with more and more libraries, I was struck by the huge number of different ways libraries and library systems have organized themselves. Not many of my colleagues seem to share my fascination - whenever I bring up governance questions or issues, many eyes will roll or glaze over. The underlying purpose of designing an organizational structure is to make the organization work optimally - in the case of libraries, to provide equal access and free access for all. We hear this so often, we forget what it means.

  But it's the law. *Here's an excerpt from the Vermont Statute: "The General Assembly declares it to be the policy of the State of Vermont that free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every citizen of the State of Vermont should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits of a free public library." – 22 V.S.A. § 67.*

  Providing such access to the riches and services of libraries to *all* Vermonters in an equitable fashion must be the underlying goal of any library organizational model. A good example of a heartening trend in this direction is the Department of Libraries (VTLIB) opening up Vermont Online Library to all Vermont residents, regardless of funding challenges faced by local public libraries. In addition, the establishment of the Green Mountain Library

Consortium in 2008 showed the way toward effective service delivery through cooperative cost-sharing. This is now possible with many electronic resources (some states do this for ebooks and audiobooks, for example), and some states are deepening access by providing this kind of statewide service.

Libraries have developed a lot of different organizational models and structures to serve their constituencies. Any discussion of structure and organization of libraries must include at least the following, which are touched on in the following text.

•   State Library agencies
•   Multitype library consortia and networks
•   Single-type consortia and networks – especially public libraries
•   Statewide Library Cards
•   Professional Library associations - state and national

State Library Agencies

Every state has one, but they are quite different from one another. Vermont's Department of Libraries (VTLIB)   is in the Agency of Administration; some state libraries are under Secretaries of State; some in the Education Department; some are independent commissions.   All are responsible for management of federal   LSTA funds and all collect and report library data. Many also provide services to state government, support for public library development, support for technological networks, statewide access to electronic information and resources, consulting services to all types of libraries, data collection and interpretation, interlibrary loan networks.
For more information:

State Library Administrative Agency Survey, Institute of Museums and Libraries (IMLS) includes a lot of data and information on State Libraries. A recent report summarizes a lot of data and information:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/imls_slaa_functions_roles_brief.pdf

COSLA - Chief Officers of State Library Agencies – https://www.cosla.org/

Multitype Library Consortia

These are nonprofit associations of libraries who join to provide mutual support and enhance services.   Membership can include public, academic, school, and special libraries.

Vermont has just one – Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC), a lively group founded in 2008 to widen access to ebooks and audiobooks, https://www.gmlc.org/   It is open to all libraries in Vermont; and now has 155 member libraries, which serve approximately ⅔ of the state's population. GMLC

offers electronic materials, a shared catalog, and a delivery service and shared cost of ebooks and audiobooks. It is run primarily by volunteers with a simple and eloquent mission:"....to provide Vermont's libraries with access to goods and services otherwise unattainable, through the power of partnerships and collective purchasing."

Some states, such as Florida, have regional multitype consortia blanketing the state. These organizations provide a mix of services, including technological help, shared catalogs, staff training, and more.

Single type library systems - Public

The goal of library systems is to broaden access and create consistent services across a given area. Vermont, with its very small population, could provide public library system scaffolding   create a way to ensure that *every* Vermonter has equitable access and services. There are no formal public library systems in Vermont. We are perhaps the only state in the union in this condition. The old regional libraries that some still mourn used to blanket the state might have provided a blueprint for true public library systems, but they focused on print collections rather than such things as shared cataloging or technology, and they were phased out, with the last one closing in the 2000s. That said, there is much to build on in this state: local and   informal cooperation such as HomeCard, county librarians' meetings, ad-hoc efforts such as agreements between Craftsbury and Albany, and an enormous helping of good will.

Public Library Organizational Models in Vermont

Municipal - an arm of town government. We have 93.

Incorporated - a private nonprofit corporation chartered to serve all people in its service area. 58

Community - school/public combination. 12

Special district -   Just one – Deborah Rawson library, by agreement with two towns - Jericho and Underhill.

Types of Public Library Systems–one state's approach

Vermont library staff often express concerns about library systems–fearing that   the local library would have to cede control of collections, policies, and even identity to a faceless bureaucracy. *This is not the case.* For example,   New York's 60-year history of public library system development is proof positive that it's quite possible to maintain a library's look and feel, identity, collection, board, governance style, and everything that makes it special, while reaping the benefits of system membership which might include shared cataloging, roaming experts, administrative services, staff training, expert consulting, and more.

New York makes a useful distinction among three types of systems. Numbers in parentheses are the number of such systems in each category. *Consolidated*: (3) Chartered as a single entity under a board of trustees (Brooklyn, The New York Public Library, and Queens Borough Public Library). *Federated*: (4) Created by action of the board or boards of supervisors or legislature of the county or counties involved while member libraries retain their own charters (Buffalo & Erie, Clinton- Essex-Franklin, Monroe, and Onondaga). *Cooperative*: (16) An association created by agreement of boards of chartered member libraries, which retain their autonomy. - New York State Library https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libs/brochurp.htm

For more information on the many models for public library organization take a look at *Public Library Structure and Organization in the United States.* National Center for Education Statistics, 1996. Ye,s it's old but it's a very useful set of definitions and conditions in each state. https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/publiclibrarystructureorg3-1996_0.pdf

Single-Type Library Systems – Academic

Most multi-campus institutions have consolidated library systems with shared cataloging at a minimum, and easy reciprocal collection use. In addition many colleges and universities have banded together to share what makes sense to provide better service to all. Two examples include COMPASS (Smith, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke and Tripod (Swarthmore, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr. Both focus on joint management of digital collections.
Vermont's new Vermont State University will have a library system,, as do UVM and Community College of Vermont.

The Vermont Consortium of Academic Libraries provides cross-institutional connections. It was was founded in 2008 to "....   to promote interlibrary cooperation, support resource sharing among member institutions, facilitate shared access to online information resources, and provide timely and economical delivery of books and other materials between libraries. VCAL membership includes major private colleges as well as state institutions.

Statewide Library Cards:

Even without a robust system, a statewide library card can broaden access considerably. Twenty four cities in the United States have populations greater than the entire state of Vermont (U.S. Census Bureau https://www.census.gov/). With such a small population it is perhaps worth investigating how other states have introduced statewide library cards, whether such an egalitarian service could work in Vermont.

Fifteen states have statewide public library cards, according to an ALA

report, the ALA *Reciprocal Borrowing Survey (2005),* Three of those states - Iowa, Michigan, and MInnesota - do not have readily available information about those programs online as of May 10, 2023. Links for the remaining 12 state library card programs are provided below.

- Colorado CLC
  https://www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/resource-sharing/clc/clc-for-libraries/
- Connecticut BorrowItCT https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/ccard
- Georgia Georgia PINES https://georgialibraries.org/your-library-card/
- Hawaii Public Library System
  https://www.librarieshawaii.org/2022/03/25/visit-the-library/#HoursofOperation
- Indiana PLAC
  https://www.in.gov/library/services-for-libraries/ldoresources/placrules/plac/
- Kansas eCard https://kslib.info/FAQ.aspx?TID=17 Electronic information only provides access to collections in academic libraries as well as public to all Kansans.
- Maryland MPOWER
  https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/001000/001339/unrestricted/20054003e.htm
- Nebraska - NebraKard https://nlc.nebraska.gov/nebraskard/faqs.aspx
- Pennsylvania
  https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Libraries/Library-Programs-and-Services/Pages/Statewide-Library-Card-Program.aspx
- Rhode Island - Ocean State Libraries https://oslri.org/application/
- Wyoming
  https://library.wyo.gov/what-a-wyoming-library-card-can-do-for-you/

National and Statewide Professional Associations

For more than a century, professional associations have played a large part in the development of library services of all kinds. At the national level, The American Library Association (ALA) and its divisions have more than 50,000 members from public, academic, school, and specialized libraries. ALA provides training, conferences, peer support, advocacy, accreditation of graduate programs, and a vigorous publications program. Other important national groups: the Association of Small and Rural Libraries (ASRL), Special Libraries Association (SLA), the   Association for Information Science and Technology, and special subject groups. There are also regional groups, such as the New England Library Association.

Each state has a state library association, usually a chapter of ALA. The Vermont LIbrary Association (https://www.vermontlibraries.org/) is active in continuing education, peer support, representation in policy discussions, and advocacy. As in many states, the VLA often works closely with the Department of

Libraries to ensure the healthy development of library services, and to smooth the way as technological and social change influences the way we use libraries and the way we run them.

Summing Up: Key points for Vermont library leadership

- If Vermont libraries, in particular public libraries, have weakness, it is in the lack of formal public library systems. Particularly in this era of expensive electronic resources, rapid change, and higher expectations from users who have lived elsewhere, it is important for library leadership here to investigate the possibility of developing one or more comprehensive public library systems.
- Library systems can greatly enhance the services we provide Vermonters, as well as provide some cost-sharing for expensive resources, continuing education and peer support for staff, and happier users.
- You do not have to give up autonomy, identity, or home rule to participate in the benefits of a system.
- Another project I would urge the Vermont Library leadership to consider is how to educate the general public as well as policy makers and officials about the true value, breadth, and depth of libraries. The recent flap about Vermont State University's proposed total revamp of its library system might have been averted if everyone had gone into the planning with a shared body of knowledge about library operations, print and electronic publishing, and best practices as they are evolving throughout the country.

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Knowledge for Life.
Knowledge for All.

August 16, 2023

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
Thomas McMurdo, Interim State Librarian
Thomas.McMurdo@vermont.gov
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.6M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to write to you today on the topic of library structures and organizations in Vermont. As we discuss potential changes and improvements in this area, it is my hope that we can collectively work towards creating a more effective and impactful environment for our public libraries. Some ideas are already partially implemented and require expansion, while others present innovative approaches that merit thorough consideration. As we move forward with this endeavor, I hope we can foster discussions and implementations around these ideas for the benefit of our communities.

Direct Funding for Libraries

One immediate avenue for enhancing library services involves securing direct funding for libraries in Vermont. The recent legalization of marijuana has presented an opportunity to generate additional tax revenue. Given the intrinsic value public libraries bring to their communities, it's reasonable to allocate a portion of this revenue to support library operations and initiatives. There may be other ways to get direct funding for libraries that are unknown to

us now, but providing direct funding to public libraries should always be at top of mind. Each public library knows the needs of their communities and would spend funds wisely.

To ensure accountability, it is essential to establish clear standards that libraries must adhere to in order to become eligible for this funding. Drawing inspiration from successful models like Maine's tiered standards system (Required, Enhanced & Exemplary), we can develop a pathway for libraries to meet and exceed standards while working collaboratively with their local governments. You can read more about the Maine Standard system here: https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/index.shtml

Embracing Shared Systems

Considering Vermont's modest population of around 645,000 people, shared systems stand as an efficient solution for resource optimization. Implementing a single Integrated Library System (ILS) across the entire state would eliminate the need for individual libraries to maintain separate ILSs, resulting in significant cost savings. A unified state library card could facilitate access to any library within the system. Moreover, this shared ILS could pave the way for a seamless Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system, streamlining book borrowing and resource sharing among libraries. To complement this structure, a strengthened courier system is necessary, which could be organized geographically for optimal efficiency. Regional collection development could further enhance libraries' ability to cater to specific community needs.

Building a Collaborative Digital Collection

Expanding our digital offerings through collaborative efforts is another promising approach. A shared digital collection would encompass a comprehensive range of resources, including e-books, audiobooks, and streaming media. Pooling resources through group purchases would capitalize on economies of scale, leading to substantial cost savings. The establishment of a foundational digital collection can serve as a basis for future à la carte additions, further enriching the digital resources available to patrons.

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Access to Expertise for Libraries

In our pursuit of robust library services, a shared pool of specialized expertise would greatly benefit libraries. Experts in fields such as grants, legal matters, and human resources could be available on a consultative basis to assist libraries in navigating these intricate areas. This approach ensures that all libraries, regardless of their size, have access to essential knowledge, ultimately enhancing their operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Vermont's library landscape is comprised of over 180 public libraries, each with its unique character. However, by fostering collaboration and innovative thinking, we can enhance the impact of our libraries on a statewide scale. The structural and organizational ideas presented today, including direct funding, shared systems, collaborative digital collections, and access to expertise, have the potential to reshape the future of library services in Vermont. By embracing these concepts, we can empower our libraries to better serve their communities and ensure equitable access to valuable resources and knowledge.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Danko
Library Director

Patty Genadio
Jeffersonville, Vermont
July 17, 2022

<u>Written Testimony on the Topic of Staffing:</u>
<u>For the Working Group on the Status of Vermont's Libraries</u>

I was a library clerk at a Vermont public library from 2017 to 2021. When a new library board took over in early 2021, they quickly made a series of problematic decisions and actions that undermined the library staff and volunteers, and they quickly turned our formerly warm, supportive workplace into an extremely toxic work environment. Within less than four months, all eight members of our library team — four staff members and four volunteers — resigned. This presented a loss of nearly seven decades of institutional memory and experience for our library.

We had tried to work with the new library board. We asked them to do the VTLIB trustee trainings, so that they would have a better understanding of their responsibilities and limits, as well as ours, but they kept putting it off. The board told us that our jobs were easy, that they found nothing at the library when they started, and that the library was broken. They told us this after we'd kept the library going during the difficult first year of the pandemic, and after countless patrons had thanked us for continuing to provide library services and for being a lifeline during an extremely challenging time. The board repeatedly dismissed our experience, our training, our expertise, and our concerns about protecting patrons' privacy.

Multiple members of our library team considered seeking legal counsel, both while we were still at the library, and also after we had resigned. The board repeatedly made baseless allegations against us in social media and in the press, some of which led to another library's rescinding of a job offer to one of my colleagues. The board's public attacks only stopped after this colleague engaged legal counsel.

My colleagues and I were in regular communication with librarians at the Vermont Department of Libraries about our situation. The VTLIB librarians were sympathetic and offered advice and guidance, while also acknowledging that there was not much they could do to help us. At one point, they mentioned that the remaining staff could consider seeking legal counsel. We did consider that, but we couldn't afford that option, and we also thought that the board might decide to become more collaborative, in the face of the most recent resignations; but instead, the situation deteriorated even further.

Several times, my colleagues and I considered resigning en masse, but we always decided against that, because we knew that our patrons would have been abruptly and negatively impacted, as much-needed services to our community would have been immediately disrupted.

We reached out to the town selectboard multiple times, but they dismissed our concerns and continued to voice their full support for the library trustees and the rest of the library board. Eighteen months later, the town continues to be deeply divided, with many former patrons no longer feeling comfortable going to their local public library.

Areas for Improvement:

I've learned the hard way that there are very few protections and recourses for public library personnel in Vermont. This needs to change. I appreciate Vermont's tradition of local control of our public libraries, but library personnel should not be subject to the whims of library boards and board members who engage in troubling behavior towards library staff and volunteers under their authority.

Conflicts of interest also present a challenge in small Vermont towns, where there is often much overlap between local government, local boards, and other local organizations. In the case of our library, some of the new board members had close ties to local elected officials, and some had histories of friction with some of the library personnel newly

under their authority. Conflicts of interest need to be recognized and addressed in order to enable successful, transparent, and accountable library governance.

Questions for the Working Group To Consider:

What can VTLIB do to further support library staff and volunteers who find themselves in a toxic library work environment?

What can VTLIB do to further support library staff and volunteers who are dealing with challenging library boards and/or board members?

Is there legislative action that could be introduced to provide more protections for staff and volunteers at Vermont's public libraries?

Successful Strategies and Approaches:

I wish that I could mention strategies and approaches that have proven successful, but, unfortunately, none of the strategies or approaches that my colleagues and I have tried over the past year and a half have been successful.

I have spoken with library personnel from other Vermont libraries who have also dealt with challenging library boards. I also know from past experience what it's like to serve under supportive library boards. I hope that the Working Group, VTLIB, and our state can find and institute strategies and approaches to help protect library personnel and to help library staff, volunteers, and boards to work together respectfully to better serve Vermont communities.

Patty Genadio
Jeffersonville, Vermont
May 14, 2023

<u>Written Testimony on the Topic of Library Structures and Organizations:</u>
<u>For the Working Group on the Status of Vermont's Libraries</u>

I was a library clerk at the Varnum Memorial Library in Jeffersonville (an incorporated village in the Town of Cambridge) from 2017 to 2021. A new library board took over in January 2021, when the Cambridge Selectboard appointed four new trustees to replace trustees who had resigned in 2020 due to the pandemic; on Town Meeting Day 2021, three of these new trustees were elected to new terms. (Two had previously served on the Varnum's board, during a contentious tenure.) The new library board created an incredibly toxic work environment at the Varnum, and within four months of Town Meeting Day 2021, our entire library team of four staff and four volunteers, representing nearly seven decades of institutional memory and experience at our library, had resigned because of the board's actions.

The Varnum is not a municipal library, but because the Cambridge selectboard has involved itself so often and so deeply in matters pertaining to the Varnum, my colleagues and I repeatedly reached out to them with our concerns. Over and over again, the selectboard dismissed or ignored these concerns.

The Varnum is an incorporated nonprofit public library with an opaque governance system. The Crescendo Club Library Association (CCLA) is the nonprofit that owns the library. The board is made up of five library trustees elected by the town (or appointed by the selectboard, in some cases) and some CCLA members. In March 2021, after our director's resignation, my colleagues and I asked Lara Keenan, the Vermont Department of Libraries (VTLIB) Governance Consultant, about the Varnum's governance structure and about other libraries with similar structures. Lara told us about two such libraries, but she said that both were "pursuing changing their governance structure to make it less complex."

In the 26 years that I've lived in Cambridge, the Varnum has had five different directors. This high turnover rate is a direct consequence of the Varnum's flawed governance structure, which leaves the library and its personnel

vulnerable to the whims and questionable conduct of problematic board members. This is part of a destructive pattern going back decades. Over the past 20 years, in addition to the four library directors who have resigned from the Varnum, several other staff members, volunteers, and board members have left their positions because of troubling behavior by library board members.

My colleagues and I repeatedly asked our new board to do the VTLIB trustee trainings, but they continually dismissed our requests. The Varnum board publicly made false allegations against our library team, and continued to do so after we had all resigned; and they publicly claimed false credit for our work and achievements (grants, programs, etc.) The current Varnum board chair has ushered in greater transparency and inclusivity, but many serious issues and damaging patterns that have plagued the Varnum for years remain unaddressed and unresolved. The board's unfounded allegations still swirl around our community, and the absence of a public apology or other form of public accountability has continued to cause division in our town. My kids grew up going to the Varnum, it's where I found my calling to be a librarian, and I hope that the Varnum will ensure the library's long-term viability by improving its governance system and instituting mechanisms to help make its boards more open, functional, and accountable.

I addressed some of these issues in my July 2022 testimony to the Working Group on the topic of staffing. In that testimony, I also addressed the significant issue that conflicts of interest present to the governance of small towns and local organizations. Cronyism, nepotism, and conflicts of interest are serious problems that not only discourage citizens' participation in civic and local organizations, but also narrow the circle of people running these institutions.

Various library trainings demonstrate the many challenges that library personnel in Vermont and across the country face, especially since the beginning of the pandemic. In Infopeople's February 2022 webinar "We Are NOT Okay: Library Worker Trauma Before and During COVID-19 and What Happens Next," the webinar's presenters and many of the attendees discussed the trauma that library personnel have experienced due to difficulties with patrons, co-workers, and library boards, and how these difficulties were magnified and worsened by the pandemic.

In VTLIB's March 22, 2022, webinar "HR at Your Library: Resources and Tips To Foster Organizational and Employee Success," Gary Deziel, of the UVM Extension Service and a former public library trustee, discussed an extensive study that determined that toxic work culture is driving the Great Resignation. He said that toxic culture is 10 times more important a consideration in resignations than is the issue of compensation. Most library workers in Vermont do what we do as a vocation, and we don't expect high wages, because we know most libraries can't afford to pay better; but we also don't expect to be treated badly by the boards we serve under. Unfortunately, that kind of treatment is not rare. At the 2022 Vermont Library Association conference, my former director and I moderated the session "How staff & volunteers can learn to handle challenging library boards & library work environments". It was an interesting and informative discussion, though it was discouraging to hear that so many other librarians around Vermont have also had to deal with challenging boards.

It's been hugely disconcerting these last few years to witness the dismissiveness and hostility towards libraries and library personnel: nationwide; here in Vermont, as evidenced by the actions of the Vermont State University (VTSU) board; and right here in my town of Cambridge. But locally, statewide, and nationwide, it's been incredibly encouraging to see that many Americans support and cherish libraries. When I was helping to gather signatures for a petition against the VTSU board's plan, I was profoundly impressed and moved by the responses of Vermonters from all walks of life, professions, education levels, etc. Every person I spoke with opposed the board's plans, and didn't understand why the board would even put forward such a catastrophic proposal. Most Vermonters, especially the rural Vermonters I spoke with, understand that this plan would have eviscerated our state colleges and the communities they serve. Vermonters recognize the important role that libraries serve on our campuses and in our communities.

Public libraries provide essential services to their communities. The pandemic spotlighted the crucial work that Vermont library personnel deliver to our patrons and our towns, and showed that library personnel are essential workers. Most Vermont library workers provide these essential services at meager pay, and volunteers provide services at no pay. Vermont's public

libraries and their personnel need supportive, transparent, and accountable governance systems. I hope that the Working Group will study and consider the following suggestions:

- Mandatory trustee trainings for library trustees and other library board members
- Assistance for public library boards to help make their governance structures more transparent, accountable, and effective
- Protections and recourses for library personnel to help them cope with challenging library boards
- Standards and/or laws that would better protect Vermont library personnel
- Possible sanctions for problematic library boards
- Possible incentives and/or rewards for library boards that institute best practices such as trustee trainings and transparency
- Update and revision of the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries

More light needs to be cast on issues such as board mismanagement, conflicts of interest, and egregious treatment of library personnel, to bring about greater transparency, accountability, and improvement in the management and functioning of Vermont's public libraries. It's crucial that people in positions of power and influence at the Vermont Department of Libraries and in our state government are aware of the incredibly challenging, and often toxic, conditions confronting many Vermont library workers and volunteers.

I have served under supportive, competent, and transparent boards, both at the Varnum and elsewhere, and I've seen firsthand what good public library governance looks like, and the great value and service these boards can provide. Librarians and our allies can bring greater awareness to the challenges facing Vermont libraries and their personnel, and can help to generate positive changes in library governance, library standards, and library working conditions, to help our public libraries become more welcoming, more accountable, and more sustainable for library personnel and for the communities we serve.

Randal Smathers
Director, Rutland Free Library

May 22, 2023

Testimony for Working Group on the Future of Libraries

Structures and organizations

The defining feature of Vermont libraries writ large is the lack of structure. Many states – notably Massachusetts, for reasons that will become clear – have statewide systems, so a card issued in Boston works in the Berkshires. Vermont, by virtue of our habit of local control, instead has 185 libraries, each with its own card, integrated library system, budget, policies, etc., etc.

I would suggest that some form of a centralized collection, with an integrated catalog, would be a badly needed first step to improving the situation.

This fragmentation also results in massive duplication of effort and waste of resources statewide. Yes, every library is going to want to buy the latest bestsellers, but there are any number of ways this could be mitigated:

The reality is that some readers want alternative forms of a book: Audiobook either streaming or on CD, large print, braille, downloadable ebook in either Kindle or epub format. Large libraries typically purchase some / most of these and multiple copies in print and downloadable formats to meet demand. The current system requires each library to purchase as many formats as they can, and prohibits small libraries from accessing most of the formats for any given title until months after its release.

There's a working example of how it could work: VTLIB does a good job through its ABLE program of helping libraries and blind users with its braille collection. And it used to do a fine job of providing support for – in particular – large print versions as well. This was discontinued with the ending of the central library collection as part of the 2015 budget cut by the Shumlin Administration.

That closure saved the state money, but cost many times that for libraries as a whole, as libraries around the state scuffled to make up the gap for the many mostly senior readers who rely on large print to keep them reading. And it created inequalities between communities blessed with large libraries with relatively ample resources and those with very limited purchasing budgets.

Then there's the issue of storage. If there were a system of sharing resources, not every library would have to hold every book of every major series. For example, Rutland could keep the back catalog for Clive Cussler, Bennington for Martha Grimes, Brattleboro for Frank Herbert, and so on, with the expectation that the holding library for each of these titles would replace them as needed and keep them available for interlibrary loan.

Currently, the state works on an ad hoc network. It's a mix of hub-and-spoke and point-to-point. Within the Catamount Library Network (CLN) consortium at least, that's a result of the failure of a hub-and-spoke system. Lessons can and should be learned from it.

When intraconsortial lending was set up for CLN, the default was that books borrowed from a sister library were always ordered from the largest library (Rutland Free) as long as Rutland had a copy, then the next largest, and so on down to the smallest. This worked up to the point where it overloaded Rutland's ability to handle the load:

- It resulted in very fast loan times, as we were shipping three times per week (in part to keep up to demand), where smaller libraries might only ship once a week;
- Loans were reliable, because literally the first thing an RFL circ staff member does every day is check for consortial holds, then they are processed and, if it is a shipping day, put into the courier bins.

But because it was an unfunded mandate, there was no support for our library. What the state had once done (and paid for) from its central collection now fell to libraries like RFL.

- We were providing some 5,800 items and requesting 3,700 annually (including in-house holds).
- This resulted in our "overusing" the courier system, and paying the subsequent overuse penalties for shipping items for other libraries' borrowers.
- RFL staff were overwhelmed by the volume. One day we received nine (count 'em 9) bins via courier.
- The courier service was overwhelmed by the volume. Their small cargo vans weren't set up to handle that many big, green, library bins. So, they started overloading the 50-pound-max bins, which resulted in broken bins (that we were charged for) and complaints from both our staff and the drivers.
- RFL was paying staff at least an hour a day to pull and ship books, and a similar amount three times a week to unpack and reshelve items. Again, this was a service that had been provided by the state library, and when the then-administration slashed the budget, it fell to individual libraries to pick up the slack. Demand has continued to increase for this service and is likely to continue in our "order online, have it shipped" consumer culture.
- As the consortium continues to grow, we have run out of storage space to hold books until they are bagged, binned, and shipped. The need for more circulation space to handle out-of-library loans is a major driver toward our needing to consider a space expansion, which is going to run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

    So, the lesson is that it was a quick, efficient way to share resources around the state, but because it was an organic system that just grew up instead of a designed network, it quickly outgrew our ability to provide the service.

A well-designed hub-and-spoke system could achieve many worthwhile benefits:

Reducing road miles, costs (and greenhouse gas emissions) by shipping items the shortest distance (with hubs in Burlington, Brattleboro, Rutland, and Barre??).

Reduce wasteful duplication.

To control costs, VTLIB could contract with public (or college) libraries to do the work … kind of like how it works now, only subsidizing the libraries doing the heavy lifting instead of penalizing them.

This could also work for specialized collections (by format like large print / audiobook on CD, by genre, nonfiction specialization, or language). Given that Vermont is making strides to have a more diverse population, the latter is going to be a challenge going forward. A library with half a shelf in

languages other than English is not going to be of much use for a community with a diverse population. VTLIB has made some very positive baby steps to address this (the Welcoming Library for kids, for example).

Please feel to reach out with any questions / concerns at randal@rutlandfree.org or via cell at 802-683-9778. And thanks again for doing this work.

Randal

Catamount Library Network
Starr Latronica

May 16, 2023

- Who makes up your membership? 23 member libraries

- What is your organization's role? As a larger library in the consortium, we tend to be called upon to weigh in on most matters. Although meetings are open to all libraries and all libraries are "required" to send a representative, many of the small libraries don't always make it to meetings, though they are urged to attend or submit input.

- What is the cost to members, if any? It varies—based on population, size of collection and circulation. There is a minimum price of $700/year.

- What support or service does your organization provide to members/libraries/the Vermont public? A shared catalog and ILS at a reasonable price—that's the support for the member libraries, which ultimately translates into support for the public by allowing for easy access to 23 collections.

- What is going well? Patrons appreciate being able to browse the shared catalog and place their own hold for materials beyond their home library. Libraries appreciate an ILS at a reasonable price (and the ease at which patrons can access other collections.)

- What are your organization's pinch points? It's hard for the small libraries to fully participate in meetings and trainings. Sometimes long term staff gets frustrated with new staff that doesn't always have training in cataloging, etc. At times the ILS is not what we would hope it is…it is open source and can be clunky.

- What do you see on the horizon for your organization in the next 10 years? We have just appointed a long range planning committee. The structure is becoming unwieldy by trying to balance the needs of the small libraries with those of the larger.

- What improvements in statewide structures would help the libraries and library staff your organization supports? (Please note that this question is *not* limited to asks of the Department!) We frequently hear frustrations from patrons that they cannot check out materials onsite from other libraries with their card (unlike CT or large swaths of MA). It would be very popular to have a statewide card, but I assume that would require state funding for public libraries.

To the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

We are grateful for the opportunity to raise an issue that is endemic to incorporated libraries in Vermont: How can we provide library employees with truly affordable health care, professional pay rates, and other benefits?

In Plainfield, the Cutler Memorial Library's unincorporated status poses continual challenges, some of which include raising 32% of our annual budget in a rural area with high poverty (15.7%) and a small tax base of 487 properties and 1,266 residents. We also must reiterate our value as a non-profit year after year to an ever-shifting Select Board for a town appropriation which is significantly less than the surrounding towns give their municipal libraries. (Our appropriation is 3.6% of the overall town budget as compared to 7% in surrounding towns.) Despite the work of the library that directly benefits the entire community and reduces the cost to maintain a public library for the municipality, the unincorporated library is not afforded the same benefits of a municipal library, such as health care and pensions for employees, building maintenance and upkeep, or access to municipal grant opportunities.

Given the smaller budgets of many incorporated libraries, many librarians of unincorporated libraries and many part-time librarians in the state make ends meet by availing themselves of state benefits (3 Squares, Heat subsidies, Medicaid). Often, when we consider raising pay, library boards have to take into consideration that doing so would make the employee lose their state benefits, putting the employee in a worse financial situation than they were before. As a board, it is incredibly challenging to offer a true benefit, one that isn't financially out of reach for the employee — particularly for a part-time librarian who would receive a pro-rated benefit.

The state health exchange does not provide a solution, as even very high deductible plans can be costly and using town plans may also be prohibitively expensive. Library boards themselves can usually not afford to pay the premiums for small nonprofits' employer-sponsored plans, even if the plans were affordable for an employee. If librarians have to use the state health care exchange, there are subsidies, and for many, these could be helpful, but once you make too much to receive Medicaid, essentially any pay raise gets eaten up by the lessening of your health care subsidy. Even the worst plans are so expensive that you must make a great deal to break out of that cycle. When a plan with a $7000-$8000 per person deductible (though it covers preventive care), a plan which also may have co-insurance for things like MRIs or inpatient/outpatient hospital visits, costs one person $650/month or a family $1800/month (without subsidies), that is a pretty profoundly broken option.

We ask that the Working Group address this problem with innovative solutions. Could there be a state-wide library system, perhaps involving other VT nonprofits, to establish collective purchasing of insurance that would lower costs for all?

Considering further the vital contribution libraries make to our state, it makes sense for the state to subsidize librarian employee benefits so that we can keep these essential workers healthy, both psychologically and physically. Without such subsidies, we are asking individuals to take on enormous workloads covering a broad range of skill sets for nominal pay and usually no benefits. That they do so is a credit to their devotion to the cause of literacy and information access, community building, food security, digital literacy, and public programming. Still, it is unconscionable of us to rely on their self-sacrifice any longer.

Thank you for addressing this urgent need.

The Cutler Memorial Board of Trustees
Grace Worcester, Chair
Erica DaCosta
Genese Grill
Karen Hatcher
Laura Williams McCaffrey
Mary Trerice

Submitted by Bryn Geffert on behalf of the Vermont Library Association
May 12, 2023

Who makes up VLA's membership?

We currently have membership in the low 300's, including public and academic/special library librarians, trustees and friends.

VLA's structure includes:

Executive Committee/Officers

- [Vice President/President Elect](#)
- [President](#)
- [Immediate Past President](#)
- [Secretary](#)
- [Treasurer](#)

Representatives, Section Presidents, and Standing Committee Chairs

- [American Library Association Councilor](#)
- [Representative to the New England Library Association](#)
- [College & Special Libraries Section President](#)
- [Friends & Trustees Section President](#)
- [Public Libraries Section President](#)
- [Chair, Membership and Outreach Committee](#)
- [Chair, Government Relations Committee](#)
- [Chair, Intellectual Freedom Committee](#)
- [Chair, Vermont Library Conference Committee](#)

Non-Voting Leadership (Section Vice Presidents and Ad-Hoc Committee Chairs)

- [College & Special Libraries Section Vice President](#)
- [Friends & Trustees Section Vice President](#)
- [Friends & Trustees Section Immediate Past President](#)
- [Chair, Awards & Scholarship Committee](#)
- Chair, Inclusion Committee

General Membership

What is your role?

Mission: The Vermont Library Association (VLA) is an educational organization working to develop, promote, and improve library and information services and librarianship in the state of Vermont.

What is the cost to members, if any?

Annual membership costs are as follows:

- *Birch – $25 –* Salary of $10,000 or less. Non-employed/retired members. Friends. Trustees.
- *Pine – $35 –* Salary between $10,001 and $30,000.
- *Maple – $50 –* Salary of $30,001 or greater.
- *Cedar – Variable –* Student VLA/ALA joint member.

What support or service do you provide to members/libraries/the Vermont public?

Most of our services are for VLA members and Vermont libraries in general. We provide an intellectual freedom response team, continuing education, discounts for NELA, advocacy, an annual conference, etc.

What is going well?

VLA is a great way to get involved, support, and connect with librarians statewide.

What are your pinch points?

It can be hard to fill officer positions.

Officer terms go by quickly and it can be a struggle to get everything accomplished that we hope to in this all-volunteer organization.

We eliminated bundle memberships this year to make our membership simpler. (A bundle membership was a group membership rather than an individual membership, allowing all of a library's staff, or Friends, or trustees to be bundled together under one membership. Unfortunately, in doing this we lost some Friends and Trustees.

What do you see on the horizon for your organization in the next 10 years?

Having 3 separate library organizations in this small state (VLA, VSLA, VCAL) seems like a lot. How could we be unified in supporting all librarians statewide?

Some reinvigoration and interest in youth librarians having more input and support from VLA.

What improvements in statewide structures would help the libraries and library staff they support? (Please note that this question is *not* limited to asks of the Department!)

In this age of climate change, block grants for library building weatherization could be hugely helpful. Many of Vermont's library buildings are inefficient and heated with petroleum. What if the State could create a program to help libraries be greener and better prepared for climate change?

Cost of licensing digital content. Could the state broker better deals for digital sources? Relating to this, how can VTLib and GMLC work together more easily on this? It seems there is a lot of duplication …

Could VTLib broker benefits (health, retirement, etc) for small and incorporated libraries? This would have a huge ripple effect.

From: Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) Board – Wendy Hysko
To: Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont and House and Senate Committees on Education
Re: Digital Library Collections to Vermont Citizens

May 16, 2023

The Board of the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) is writing to communicate the services and collections that GMLC provides and what are the needs for these digital library collections.

Who makes up your membership - GMLC includes 160 member libraries statewide. All GMLC member libraries have access to the ListenUp Vermont (LUV) downloadable books collection.

What is your organization's role - Our mission is to provide Vermont's libraries with access to goods and services otherwise unattainable, through the power of partnerships and collective purchasing. This is summed up in the consortium's tagline: *Vermont Libraries, Working Together*.

What is the cost to members - All members pay an annual $100 administrative fee and $.28 X # registered borrowers + $.20 X # LUV check-outs from previous year. There is a discounted per checkout cost for libraries that invest in Overdrive Advantage titles that can be purchased for their own patrons and help alleviate some of the long holds lists for the general collection popular titles.

What support services does your organization offer -

- ListenUpVermont - The digital library, ListenUpVermont (LUV) which we steward has grown steadily over the past 15 years to become an integral part of the Vermont library landscape.
- VOKAL - a shared ILS using open source software with 64 libraries and growing
- Mango Languages
- Library delivery service - we started the courier service in 2016, now run by VTLib, as a pilot project establishing at least weekly service to over 100 libraries, contracting Green Mountain Messenger to establish this library materials collection, sorting and delivery system. Prior to this delivery service being launched, all interlibrary loans were sent through the USPS which was labor intensive and costly. The courier service was handed over to VTLib to manage in 2018.

What is Going Well LUV - LUV's growth and invaluable influence on Vermont's library culture can be shown in the following statistics:

1. An increase from 11,750 to 14,250 users in March 2023 compared to March 2022
2. An increase from 1,200 to 1,500 daily users in March 2023 compared to March 2022
3. An increase from 46,000 to 58,000 checkouts in March 2023 compared to March 2022
4. An increase from 22,000 to 28,000 holds in March 2023 compared to March 2022

The LUV collection has volunteer professional library selectors to build and maintain the shared collection. Through the shared volunteer effort, the LUV is a popular collection of titles heavily utilized by library patrons across Vermont.

Pinch Points - LUV's growth is hindered by three problems. Inadequate funding, unfair price structures and licensing agreements from publishing houses, and ease of checkouts. Together these three problems have created roadblocks to creating a large enough collection to adequately service our 27,000 active patrons. As such, LUV patrons often find long hold lists and wait times. GMLC invests over $150,000 annually in LUV collections, which is still not enough. GMLC received over $200,000 last year from VTLib with IMLS ARPA passthrough funding to help alleviate many years of growing holds queues. Funding like this really benefited libraries and library patrons statewide. As our patrons become more savvy they have found ways around some of these problems becoming more "power users" of apps, so morale is currently high, but limited funding for digital titles will be an ongoing pinch point.

What is Going Well - VOKAL koha ILS consortium - VOKAL was launched as the first shared ILS in Vermont using the koha open source ILS in 2010. VOKAL will grow to 66 libraries this year, finding a balance using a flexible shared system that serves the smallest to largest libraries in Vermont. Volunteer committees inform decisions made about the different modules of the ILS. Committees include: a Cataloging Committee to manage best practices in sharing bibliographic records; a Circulation Committee to manage best practices for stand alone libraries as well as libraries in reciprocal borrowing agreements like Homecard and One Card; and a Consortium Committee to navigate setting system preferences that will impact all VOKAL member libraries with representatives from different sized libraries having a voice. VOKAL sponsored developments have been incorporated

into the general software releases used by libraries around the world. VOKAL implemented the Aspen discovery system in 2021 which brings records from the traditional physical item catalog, and digital subscription records to one format. Member libraries can design its look and feature specific collections, as well as design a full website. Currently the VOKAL Executive Committee, comprised of members of the original Implementation Team including Wendy Hysko from the Brownell Library in Essex Junction, Kim Peine from the Dorothy Alling Library in Williston, and Richard Pritsky from the Carpenter Carse Library in Hinesburg manage membership inquiries and connecting potential new members to the support company, Bywater, that VOKAL partners and contracts with. Bywater also supports developments, coordinating consortium-wide training, and general consortium oversight.

Pinch Points for VOKAL - because of the volunteer support from member libraries, VOKAL manages to keep costs down while having funds to help sponsor developments contracted through Bywater. The VOKAL Executive Committee is working on thoughtfully restructuring to create additional committees over the next few years to split up some of the work of the Executive Committee to ensure the consortium remains a stable and reliable ILS for the range of libraries using the VOKAL system.

What is going well Mango Languages - Mango is offered as a language resource including over 60 languages with over 20 libraries subscribing. Mango, as a direct subscription service, is low maintenance for GMLC to administer and pass along consortium savings to participating libraries.

On the Horizon for GMLC - GMLC is always looking to add shared resource services to what we offer Vermont libraries. Again, our mission is to provide Vermont's libraries with access to goods and services otherwise unattainable, through the power of partnerships and collective purchasing. Over the next ten years we will continue to look for services that enhance what we offer to Vermont libraries and their patrons and maintain our current offerings that Vermont libraries rely on.

Improvements in Statewide Structures - We have several recommendations for the Working Group and the House and Senate Committees on Education.

- Help find ways to fund digital libraries - this is not a technology that is going away. Traditional paper books are beloved by many and desirable by those who need a break from screens, but there is solid evidence that the ease and

24/7 access of digital books is essential and expected for libraries to provide.

- Vermont schools need a voice at the table in their bargaining with Overdrive. The Vermont Schools Shared Digital Collection has no ownership in Vermont. Each school is paying a price set by Overdrive. Vermont schools need a voice working for them.
- Begin a conversation with publishing houses. Libraries are currently being charged unsustainable fees for the digital content they are purchasing. Other states have sought to influence the pricing structure and succeeded.
- Speak to LUV users to understand the genuine enthusiasm for this resource.
- As we try to share resources statewide there is at times a divide between the haves and have nots, which lowers Vermont libraries' collective goodwill. This limits all librarians and libraries' ability to share in the most positive way possible. When GMLC tried to make LUV more available statewide 10 years ago, we offered 10 grants (funded through the Tarrant Foundation) to libraries that weren't using LUV yet. GMLC thought we had broadened our reach and offered libraries who couldn't afford the service a wonderful chance to try it for 2 years. However, we received pushback from libraries who could just barely afford the service that they should have been included in the grant round. Another example is when GMLC began offering Overdrive Advantage 7 years ago. This service allows for specific libraries to add extra ebooks and digital audiobooks to LUV at the library's own expense for that specific library's patrons. There was pushback with this as well. Librarians felt that it was unfair that libraries with more money could get more books for their patrons. Creating good will and positive relationships go hand in hand with creating better library services for Vermont's patrons. Our public librarians need someone they trust to help them make their libraries better. Libraries and library staff need to know GMLC and VTLib have their best interests at heart. The capital projects grants being offered through VTLib are a wonderful place for this 'best interest' to be shown. If we learn to trust each other a little more, our ability to share might grow stronger.

Thank you members of the Working Group for Vermont Libraries. The work libraries do across the state is so important to share resources and improve equity and encourage lifelong learning. GMLC is proud of the services we provide to Vermont libraries and look forward to continuing these partnerships moving forward.

Sincerely,

The GMLC board of Directors
Wendy Hysko, President
Kim Peine, Treasurer
Owen McDermott, Secretary
Chris Kirby, Director
Mara Seigel, Director
Richard Pritsky, Director

Written Comments: STAFFING

Abby Adams

Library Director, Platt Memorial Library, Shoreham, VT

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

I think that volunteers get used too much in Vermont libraries, which is a direct result of lack of funding. We even still have libraries in the state that are totally run by volunteers. This represents a problem in several ways-- one, there's no accountability for practice. Two, a volunteer may or may not have any training in best practices. Three, a community may be getting an inconsistent or inequitable level of library service. To my mind, our person-to-person interactions are some of the most important in the library. If we truly want people to have access to information to educate and entertain, then we need the people with the most training to provide the majority of those interactions with the public. I think the Library Certificate program the state runs is a wonderful solution to the problem of lack of affordable access to MLIS programs. I would love to see the state sponsor the equivalent of an "associates" Library Certificate-- the full certificate program is designed to ensure that libraries are run by directors that have background in the principles and best practices of librarianship, but there are other staff who would benefit from some level of continuing education. I think this would be particularly useful if it were systematized; library assistants need training in reference interactions, reader's advisory, basic principles of cataloging and organization of information, as a start. Any library staff who provides programming for children should have some specialized education in childhood development and literacy development.

I think with the recent realignment of salaries across the state that librarians are starting to be better paid. In the last budget cycle I advocated for an increase in wages across the board and set starting salary points for a variety of different jobs that we might have in the library. Leadership from the state would be helpful, specifically in the form of minimum standards. We're still some of the lowest paid professionals in the country, but much of that has to do with our tradition of having small, underfunded libraries in every town, rather than larger hub libraries that serve more than one community. A small, underfunded library has a really hard time attracting a professional, degree-holding librarian who has experience running a complete program.

That's my 2 cents for now. I may send you more later. I hope it's useful!

Best,

Abby

Library Director

Testimony to the Working Group on the Status of Vermont's Libraries from University of Vermont Inclusive Excellence Committee Regarding the Status of Staffing in Academic Libraries as Related to Issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

To whom it may concern:

The University of Vermont Libraries Inclusive Excellence Committee was charged in 2020 "to promote and facilitate the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the UVM Libraries." Our first activity was to investigate hiring practices that promote DEI. We were encouraged to make recommendations to our unit on best practices in recruitment, interviewing and hiring in order to encourage a more diverse body of staff as well as have an equity lens in every aspect of our work. It is with this in mind that we write you to give testimony on the status of staffing in Vermont academic libraries.

The UVM Libraries has continued to be understaffed in recent years but is currently operating well below a sufficient staffing level. At last census, we had 17 vacant positions out of a total of 68 positions, including both staff and faculty (librarians). Similar to many institutions throughout the country, the reasons for these vacancies are numerous: retirements, impact of COVID, low wages, inflation, high cost of living, etc.

At UVM, wages are low, especially for staff. Until recently, many staff members needed to work second jobs in order to make ends meet. But there have been improved conditions due to the recent unionization of staff under the name UVM Staff United and the ratification of their first contract. They have brought the minimum wage at UVM up to $20/ hour, have seen the formation of a sick bank, increase paid time off, and parental leave. But, as is the case in many institutions in Vermont, the yearly wages are still low compared to the cost of living in Vermont, and these improvements have not entirely alleviated the financial burden of living and working in the area. Faculty wages are also low in comparison to faculty positions across the country, though because faculty at UVM have been represented by United Academics for years, the gap is not as great. But, once again, faculty salaries at UVM are low considering the high cost of living.

Chittenden County, where UVM Libraries is located, has an especially high cost of living due to inflated housing costs and is experiencing a shortage of housing. This, combined with low wages, makes it hard for new employees to find somewhere affordable to live.

This combination has become a real issue for recruitment, hiring, and retention in the UVM Libraries. Recent searches have failed because candidates compared their current salaries and cost of living to that at UVM in Vermont and simply could not make it work. One director-level candidate noted to the search committee that housing was twice as expensive as her current location, childcare was three times as expensive, while the salaries were comparable; the buying power of a UVM Libraries position is simply lower than similar salaries in other locations. We have had three failed searches and multiple searches where we were not able to get our top candidate due to the combination of low salaries and the high cost of living.

This is distinctly a DEI issue because we cannot offer attractive packages to candidates. We also will eventually end up with an inequitable and less than inclusive workforce if the only candidates who can afford to take a job at UVM Libraries have additional sources of income at their disposal. We have heard it said that not finding housing in Chittenden County just means employees should live further away from UVM. Not only does this attitude make UVM's physical campus less accessible for any number of reasons (access to vehicles/public transportation, family obligations, time constraints of additional commute length) many BIPOC and LGBTQ candidates do not feel comfortable living in rural areas, outside of Chittenden County or the Burlington area. Because the Burlington area is more diverse than other areas in Vermont, it is an attractive area to live for many relocating from out of state. In recent searches we asked candidates how important the diversity of where they work and live is to them and many indicated that it was very important. In fact, the fact that Vermont is such a predominantly white state was viewed as a challenge for candidates of any race or background. The fact is that diversity is appealing to academic library candidates and our lack of diversity can be seen as a drawback as this directly impacts our ability to recruit diverse candidates nationwide. As stated above, a major component of the work that the Inclusive Excellence Committee has been tasked with is recommending recruitment best practices for current and future staff and faculty searches. These recommendations become increasingly difficult to follow as UVM becomes less able to compete with salaries and cost of living expenses in other areas.

Almy Landauer

Circulation Librarian at Fletcher Free Library, Burlington

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

Do libraries have enough staff?

The ability to provide 21st century services to Vermonters is directly related to the level of staffing (and other things). I have found in my 15 years of working in VT libraries and getting to know many librarians and libraries that I have not worked in, that many libraries are understaffed. Too often we must rely on volunteers for things like tech support or grant writing. Too often, especially in our small libraries, the librarian(s) does not have enough paid hours in the week to take on projects and programs that would greatly benefit their community, or participate in professional development activities.

Do library professionals get adequate compensation and benefits?

Absolutely not. As a whole librarians and non-librarians who work in libraries are seriously underpaid for their skill level and education. Library work is often undervalued and overlooked by the folks in power in a town or city. As a whole we have not done a good job of advocating for ourselves. Another issue is that so many libraries especially outside Chittenden County and our larger cities, offer only or mostly part time jobs (partly to keep the cost of benefits down). These jobs pay less and the vast majority do not offer benefits. This results in a reduced pool of good applicants and/or high turnover in many cases.

Beth Royer

Library Director, Carpenter-Carse Library, Hinesburg

Testimony for the Working Group on Staffing:

The year I became a library director I attended the Vermont Library Association Conference. I recall a fellow director of a one-person library saying "We need to get paid better." This was in 2019, before the pandemic, and I agreed while also saying "everyone needs to be paid better." I believe this fellow director was earning $15 an hour, and when that position was subsequently re-posted after they left, it was still a library director position paying $15 an hour.

Previous to being a library director, I served as a substitute librarian in a library in a neighboring county, where the initial pay was $12 an hour. After an introductory period, they moved this rate up to $18 an hour and wanted me to take the position as the Adult Librarian BUT it was 30 hours a week and offered no insurance. I loved that library, but not those particular work conditions. At the time, I had no spouse to host my insurance, and the pay was just enough that I couldn't qualify for Medicaid but not so much that I could effectively save money or pay my rent. Instead, as I tried to stay insured I also tried to stay broke enough so that I would not be uninsured.

As the director of an incorporated library, I've struggled with both the challenges of trying to provide a staff that is all part time with a living wage while also paying well enough to retain candidates that offer the skills of modern librarianship. This has become more challenging in a world where a large portion of the female-identifying population is doing the risk-benefit analysis about re-entering the workforce.

How do I sell potential staff on a job that offers a lot of heart but not a lot of cash, and no insurance, in a "post-pandemic" world?

I hired a programming librarian during the pandemic and the job listing drew over 20 candidates. Within a year and a half, the person we hired departed for a full-time position at another library that can offer them insurance. As long as our incorporated library expects me to cobble together a staff without paying them appropriately, we will end up with library services that also feel cobbled together. When we again hired for the same position, advertising for a longer duration and using the same placement ad, essentially, I had a total of four candidates. Meanwhile, the library paraprofessional opening at the local elementary school had something in the area of 30-40 candidates. Also included with that job: health insurance.

The Department of Libraries hasn't provided a suggested salary range for librarians. The Vermont Library Organization only recently began recommending including salary listings with their job postings. This is overdue. There is nothing more vexing than putting in the time to apply for a job and interview only to find that the position does not pay enough to cover basic living expenses.

Every time the subject comes up at the library conference, Vermont Library Association consistently states that the way we can get paid better is through advocacy. For my incorporated library in Chittenden County, this is a crisis not only for working people who are trying to live in one of the most

expensive housing markets in Vermont, but also for the future of the profession. If I can't provide a living wage for younger people who want to work in libraries, how can I expect to not lose them to a neighboring municipal library that can offer them more money? How can I not expect to lose them to other organizations that can offer them a comprehensive benefits package?

IMLS data generally runs two years behind. It also does not separate salaries out, so the only way to make an accurate comparison is by polling other area libraries about what they are paying. While I appreciate that folks from the Department of Libraries have recently FINALLY conducted a salary survey (since the last guidance on advocating for better salaries that VLA produced came out ten years ago, in 2012), this information is still not available yet. Meanwhile, Vermont Library Association's Advocacy information on their website dates from 2006. As long as there is stagnant progress on actually speaking to the problem and an absence of timely data, it will be time-consuming to offer a pay scale that pays people what the market demands.

When the library board here was hiring for my position, the information provided to them at the time of hiring from the Department of Libraries staff person they contacted was basically "sift this complex mix of factors and figure out what you should pay." Meanwhile, neighboring states with equivalent costs of living (to Chittenden County) offer positions and listings where even non-union positions are paying something closer to a living wage.

This is a crisis for the professionalism of the work, and for the people who I want to keep employed and who I want to pay fairly in a competitive job market.

--

Beth Royer

Library Director

Carpenter-Carse Library

69 Ballards Corner Road

Hinesburg, VT 05461

Bob Joly
Director, St. Johnsbury Athenaeum
Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:
Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

I have worked in Vermont libraries since 2002, in very small libraries, and now a larger library. I have worked in Incorporated libraries and municipal ones. Have I ever felt the library I worked in or directed was adequately staffed? No. Do I think staff members are adequately paid as related to professional development? Again, no.

The St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, for instance, does not presently have an IT person on staff. I made the choice to add a half time outreach position to be able to increase our work with children of homeschool families, daycare centers, and other allied organizations. We need both positions. Where will the money come from? There is no funding bucket waiting to be dumped onto the 184 public libraries in Vermont. I do not believe one is forthcoming.

So I make this proposal: increase the number of persons working for the Vermont Department of Libraries.

All libraries in Vermont depend on the great people of VTDOL. Just last week an employee met with me and an Athenaeum volunteer to discuss interaction between Northeast Kingdom Libraries and Communication Union Districts regarding near and future IT needs. I know Josh Muse did not have an extra hour in his schedule to meet with us but he graciously did so because he has knowledge in this area, and like every other member of the Department of Libraries, he is working unbelievably hard on our behalf. I am keeping this note short but I could thank every person at VTDOL.

I have worked in Vermont long enough to remember when the Department of Libraries was three or more times its current size. I am also aware that the Green Mountain Library Consortium was founded during a time when the Department of Libraries could not or would not take on needed initiatives. The current members of the Department work very cooperatively with GMLC, and many other organizations, to bring benefits to libraries we cannot afford individually. I cannot say enough about how much VTDOL accomplishes with so few folks.

Honestly, if someone creates a pot of money as a result of this study, pour it all over us. If the money is a lot more modest, fund additional positions at the Vermont Department of Libraries. We will all be the beneficiaries.

July 14, 2022

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

The Ilsley Public Library's greatest resource is our staff. In order to meet community need, the library employs seven full-time staff and six part-time regular staff (a total of 9.5 FTE). These 9.5 FTE staff positions handle collection development; planning and implementing programs and services; library technologies and technical services; and general administration. In addition, the library relies on a cadre of part-time temporary staff to cover our two service desks (work-study students and substitutes) and to carry out discharge and shelving duties (pages). In a typical week during the academic year, the library utilizes sixty hours of work-study student coverage; ten hours of substitute coverage; and twenty hours of page coverage.

This adds up to about 390 hours of staffing per week, which I would describe as adequate (Ilsley is fortunate to enjoy strong support from the Middlebury community). This might seem like a lot to someone looking in from the outside: even library supporters can be surprised to learn what it takes to run a library that is both operationally sound and programmatically responsive to community needs. "How long could it take to shelve a book?" someone might reasonably wonder. Well, not that long, but when you have to shelve hundreds of books a day it quickly adds up! Checking in books and shelving them takes between twenty and forty hours a week, depending on circulation levels. Desk coverage—having a staff member on a public service desk to check out books, help patrons, and ensure safety in the building—requires 110 hours of staffing per week (Ilsley has two service desks and is open for fifty-five hours per week).

The truth is, it takes a lot because we *do* a lot. Stakeholders need to understand that behind every amazing library service they cherish, there are many hours of staff time. Every library program requires planning, setup, breakdown, and evaluation. Every library book needs to be selected, purchased, unpacked, cataloged, processed, shelved, and checked out before it is read for the first time. Every public access computer needs to be maintained and receives regular software updates. And then there are the innumerable administrative tasks that all organizations must grapple with.

If communities want libraries that offer rich programming, engaging collections, and stellar customer service, then the librarians need adequate admin time away from the public service desk. This allows them to focus fully on engaging with patrons while they are on a service desk, and then carry out their other tasks with focus and care away from the service desk. Doing both at the same time is not optimal, and library directors need to make sure trustees, select boards, and taxpayers understand this. Having off-desk time also allows librarians to meet patrons where they are; because Ilsley has adequate staffing, we are able to ensure a strong presence in and relationship with the local schools, retirement/nursing homes, homeless shelter, and more. By bringing services outside of library walls we are able to connect with community members that do not come into the library.

Stakeholders also must understand that libraries cannot be staffed with volunteers. Volunteers play an important role in supporting their local libraries by offering their expertise on a short-term project, or by pitching in on a one-time effort that requires many hands. But volunteers absolutely cannot replace the work of paid library personnel. Likewise, volunteers should not be used to establish and maintain new library services or hours. This can be a legal issue, if library personnel are union, but it is a bad habit to get into regardless of union status. A good rule of thumb is to ask, "If this volunteer didn't feel like coming in for a week, would we have to arrange coverage for their duties?" If the answer is yes, the library should not be relying on volunteers to carry out those duties. To do so is to misrepresent what it costs to run the library and undermine the long-term stability of library operations.

At Ilsley, regular library staff receive annual cost of living increases. In addition, full-time staff receive annual step increases. It can be difficult to ascertain what a competitive salary for a Vermont librarian is. The Vermont Library Association does have a recommended minimum salary for public library directors, but it is outdated and does not address library directors with MLIS degrees. The VLA salary survey is now ten years old. If these are the measuring sticks we are using to gauge the appropriateness of compensation and benefits, I am not confident we are keeping up with other states.

It is a shame that there is not an MLS or MLIS degree offered in Vermont, and that librarians wishing to pursue a master's degree must do so online. Happily, I do believe Vermont is building a strong culture of continuous professional development through the Department of Libraries' continuing education classes, Certificate of Librarianship, and regular emails with information on additional opportunities. The VLA annual conference is another wonderful opportunity for all library staff to connect with colleagues and find inspiration. Ilsley Public Library is committed to sending any library staff member who is interested to the VLA conference. Many years, this means that we close our doors for the day.

One challenge for Vermont librarians is how to move up without moving on. In higher density states it is easy for librarians to apply for higher level library jobs in their area. In Vermont, if a

librarian wants to transition from a paraprofessional to professional position, or from a professional to administrative position, their options are limited to what is in driving distance of their home. Those options are often scant. Relocating isn't always possible, and I worry that as a result many librarians may come to feel stuck. The need to challenge and engage librarians that have 'outgrown' their current position is real, but it isn't a topic I hear addressed often. Title changes or expansion of responsibilities (along with commensurate salary increases) are two potential ways to recognize librarians that may be in the same role for many years, but whose skills and contributions continue to grow.

Another way might be to encourage a formal mentorship program. A few years ago, an Ilsley library substitute expressed an interest in learning to lead Storytimes. Our Youth Services Librarian, the mentor, identified learning outcomes and designed a curriculum, including visits to Storytimes at several local libraries, as well as one-on-one coaching. Although COVID cut the process a bit short, both mentor and mentee have walked away with positive outcomes. This, of course, required intensive work on the part of our Youth Services Librarian, the mentor. The decision to devote paid staff hours to mentorship is not just appropriate but a smart investment. Our Youth Services Librarian strengthened her instruction skills, revisited best practices in her field, and, most importantly, felt engaged in her work. I hope we can find more opportunities for Vermont librarians to learn from each other, because it really does benefit both parties.

Library staff have a deep and intimate knowledge of their community's needs, and they enjoy a high level of trust relative to other governmental workers or elected officials. As a result, libraries are where people go to find answers and get support. Increasingly, communities have a significant need for social services. Many libraries would benefit from having a dedicated staff person trained in how to help people work through moments of crisis, be it in mental health, substance abuse, poverty or homelessness, or many of the other challenges vulnerable people encounter in their everyday lives. Adding a social worker to the library staff is a departure from traditional library staffing, but we are starting to see libraries in larger cities take this step. The bodies that fund public libraries—trustees, select boards, etc.—should be educated about this trend so that funding can be allocated appropriately.

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of Vermont's public libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Hart
Director

Eileen Gatti

Director of Information Access at Eliot D. Pratt Library of Goddard College

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts on the staffing situation at the Eliot D. Pratt Library of Goddard College. I have been the library director here since February 2021 and was previously the Assistant Director of the Hartness Library, CCV.

Goddard is a low-residency Master's Degree and Bachelor's Degree-granting institution centered in Plainfield, VT, with program and residency options in Washington State. The library primarily serves students remotely through digital resources and online research assistance, with physical materials circulated by mail. During our residency cycles in summer and winter, we see students in-person within their program cohorts. Total enrollment is typically in the area 350-400 students, but generally not more than 60 on-campus at one time.

The college has been in a state of flux for the past several years, with some notable financial crises resulting in the downsizing of staff. Since I have been here, the library staff has consisted of:

- Director of Information Access (myself) -- Full-time, non-Bargaining unit member. MLS required

- Materials Access & Acquisitions Librarian -- Full-time, Bargaining unit member. MLS required.

- Residency Library Assistant -- Part-time, temporary, Bargaining unit member. MLS not required.

The library lost its Technical Services position several years ago and I continue to try to get this added back to our budget, unsuccessfully. We also had a part-time Archivist for the College Archives, which I have not been able to get approval to re-establish.

We are woefully understaffed. At current staffing levels, we are able to maintain basic services for our users and strive to be responsive and flexible. Original cataloging is a challenge given the skillset of the current staff, and we collect several fairly unique items. We are doing a fairly minimal job at managing our electronic resources and don't have the time or expertise to truly maximize our discovery service or our web presence and UX.

New Haven Community Library
78 North Street, Suite 2
New Haven, VT 05742
(802) 453-4015 | librarian@nhcl.org

July 20th, 2022

Re: Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of State Libraries: Staffing

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont

I have yet to work at a library or within a network of libraries that is not challenged by the constraints of an incredibly lean budget, tasked to maximize every single penny beyond its full value. When it comes to hiring staff in rural libraries–especially single-staff libraries–this means search committees often look for a hard-to-find, highly skilled candidate while some larger libraries and other industries/fields can solve the challenge with multiple hires that specifically fit one or two expertises. Job duties for a single-staff library director can include administrative tasks, collection and circulation management, readers advisory, reference & research, grant writing, fundraising, social, web, & print marketing, janitorial & building care, program coordination, volunteer recruitment, IT management & training, and community engagement. It is almost impossible to find a person with this level of skill let alone be able to compensate for the full value they may bring depending on their skill set if they do apply.

As innovative and new technologies are incorporated into a library's plan of service, the scope of what a rural library must be prepared to help with further increases. Add that many single-staff organizations continue to bulk up programming efforts with events like book clubs, story hours, maker spaces, summer reading for all ages, after school programs, and guest speakers–it becomes all too clear that for some library staff, job tasks feel more like a toppling to be read pile that will never be finished.

A band-aid on this issue is volunteer support, and volunteer programs are a great way to build community in your local area. But like we saw with the COVID-19 pandemic when it became unsafe for volunteers to enter the building, tasks typically assigned to volunteers came back to staff and areas of work that became possible because of volunteer support became impossible. The pandemic laid bare the overzealous use of volunteers to keep the library services running.

As employers decide or are required to give leave for childbirth, illnesses, family care, and even emergency sick leave due to the COVID-19, some libraries are at a greater disadvantage of weathering those storms due to their lack forethought of adopting policies and plans that take these issues into consideration before they become law or a unavoidable consideration. Because these conversations aren't being had, libraries are missing out on opportunities to hire qualified staff or retain those who become burnt out from the level of dependence the organization impresses upon them. What's worse is that any shift in a smaller organization has a seismic effect on its stability and can leave communities in vulnerable positions.

Systems like a local substitute list do help manage planned short-term leaves and many emergency illnesses. New Haven maintains a substitute list of 4- 5 volunteers who all receive basic training on circulation tasks prior to starting and come in for training updates periodically as library processes greatly shift. I've found this system to be helpful keeping the building operational in my absence, but it doesn't solve the dependency in which the organization relies upon my "perfect" work attendance overall.

One support system I've greatly appreciated is Vermont's Public Librarianship Certification program. As a new hire in NYS, I had a basic director orientation, cataloging training, and access to a continuing education calendar featuring one or two-day professional development classes. While I took advantage of these opportunities for myself, I also found these brief training sessions to be limited in helping me advance my knowledge on librarianship. Vermont's Public Librarianship Certification program allows non-MLIS credentialed staff to work on their library literacy in a capacity that gives them a solid framework for the how and why of librarianship. I've appreciated a more rigorous process and advanced curriculum as it has tremendously helped me further my knowledge as a director.

Another support I found helpful during my tenure as a director in New York was through our membership with the North Country Library System, a Cooperative Library System. This type of library system brought together 65 libraries from four adjacent counties into a consortial relationship. Our library relied on our system for InterLibrary Loan, IT support, consulting from MLIS professionals who specialized in different areas of librarianship, cataloging materials, workshops and continuing education, our library websites and phone app, and OverDrive.

The biggest advantage to being part of a library system meant small libraries were provided with additional, necessary support to help them work towards staying at pace with modern library services. It was also a cost effective way to have access to some of the more expensive aspects of library service while paying a smaller fee for those services because of a collective agreement—though it should be

noted a large portion of library system funding in NYS is provided for through system aid, not individual libraries budgets.

Yet these advantages came at a cost. The System also tried to standardize parts of libraries' operation, including universal cards, returning borrowed titles to non-home libraries, requiring all libraries to allow transit on new titles, and accepting patron payments on fines and fees from another library. Practices like these made it difficult to understand resident and non-resident use, added labor for staff to process stacks of titles checked out from neighboring libraries and prep them for transit, inequitable access to new materials, and confusion and liability issues for accepting payment for items from a separate organization.

Though a cooperative system keeps libraries autonomous, many processes within the library are now tied within a system and are subject to system rules, making it hard for individual libraries to be dynamic to community needs. It also creates a skewed perception about the ability of rural libraries compared to its more municipal counterparts. While there are services provided through my former Library System that I miss, I think the individuality and strong sense of mission that each library in Vermont carries is absolutely invaluable. I would hate to see our state forsake its defining characteristic solely for some of the services a system provides unless it has better protections in place that keep libraries truly autonomous.

Sincerely,

Katie Male-Riordan
Library Director

Good morning, My name is Laura Fetterolf and I am here today on behalf of the Trustees of the Cornwall Public Library in Cornwall, VT to talk with you about our staffing challenges and successes in Cornwall. Cornwall is a small town of 1,207 people in the middle of Addison County. Our library is"staffed" entirely with volunteers - the seven trustees of the library. And the reason this is possible is the library is situated within the Cornwall Town Hall - so the library is open Tuesday - Friday from 9am-5pm, and the town clerk is also a library trustee.

The reason we're all volunteers is that we are granted $4000 each year from the Town of Cornwall at Town Meeting, which goes to pay for library materials. We do receive some gifts and donations, and we do run a very profitable booksale each fall, but our total budget is still somewhere around $6000. We don't pay rent, or utilities, though we do pay for a dedicated phone line for the library's computer. When we have needed "big ticket items" - an entire set of bookshelves for the space in the newly renovated Town Hall, or a new computer for our catalog and self-checkout, we have done a public appeal and our townspeople have been generous. But we definitely do not have the funds to pay the salary of a trained librarian.

To compensate, the trustees have portioned off some of the day-to-day library operations. We have one trustee who does a fantastic job ordering and cataloging materials. We have another trustee, our town clerk, who helps patrons with books they want to find or request, or with ILLs - in between her town clerk duties. She also makes sure the bills are paid. One trustee organizes the yearly weeding to get the shelves cleared for new books. The other four trustees help with organizing the book sale, and lending their opinion and advice on any matters that come up. Our goal is to come as close as we can to meeting the state standards for Public Libraries.

1. We do provide free, equal & easy public access to services - as we are located within the town hall, so we are handicapped accessible.
2. The standards state "receives at least $1 per capita of local tax support" - Cornwall is a town of 1,207 per the 2020 census. We receive $4000 from tax support, which means we receive $3.90 per capita. We expend our total support at just over $5 per capita
3. We do cooperate with other libraries and communities agencies - we participate in ILL at no cost to our patrons, and we have partnered with the local Boy Scout Troop and the Odyssey of the Mind to provide materials and fund-raising support.

Thus far, all of that has gone pretty well. We have devoted patrons and healthy circulation numbers.

In speaking with my fellow trustees, one issue that we felt was our greatest challenge is our lack of a designated leader, like a library director, because no one has the time to do that in a volunteer capacity. We have no long term or long range plans. We plan for the next 6 months or so. We're still in the process of getting our policies written, and our mission statement crafted. We are definitely a work that is constantly in progress.

Over the years, we have heard the suggestion now and then that we close the library or try to become part of Ilsley Library. (In full disclosure, I'm a librarian at Ilsley. Ilsley is a wonderful library, the librarians are fantastic, the collection is amazing, the trustees are wonderful.) But we have had much input that most of our patrons do not want that. Our patrons don't want to become a suburb of Middlebury. Our town school has been consolidated into the surrounding district, and we have lost much of the say in how our school is run. And as it stands right now, our school might one of the schools forcibly closed by the district. When and if that happens, our library will be the last bit of Cornwall community space. Our library is our last remaining free community space in our town, the only space in town where there is any opportunity for intergenerational interaction.

So, the trustees keep working hard, doing our very best with what we've got, striving to ensure Cornwall library continues on into the future.

Maya Newroot

Children's Program Coordinator at Rochester Public Library

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

Hello!

I am writing in response to the request sent out for experiences with staffing in libraries.

I am the children's program coordinator at Rochester Public Library, since April 2021. I have a lot of enthusiasm for this job (I LOVE IT) and so many ideas! However, it has been a real struggle to balance that with what the library budget has allotted for my compensation. There's been a learning curve, for sure, but there definitely is not enough money to develop a consistently present, energetic children's program.

My solution, for now, thanks to the guidance of Jeannette Bair, Library Director, is to look at the total number of hours I'm granted for the year, and shift those hours around, on a monthly basis, according to the needs of the programs. So in summer, when I've been doing many activities, I've planned for more hours each month than I have in the winter.

But, oh, to be paid a more liveable wage and have the budget to work more--that would really be my dream job!

Maya Newroot

Patty Genadio
Jeffersonville, Vermont
July 17, 2022

Written Testimony on the Topic of Staffing:
For the Working Group on the Status of Vermont's Libraries

I was a library clerk at a Vermont public library from 2017 to 2021. When a new library board took over in early 2021, they quickly made a series of problematic decisions and actions that undermined the library staff and volunteers, and they quickly turned our formerly warm, supportive workplace into an extremely toxic work environment. Within less than four months, all eight members of our library team — four staff members and four volunteers — resigned. This presented a loss of nearly seven decades of institutional memory and experience for our library.

We had tried to work with the new library board. We asked them to do the VTLIB trustee trainings, so that they would have a better understanding of their responsibilities and limits, as well as ours, but they kept putting it off. The board told us that our jobs were easy, that they found nothing at the library when they started, and that the library was broken. They told us this after we'd kept the library going during the difficult first year of the pandemic, and after countless patrons had thanked us for continuing to provide library services and for being a lifeline during an extremely challenging time. The board repeatedly dismissed our experience, our training, our expertise, and our concerns about protecting patrons' privacy.

Multiple members of our library team considered seeking legal counsel, both while we were still at the library, and also after we had resigned. The board repeatedly made baseless allegations against us in social media and in the press, some of which led to another library's rescinding of a job offer to one of my colleagues. The board's public attacks only stopped after this colleague engaged legal counsel.

My colleagues and I were in regular communication with librarians at the Vermont Department of Libraries about our situation. The VTLIB librarians were sympathetic and offered advice and guidance, while also acknowledging that there was not much they could do to help us. At one point, they mentioned that the remaining staff could consider seeking legal counsel. We did consider that, but we couldn't afford that option, and we also thought that the board might decide to become more collaborative, in the face of the most recent resignations; but instead, the situation deteriorated even further.

Several times, my colleagues and I considered resigning en masse, but we always decided against that, because we knew that our patrons would have been abruptly and negatively impacted, as much-needed services to our community would have been immediately disrupted.

We reached out to the town selectboard multiple times, but they dismissed our concerns and continued to voice their full support for the library trustees and the rest of the library board. Eighteen months later, the town continues to be deeply divided, with many former patrons no longer feeling comfortable going to their local public library.

Areas for Improvement:

I've learned the hard way that there are very few protections and recourses for public library personnel in Vermont. This needs to change. I appreciate Vermont's tradition of local control of our public libraries, but library personnel should not be subject to the whims of library boards and board members who engage in troubling behavior towards library staff and volunteers under their authority.

Conflicts of interest also present a challenge in small Vermont towns, where there is often much overlap between local government, local boards, and other local organizations. In the case of our library, some of the new board members had close ties to local elected officials, and some had histories of friction with some of the library personnel newly

under their authority. Conflicts of interest need to be recognized and addressed in order to enable successful, transparent, and accountable library governance.

Questions for the Working Group To Consider:

What can VTLIB do to further support library staff and volunteers who find themselves in a toxic library work environment?

What can VTLIB do to further support library staff and volunteers who are dealing with challenging library boards and/or board members?

Is there legislative action that could be introduced to provide more protections for staff and volunteers at Vermont's public libraries?

Successful Strategies and Approaches:

I wish that I could mention strategies and approaches that have proven successful, but, unfortunately, none of the strategies or approaches that my colleagues and I have tried over the past year and a half have been successful.

I have spoken with library personnel from other Vermont libraries who have also dealt with challenging library boards. I also know from past experience what it's like to serve under supportive library boards. I hope that the Working Group, VTLIB, and our state can find and institute strategies and approaches to help protect library personnel and to help library staff, volunteers, and boards to work together respectfully to better serve Vermont communities.

Peter Langella

Librarian at Champlain Valley Union HS

With Supporting document; Excel Spreadsheet

Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

Dear Committee,

From 2007-2008 to 2018-2019, school librarian FTE statewide went from 220 to 197, or a ~10% decrease. Unfortunate, but, other than a few schools that aren't in compliance with the EQS 300 language (full text below), it's my opinion that the decrease is mostly due to an overall decrease in student enrollment.

From the Vermont Agency of Education's Education Quality Standards, 2121.2. Staff:
"The services of a certified library media specialist shall be made available to students and staff. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy, information and technology standards. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library media specialist on a pro-rata basis."

In the same period of 2007-2008 to 2018-2019 (the most recent data I could find), school library support staff FTE statewide went from 136 to 71, a decrease of ~47%. The implications for our profession are huge. And these numbers are before the pandemic. That "and sufficient support staff" from EQS is being ignored in a big way. Half of our school library support staff FTE has been cut in a decade.

The data are on Table 1, rows 264-287, attached.

It is my guess that districts who educate higher percentages of low-income and rural students, as well as districts who have the highest percentages of English Language Learners, have been impacted the most heavily by this inequity. I advise your committee to ask for the most recent AOE data for school library staffing, down to the building level, and I think strict staffing baselines -- and equity goals -- need to be established.

Best,
Peter

--

Peter Langella (he/him)
Librarian
Champlain Valley Union HS
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Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of State Libraries: Staffing
July 7, 2022
Susan O'Connell, Library Director, Craftsbury Public Library
director@craftsburypubliclibrary.org
802-586-9683

Public librarians in the 21st century are administrators, business managers, IT professionals, social workers. These jobs are in addition to the traditional roles librarians have had: reference librarian, collection development, readers advisory, and cataloger. As our jobs have grown more complex, there has not been a consistent response from libraries regarding compensation.

Some library organizations have acknowledged the changing requirements for library staff by increasing staffing, hours, or compensation. Other libraries have relied on volunteer hours to fill the gap, either with volunteers in the community or by relying on the director to work more hours than they are paid. Still other libraries have remained much the same as they were in the past, and have not kept pace with increased technological, social, and administrative needs in the library and community.

In my 11 years working at the Craftsbury Public Library, I have twice launched an advocacy campaign regarding my own job, and that of my staff. The first time I advocated to have my position increased from 32 hours/week to 40 hours/week, and increased compensation for support staff. The second time I advocated for benefits and a pay rate more in keeping with my professional credentials. In both instances, I was successful, and I feel that my position is now a desirable position that would attract qualified candidates who would serve the library well. Had I not done the work of disrupting the status quo regarding staffing and compensation, the job would have expanded but with me taking up the slack. When the time comes for the library to hire a new director, they would have been unable to find someone with the necessary skills and experience who would accept the compensation they offered.

I think there are several problems that need to be addressed. Libraries traditionally struggle to find proper funding, and funding is highly variable from town to town. State funding would help to provide needed funds, and could also serve to even out the variability in funding. Librarians and board members need better guidance on what proper compensation is. In years past, the Vermont Library Association provided semiannual salary surveys, and VTLIB has recently launched a survey to help gather and disseminate data on salaries which should be helpful.

During both of my advocacy campaigns, a recurring theme was that library patrons were unaware that my position and compensation was not equal to the professionalism they experience at the library. While the library board worried about increasing the budget, the community was strongly supportive of improving conditions so that the library could continue to function with professional staff. This is where clear expectations, in the form of standards, VLA recommendations, or other means would help to ensure that librarian salaries move toward the professional compensation that reflects the education and skills that go into the job.

While some public libraries are able to provide benefits through the municipality, incorporated libraries do not have that option. Finding a way to provide health care coverage and retirement benefits through a group purchasing plan would benefit my library, and I imagine a fair number of other libraries as well.

Written Comments:
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Bree Drapa
Director, Westford Public Library
westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com
I would be happy to speak on behalf of this important issue.

I received my VT Certificate of Librarianship in 2015. This was a time when classes were still held in person in Berlin and you really got to know the cohort you were learning alongside. The connections I made in those core classes still exist for me today. At a recent mentoring meeting (thank you, Joy, for starting up this program), several of the mentors were people I had taken classes with or been taught by. It felt like a reunion. I really miss in person meetings and classes, but also see the value in digital instruction.

The fact that my VT Library Certification was earned at no cost to me or my library was amazing. I do not think people would take the time to earn this accreditation, nor would some libraries prioritize paying for it. I would recommend doing everything you can to keep VTLIB's classes free for those who take them.

I have continued to take classes through VTLIB – there always seems to be something I am interested in. As a solo librarian, I wear all the hats, so I need all the classes! I find it odd, or worrisome, that we do not need to take further CE classes to keep up our certification. The value in updating skills, learning new information, and making those important connections with colleagues does not stop once you have your certificate.

Not only have I taken VTLIB classes, but I have taken classes with their partner organizations – like Narcan training or mental health classes with the Howard Center and Gary Diezel's HR courses through UVM Extension school.

I deeply miss the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative – a program that I was part of for many years. These classes and workshops grew my youth services practice and gave me materials and skills to better serve my community. Not only that, but we were also trained and certified to teach childcare providers through Northern Lights. Giving child care providers FREE credits was super helpful for them, since they must take many hours of CE, often at their own expense, to keep up their certification.

At this point in my library learning journey, I often look outside of Vermont for learning opportunities. I have participated in several ALA book groups and found them very informative. But that most relevant and transformational educational opportunities I have had have been through the Association of Rural and Small Libraries. ARSL just gets a small, rural librarian. Their classes are relevant, timely, and very professional. The ARSL Conference is more useful and applicable to me than even our VLA Conference. The national presence and the ability to draw on a larger pool of experts makes ARSL a valuable resource. I have met and learned from colleagues across the country and to see their struggles and strengths has given me inspiration and even more connections to the library world. In 2020, I was accepted into the ARSL Outstanding in Their Field Leadership Institute. This 20-month long program has given

me skills and opportunities that I never thought I would have. It has been my unofficial MLIS.

Speaking of MLIS, the fact that there is no ALA accredited MLIS program located in the state of Vermont is a blow for the profession. Online programs do not work for everyone. Also, the cost of the programs available, online or otherwise, are prohibitive. I am never going to recoup my investment in an MLIS working in Vermont. I am not going to suddenly start making $40,000 more at my current job with an advanced degree. Even if I switch to a larger library (I love being a rural librarian), the ROI is not here in this state.

Because I value CE, I also like to give back in the form of presenting at conferences, webinars, workshops, etc. The VT library landscape is full of talent and using that talent to strengthen the profession should be a top priority of VTLIB going forward.

Before I conclude, I would like to compliment Joy Worland on her improvement of the VTLIB CE offerings and process. Since she came on, there have been a greater variety of classes/topics available, as well as various meet ups, round tables, and trainings for upper level library workers. Her efforts are very much appreciated. Keep up the good work, Joy!

Looking back on what I wrote here, I think that CE is partly what you learn and partly who you meet. The connections that are made through the learning process can be just as important as the information or skills learned.

Cassie Willner
Program Manager
Children's Literacy Foundation
cassie@clifonline.org / 802-244-0944
November 18, 2022

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries—

Thank you for the invitation to submit testimony on behalf of my organization, the Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF). CLiF's mission is to help inspire a love of reading and writing among under-resourced children across Vermont and New Hampshire. Since CLiF's founding in 1998, we have served over 350,000 children, and given away over $10 million in new, high-quality children's books. We've partnered with over 90 percent of the rural libraries in Vermont and New Hampshire towns with populations under 5,000, helping to increase circulation and build community around literacy. We also partner with public schools, out-of-school time programs, summer programs, affordable housing developments, correctional facilities, family centers, and other social service agencies to reach underserved youth in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Our longstanding partnership with public libraries has been and remains a mainstay of CLiF. Through our Rural Libraries grant program, we work closely with the public library, the local elementary school, and area early education locations to provide extensive support over the course of one school year. Libraries can also apply to our Summer Readers, Community Building, and Revive grant programs.

So how do we link to library workforce development, staff training, and continuing education?

Capacity is always an issue. If a library doesn't have employees or volunteers comfortable with basic grant writing, with available time to complete the application, and who are "in the loop" with these grant opportunities, then they may potentially miss out on wonderful and FREE programs for their communities. We work hard to reach our libraries in need; but we can't obviously write the grants for them.

We provide two professional development opportunities open to public librarians/staff/affiliates—both are free and held online in order to make it as easy to attend as possible. The first is our annual "Community Literacy Conference" that is open to all CLiF partners including librarians, teachers, school staff, administrators, out-of-school time providers, early educators, etc. This conference offers a total of 4.5 hours of training from presenters, as well as peer-to-peer sharing, updates on CLiF's research and work, and free books we send to participants! At the last event in March 2022 we offered three online workshops: "Building Diverse Classroom Collections and Facilitating New Conversations," "The Power of Story: Finding Your Voice," and "Using Nonfiction Graphic Novels."

We also hold a bi-annual "Rural Library Conference." This is held virtually and offers a total of 4.5 hours of professional development with a specific focus for small, rural libraries. At the last conference in Fall 2021, almost 150 people registered for the event. We offered three online workshops: "Diversity to Inclusion," "Singing a Story, Telling a Song: Tips for Creating Language-Rich Storytimes," and "Moving Forward Virtually with Family Initiatives during COVID." Each session was 1.5 hours long and anyone who logged in and identified themselves in the chat received a box of new books.

From our 2021 conference, we asked for feedback and here are some topics and themes that were requested for the next event (which will be held in Fall 2023):

- Engaging 0-5
- Reaching the homeschooling population
- ACES/SEL connections
- Staff Development on the cheap
- Mental Health First Aid
- Lose of school librarians – how to help
- Building flourishing communities
- Public movie
- Family & community engagement
- Blogs – technology
- Outreach & advertising

The last thing we offer are literacy program ideas available on CLiF's website that librarians can implement with little or no funds. We also have many professionally-produced videos to help librarians (and any adults) be more comfortable sharing stories and books with children. While librarians will not receive professional development credit for accessing these resources, they can use them to further develop their skills and programming.

Building our community, making connections, sharing stories, learning from each other, adjusting to current needs—these are all important aspects of our professional development opportunities.

As has been widely reported, the results of the first Nation's Report Card since the pandemic began were sobering. After years of disrupted learning, average reading proficiency scores for 9-year-olds plunged to their lowest level in over 30 years. While students across all demographics were impacted, the steepest declines were measured among students from historically under-resourced backgrounds. It's never been more important to ensure all kids in our communities have equitable access to enriching literacy experiences and resources, and why CLiF will continue to invest in our public libraries and librarians as important partners in our work.

August 10, 2023

Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library

To the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

I am hoping that Certificate classes are now open to new residents of Vermont who have not yet found a VT library job. I am imagining that the rules were changed when classes went online but I figured I should mention it.

When I got my masters in NY twenty odd years ago, I wanted to take a class to meet local people in the field. I know the DOL rep felt terrible telling me "No". Libraries can be SO different in states with library systems, or just more money, it can also be very helpful to learn what the libraries world is like on the ground in VT.

Thank you,
Catherine

Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library
2827 Route 116, Starksboro, VT 05487
802-453-3732
Library hours: Monday 10-6, Thursday 10-5, Saturdays 9-2.
SPL is a courier library.

Johnny Flood, Vermont Early Literacy Initiative
Vermont Humanities
Written statement for the Working Group meeting on November 11, 2022

As you've heard in past testimony, the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative's original goal was to improve the cognitive content of public library's early literacy programming. At the time, this was almost exclusively story time. No matter how tiny or how huge your library is, if you're a librarian, you do story time. Story time is and always will be a song, a finger play, a story, and a craft, and maybe another song. And there's nothing wrong with that!

But it was the dream of a past VTLIB children's consultant—Grace Greene—that librarians would learn just how important those story time interactions were. When you have a group of babies, you also have a group of parents. You're reading to the babies, but you're also talking to the parents. You're modeling the reading. You're also giving parents tips on reading to their baby, talking to their baby, all of that. So those early trainings served as continuing education as they helped to raise the bar and allowed librarians to understand that what they were already doing was important, good work; they just needed to do it with *intentionality*. We wanted them to make it clear to their communities how important the public library was, if they didn't know it already.

As one librarian said in her testimony, after VELI, story time was no longer considered just entertainment. It was education.

Librarians from 98 public libraries attended those trainings over a decade—and VELI eventually expanded to include other topics such as social-emotional development, STEM, visual literacy, you name it. Librarians also made connections with and trained community child-care providers. At first librarians said they didn't know how to train child-care providers and there was real pushback at first, until they realized that they *are* literacy experts and they have valuable knowledge and experience to offer.

Vermont Humanities is now the home of VELI. In 2020 we began by reconnecting with 11 of the VELI libraries in a first cohort and planning to offer trainings on "big-picture" topics while providing books and materials for programming. And then, we all know what happened in early 2020. Much like how librarians had to pivot with their communities, we did as well. As time went on, it began to make more sense to have regular personal contact with the 11 libraries, rather than try to get together for in-person conferences. We asked them, "What do you need? How can we help?" And that help was wide-ranging and unique to each community. The kinds of programs that were popular before the pandemic may not meet the needs of children, families, and other community members in this ever-evolving landscape. What was needed in Bennington (where the community was welcoming new Americans from Afghanistan) was not what was needed in Bradford (where the library was the new meal-distribution location for the community). In Enosburg Falls, the librarian had always wanted to put together circulating take-home bags with books and materials around a topic. They've been so popular, she's making more. In Orwell, the librarian wanted to connect with middle-schoolers for the first time—a notoriously hard-to-get audience—and she did that through a Humanities Camp. In Barre, the

librarian is restarting his in-person programs for child-care providers, something that had been suspended over the pandemic. Clearly, it could not be a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Therefore, we shifted our focus to making routine site visits to observe programs, deliver books, and speak with librarians about the challenges they face and offer advice, which could come from other librarians, in some cases. We held regular Zoom meet-ups, where librarians could offer each other advice about particular topics. Even in the larger towns, librarians often feel isolated, and we see part of our role as bringing the librarians together. In a recent meeting two of the librarians talked about how they hadn't had an in-person story hour in so long and had almost forgotten how to do it. One said she wasn't sure she was doing a "good job" anymore! If anyone could understand how she was feeling, it was the others on the call, and they were able to talk it over together.

As a humanities-centered organization, we strive to bring the humanities disciplines into communities and to use literacy, learning, and discussion as tools for community-building as much as for education and enrichment. We feel very strongly that public libraries serve a vital role as community hubs that align and help further our own mission, and we know that VT librarians are working incredibly hard to meet the specific needs of their communities. In that vein, we want our relationship with librarians to be a partnership, where we offer our strengths as facilitators and administrators first and bring our backgrounds as subject matter experts into conversations, workshops, and trainings when it is directly relevant to their work—and help them share their expertise with one another whenever possible.

We still plan to offer more "formal" learning opportunities for the VELI cohort and are excited to introduce these in the near future, but we will continue to meet the librarians where they are because we believe this is valuable to librarians professionally.

In summary, librarians have to be dynamic and generous and nimble—it's part of the job description! We strive to provide librarians this same support as they form new community collaborations, welcome new audiences into the community and the library, all the while they grow as professionals.

Working Group On the Status of Vermont Libraries Report: Higher Education - UVM School Library Studies Sequence

By Deborah Ehler-Hansen, M. Ed., Department of Education Program Coordinator - UVM School Library Media Studies Sequence & Part-Time Faculty Lecturer, November, 2022

Historical Background Information

UVM Library Science Program Celebrates 44 Years!

- The UVM Library Science program was started in the Department of Education in 1978 by Professor Helene Lang.
- Coordinator and Lecturer, Judith Kaplan, led the flourishing program - transforming learning in School Libraries for K-12 students in Vermont for almost two decades, until retiring at the end of July, 2022.
- Deborah Ehler-Hansen took over the program as Coordinator and Lecturer in August, 2022.

Why School Librarians Need Higher Ed Training

School Libraries in the Digital Age: Dynamic Hubs for Learning

According to the American Association of School Librarians, **"**Today's school librarian works with both students and teachers to facilitate access to information in a wide variety of formats, instruct students and teachers how to acquire, evaluate and use information and the technology needed in this process, and introduces children and young adults to literature and other resources to broaden their horizons. As a collaborator, change agent, and leader, the school librarian develops, promotes and implements a program that will help prepare students to be effective users of ideas and information, a lifelong skill" (2022).
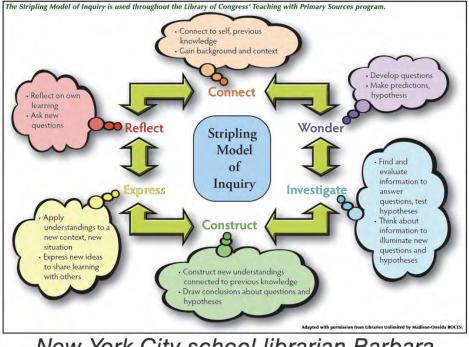
School Librarians, also known as School Library Media Specialists, are educational leaders and resource specialists in pre-K-12 schools who collaborate with other educators to provide equitable and inclusive access to resources and information for all learners. Educational training for this profession requires knowledge, skills, and understanding about the intersection of teaching and learning and principles of librarianship that impact successful school library programs.

The Intersection of Teaching & Learning and Librarianship

School Libraries Provide Inclusive Resources!

Inquiry/Critical Thinking Skills in the School Library!

The Stripling Model of Inquiry is used throughout the Library of Congress' Teaching with Primary Sources program.

New York City school librarian Barbara Stripling created this model.

Information Literacy Skills in the School Library!

Information Literacy! What is it?

An introduction by Deborah Ehler-Hansen

image: http://kimanziconstable.com/information-overload/

Click on the following links to learn more about specific information literacy skills:

How to Formulate Good Questions

Searching for Primary and Secondary Sources of Information

How to Cite Properly

Copyright, Fair Use and the Public Domain

Database Instruction

Digital Curation Tools

Evaluation of Sources

Note-taking

Annotated Bibliography

Digital Ethics and Safety

EBooks in the School Library!

Girl in the Blue Coat
Monica Hesse

The Greatest Zombi
Jeff Strand

Labyrinth Lost
Zoraida Cordova

The Lie Tree
Frances Hardinge
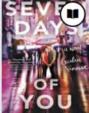
One Was Lost
Natalie D. Richards

Out of Darkness
Ashley Hope Pérez

Piper Perish
Kayla Cagan

Seven Days of You
Cecilia Vinesse

Databases in the School Library!

Bloom's Literary Reference Online: This database "Examines great writers, important works, memorable characters, and influential movements and events in world literature." Read and listen to the classics online, and choose from a total of 1,000 videos, which includes movies and podcasts.

Writer's Reference Center: This is a great database you can use, no matter what class you are taking! Learn the fundamentals of writing, such as the writing process. Learn how to write about themes, characters, forms and genre. Review, step by step, how to construct a great essay with examples! Learn about writing styles, punctuation and grammar. Utilize the Guide to Research, the Reference Shelf, and many other valuable resources.

Computer Science Education in the School Library!

Spotlight on Coding and computer Science:
Learn to code using interactive ebooks that you can access 24/7 from anywhere!
Learn HTML, Java, Javascript, Lego Mindstorms, Minecraft,
Python, Raspberry PI, Ruby, Scratch, Apple Swift, and Alice.

Technology - Makerspaces in the School Library!

View the videos below to see how students are creating, innovating, collaborating, and learning in the FHUHS Library Makerspace!

Robotic Arm

Makerspace activities in the library!

A Statewide Shortage of School Librarians: The Dire Need For Newly Educated/Trained School Librarians

Agency of Education Teacher Shortage Areas 2022-2023

According to the [Agency of Education 2022-2023 Teacher Shortage Areas Report](#) there is a STATEWIDE SHORTAGE of PK-12 Library/Media Specialists.

Our current class EDLI 376 is filled over the recommended enrollment amount.

UVM School Library Studies Sequence: Main Goal

The main goal of the UVM school librarian preparation program is to prepare candidates for service and leadership as school librarians serving PK-12 students. This is the only school library educator program in Vermont. Please see Libraries Transform: The Expert in the School Library Resource Guides.

UVM School Library Studies Sequence: An Overview

The University of Vermont offers graduate educational opportunities for those interested in school library media studies to gain an educator licensure in Vermont or to acquire a graduate degree in school library media. Courses are remote - online, asynchronous with synchronous video conference sessions. Students follow a sequence of courses, as listed below, which support cohort-based learning opportunities. As a result - together - students build a collaborative and supportive, professional community which thrives over many years.

Licensure: Six Graduate Courses

- ○ EDLI 372 Managing and Leading School Library Media Centers
- ○ EDLI 373 Developing and Organizing School Library Media Center Collections
- ○ EDLI 377 Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers
- ○ EDLI 376 Sources and Services for School Library Media Centers
- ○ EDLI 374 Designing Learning in School Library Media Centers
- **Graduate Degree: Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction** with a concentration in Library Media Studies

UVM School Library Studies Sequence: First Year of Sequence

1. **EDLI 372 Managing and Leading School Library Media Centers (FALL)**

    Managing and Leading School Library Media Centers examines foundational principles and issues of school librarianship, such as intellectual freedom, equity, and access. Candidates will prepare for organizing and operating a school library media center, with emphasis on leadership and advocacy for planning, policy and procedure development, facility design, personnel administration, and program evaluation.

2. **EDLI 373 Developing and Organizing School Library Media Center Collections (SPRING)**

    This course explores fundamental concepts for developing and organizing School Library Media Center collections in this course. Equity of access to information resources is a guiding principle that drives collection development, and emphasis is placed on evaluation, selection, and acquisition of resources appropriate for students, staff, and other patrons in contemporary schools in both physical and virtual environments.

3. **EDLI 377 Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers (SUMMER)**

    Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers explores the planning, instructional use, and management of technology in the contemporary school library media center. Learners will develop competence and confidence in teaching with and using technology. This course explores the ways that technology can support readers, provide access to resources, create community, and give students authentic outlets to communicate their ideas beyond school walls. Course participants will also examine ways to design instruction to teach and promote digital citizenship and media literacy skills.

UVM School Library Studies Sequence: Second Year of Sequence

4. EDLI 376 Information Sources and Services for School Library Media Centers (FALL)

This course focuses on the teacher librarian's role in the information landscape. *Information Sources and Services* addresses: research strategies, search tools, information curation, teaching, and evaluation with multimedia digital reference resources to meet the needs of a diverse learning community. There will be an emphasis on virtual library learning spaces which is critical in an anytime, anywhere learning environment.

5. EDLI 374 Designing Learning in School Library Media Centers (SPRING)

This course is designed to explore theories and best practices for teaching and learning in today's school libraries. School Librarians are educators who demonstrate knowledge of learners and learning. They model and promote collaborative planning and assessment, instruction in multiple literacies, and inquiry-based learning which enables members of the learning community to become effective users and creators of ideas and information. School Librarians design and implement instruction that engages students' interests and develops their ability to inquire, think creatively and critically, build citizenship skills, and gain and share knowledge in a proficiency-based, personalized learning environment.

6. EDLI 371 Children's and Young Adult Literature (SUMMER)

Effective school librarians promote reading for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. This course is designed as a survey of the context and merit of children's (CH) and young adult (YA) literature, that is, books written for and read by readers from ages Pre K-Grade 12. The course will examine major trends in children's and young adult literature, and current issues in the selection of reading materials in multiple formats to support reading for information, reading for pleasure, and reading for lifelong learning.   The course also includes a focus on best practices in reading and literacy instruction that enhances opportunities to meet the diverse interests and abilities of all readers.

Extended Learning Opportunities:

In addition to coursework, candidates enrolling in the UVM School Library Studies Sequence have opportunities to extend their learning through performance tasks and projects embedded in coursework that apply theory to authentic practice in the field.

Those opportunities include, but are not limited to:

Field experiences: Candidates visit and evaluate various physical and virtual school libraries to reflect on models for best practice.

Practicum experiences: Requirements for the School Librarian endorsement (Vermont Educator #61) practicum are supported through established mentor relationships for novice school librarians, and guidance for the transcript review process.

Leadership/service opportunities: Candidates design and lead professional learning for colleagues, and other members of the educational community in face-to-face or virtual environments.

Professional Organizations and networks: Candidates develop professional learning networks that include national and state school libraries, technology, and other educational organizations that support learners with resources for curriculum and educational practice in a globally connected world.

Research opportunities: Candidates use an inquiry process and reflective practice to explore current issues in education and school library practice. Findings and resources that support conclusions may be published or shared through social media or other appropriate venues.

Foundational Principles of Librarianship: Candidates advocate for Intellectual Freedom, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity as foundational to effective school library programs for all learners.

The program addresses the philosophy, principles and ethics of the field through five standards: (ALA/AASL/CAEP* School Librarian Preparation Standards 2019)

Standard 1: The Learner and Learning
Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are effective educators who demonstrate an awareness of learners' development. Candidates promote cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness. Candidates integrate the *National School Library Standards* considering learner development, diversity, and differences while fostering a positive learning environment. Candidates impact student learning so that all learners are prepared for college, career, and life.

1.1 **Learner Development**. Candidates demonstrate the ways learners grow within and across cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and developmental domains. Candidates engage learners' interests to think, create, share, and grow as they design and implement instruction that integrates the *National School Library Standards*.

1.2 **Learner Diversity**. Candidates articulate and model cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness, supporting individual and group perspectives.

1.3 **Learning Differences**. Candidates cultivate the educational and personal development of all members of a learning community, including those with diverse intellectual abilities, learning modalities, and physical variabilities.

1.4 **Learning Environments**. Candidates create both physical and virtual learner-centered environments that are engaging and equitable. The learning environments encourage positive social interaction and the curation and creation of knowledge.

* Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

The program addresses the philosophy, principles and ethics of the field through five standards: (ALA/AASL/CAEP* School Librarian Preparation Standards 2019)

Standard 2: Planning for Instruction

Candidates in school library preparation programs collaborate with the learning community to strategically plan, deliver, and assess instruction. Candidates design culturally responsive learning experiences using a variety of instructional strategies and assessments that measure the impact on student learning. Candidates guide learners to reflect on their learning growth and their ethical use of information. Candidates use data and information to reflect on and revise the effectiveness of their instruction.

1.1 **Planning for Instruction**. Candidates collaborate with members of the learning community to design developmentally and culturally responsive resource-based learning experiences that integrate inquiry, innovation, and exploration and provide equitable, efficient, and ethical information access.

1.2 **Instructional Strategies**. Candidates use a variety of instructional strategies and technologies to ensure that learners have multiple opportunities to inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage in their learning.

1.3 **Integrating Ethical Use of Information into Instructional Practice**. Candidates teach learners to evaluate information for accuracy, bias, validity, relevance, and cultural context. Learners demonstrate ethical use of information and technology in the creation of newknowledge.

1.4 **Assessment**. Candidates use multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth. Candidates, in collaboration with instructional partners, revise their instruction to address areas in which learners need to develop understanding.

* Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

The program addresses the philosophy, principles and ethics of the field through five standards: (ALA/AASL/CAEP* School Librarian Preparation Standards 2019)

Standard 3: Knowledge and Application of Content
Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are knowledgeable in literature, digital and information literacies, and current instructional technologies. Candidates use their pedagogical skills to actively engage learners in the critical-thinking and inquiry process. Candidates use a variety of strategies to foster the development of ethical digital citizens and motivated readers.

1.1 **Reading Engagement**. Candidates demonstrate a knowledge of children's and young adult literature that addresses the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners. Candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation to read for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment.

1.2 **Information Literacy**. Candidates know when and why information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. Candidates model, promote, and teach critical- thinking and the inquiry process by using multiple literacies.

1.3 **Technology-Enabled Learning**. Candidates use digital tools, resources, and emerging technologies to design and adapt learning experiences. Candidates engage all learners in finding, evaluating, creating, and communicating data and information in a digital environment. Candidates articulate, communicate, model, and teach digital citizenship.

* Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

The program addresses the philosophy, principles and ethics of the field through five standards: (ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards 2019)

Standard 4: Organization and Access
Candidates in school librarian preparation programs model, facilitate, and advocate for equitable access to and the ethical use of resources in a variety of formats. Candidates demonstrate their ability to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection of resources to assert their commitment to the diverse needs and interests of the global society. Candidates make effective use of data and other forms of evidence to evaluate and inform decisions about library policies, resources, and services.

1.1 **Access**. Candidates facilitate and advocate for flexible, open access to library resources and services according to the ethical codes of the profession. Candidates design and develop strategic solutions for addressing physical, social, virtual, economic, geographic, and intellectual barriers to equitable access to resources and services.

1.2 **Information Resources**. Candidates use evaluation criteria and selection tools to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection designed to meet the diverse curricular and personal needs of the learning community. Candidates evaluate and select information resources in a variety of formats.

1.3 **Evidence-Based Decision Making**. Candidates make effective use of data and information to assess how practice and policy impact groups and individuals in their diverse learning communities.

* Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

The program addresses the philosophy, principles and ethics of the field through five standards: (ALA/AASL/CAEP* School Librarian Preparation Standards 2019)

Standard 5: Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Responsibility Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are actively engaged in leadership, collaboration, advocacy, and professional networking. Candidates participate in and lead ongoing professional learning. Candidates advocate for effective school libraries to benefit all learners. Candidates conduct themselves according to the ethical principles of the library and information profession.

1.1 **Professional Learning**. Candidates engage in ongoing professional learning. Candidates deliver professional development designed to meet the diverse needs of all members of the learning community.

1.2 **Leadership and Collaboration**. Candidates lead and collaborate with members of the learning community to effectively design and implement solutions that positively impact learner growth and strengthen the role of the school library.

1.3 **Advocacy**. Candidates advocate for all learners, resources, services, policies, procedures, and school libraries through networking and collaborating with the larger education and library community.

1.4 **Ethical Practice**. Candidates model and promote the ethical practices of librarianship, as expressed in the foundational documents of the library profession including the American Library Association Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights.

* Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

Vermont Core Teaching Standards Crosswalk with UVM EDLI Coursework
Library Media Endorsement/Initial Certification

Standard #1 **Learner Development** The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction for School Library Media Centers EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature
Standard #2 **Learning Differences** The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature

Vermont Core Teaching Standards Crosswalk with UVM EDLI Coursework
Library Media Endorsement/Initial Certification

Standard #3 **Learning Environments** The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 372-Managing School Library Media Centers EDLI 373-Developing and Organizing School Library Media Collections EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services EDLI 377 Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers
Standard # 4 **Content Knowledge** The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services EDLI 372-Managing School Library Media Centers

Vermont Core Teaching Standards Crosswalk with UVM EDLI Coursework
Library Media Endorsement/Initial Certification

Standard #5 **Application of Content** The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services EDLI 372-Managing School Library Media Centers
Standard # 6 **Assessment** The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services

Vermont Core Teaching Standards Crosswalk with UVM EDLI Coursework
Library Media Endorsement/Initial Certification

Standard #7 **Planning for Instruction** The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services
Standard #8 **Instructional Strategies** The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 371-Children's and Young Adult Literature EDLI 373-Developing and Organizing School Library Media Collections EDLI 376 Information Sources & Services EDLI 377 Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers

Vermont Core Teaching Standards Crosswalk with UVM EDLI Coursework
Library Media Endorsement/Initial Certification

Standard #9 **Professional Learning, Ethical Practice** The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.	EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 373-Developing and Organizing School Library Media Collections EDLI 372-Managing School Library Media Centers
Standard #10 **Leadership, and Collaboration** The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.	EDLI 372-Managing School Library Media Centers EDLI 374-Designing Instruction EDLI 377 Information Technologies for School Library Media Centers

UVM School Library Studies Sequence & The EQS

2121.2. Staff.

The services of a certified library media specialist shall be made available to students and staff. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library media specialist and sufficient staff to implement a program that supports literacy, information and technology standards. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library media specialist on a pro-rata basis.

[Vermont State Board of Education Rules Series 2000 – Education Quality Standards CVR 22-000-003, page 9.](#)

UVM School Library Studies Sequence & The EQS

2122.2. Access to Instructional Materials. (The heart of what school library do... as well as provide safe places in schools for students to collaborate with others, learn, seek information and build new knowledge.)

Each school shall:

a. provide a learning environment with sufficient supplies and infrastructure to allow for learning;

b. develop, maintain, and expand as needed a collection of print, digital and technology resources, administered by a certified library media specialist;

c. ensure that the curriculum is supported by necessary digital and print resources;

d. ensure that students, teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals have access to an organized collection of digital and print materials sufficient and appropriate to support all students in meeting or exceeding the current state and national standards at no cost to the student;

e. provide students access to the library on a regular basis to use materials for reading, research, and for instruction in the skills needed to select and use information effectively;

f. provide access to a variety of up-to-date information, assistive, and other technology to support students in meeting or exceeding the standards;

g. provide broadband Internet service for students and educators to access educational resources;

h. adopt and implement written policies on electronic resources, acceptable Internet usage, and procedures for handling complaints for both staff and students;

i. support a schedule that provides opportunities for a library media specialist to collaborate with teachers as they integrate information research skills into their curriculum; and

j. ensure that students are afforded the opportunity to learn the skills to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and to present information and ideas within content areas using technology integration.

Upon Completion: Licensure & M. Ed.

All the courses in the sequence are upper-level/graduate courses and are embedded in a strand of the UVM Master of Education Program. For those who may want to pursue an advanced degree, the courses can be combined with other education courses that will lead to the MEd.

This series of courses (online asynchronous/synchronous) allows you to gain licensure as a school librarian/media specialist. The content of the coursework addresses the essential competencies required by the State of Vermont. Upon successful completion of the two-year series, qualified individuals may request a Transcript Review by the Vermont Agency of Education.

While the sequence originated with practicing educators in mind, it is by no means aimed exclusively at teachers. For those who need to gain particular competencies, individual courses may be taken. For those seeking to change careers, the school librarian endorsement also has an option for non-educators to enter the profession through Transcript Review for Initial Certification.

This series of courses (online asynchronous/synchronous) allows you to gain licensure as a school librarian/media specialist. The content of the coursework addresses the essential competencies required by the State of Vermont. Upon successful completion of the two-year series, qualified individuals may request a Transcript Review by the Vermont Agency of Education.

While the sequence originated with practicing educators in mind, it is by no means aimed exclusively at teachers. For those who need to gain particular competencies, individual courses may be taken. For those seeking to change careers, the school librarian endorsement also has an option for non-educators to enter the profession through Transcript Review for Initial Certification.

All participants are encouraged to review the requirements for Vermont Educator Licensure through Transcript Review.

School Library Media Studies Requests:

School Library Media Studies Requests:

1. As noted on Slide 15 According to the [Agency of Education 2022-2023 Teacher Shortage Areas](#) [Report](#) there is a STATEWIDE SHORTAGE of PK-12 Library/Media Specialists. My current class EDLI 376 is filled over the recommended enrollment amount. We have the graduate students who would like to become School Librarians and the State of Vermont and the students of Vermont need more School Librarians. We believe we must expand our program immediately to accommodate these needs. We are asking for the following in order to support this dire need:
   a. Double the amount of courses offered by ensuring that a new cohort of students can start the School Library Studies Sequence each year, versus every other year.
      i. This means that two courses would be offered simultaneously each semester to ensure that students can move through the courses sequentially, as they are built upon each other - and students would move forward together through the courses - within their own cohort.
      ii. This would allow space for new students to jump into the sequence, and thus move through the sequence faster, to help overcome the shortage that we currently have within the State of Vermont.
      iii. We would have two teachers teaching core classes simultaneously.

School Library Media Studies Requests Continued:

2. We would like to offer additional Professional Development courses, which would run simultaneously, in addition to the two core classes, as noted on the previous slide. Such courses would enable School Librarians to teach courses such as:

a. Information and Media Literacy (Harvard)
b. Creating Cultures of Thinking and Diverse Perspectives (Harvard)
c. The Power of Making Thinking Visible (Harvard)
d. Place-Based (Community-Based) Teaching & Learning (Northeastern University)
e. SEL and Reading/Literature (CASEL)
f. Grant Writing and the School Librarian/School Library
g. Supporting English Language Learners in our Schools

School Library Media Studies Requests:

3. Money to support Professional Development for UVM School Library Lecturers at colleges, such as Project Zero at Harvard, Northeastern University, and the American Library Association.

4. Vermont Department of Libraries purchase a set of required books for each of the classes (30), so that UVM Grad students are able to borrow their textbooks for the semester?

5. Vermont Department of Libraries purchase a set of Sears Cataloging books (30) for the cataloging class.

6. Is there a possibility to create audio versions of texts that do not have a digital format - to create accessibility for all of our graduate students? (ABLE Library).

Thank you!

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Ehler-Hansen, M. Ed.

Judith L. Kaplan
16 Prospect Hill
Burlington, VT 05401

jelkaplan@gmail.com
(802) 233-0880

November 15, 2022

My name is Judith Kaplan, and I have enjoyed multiple roles in my career as a school librarian during the past 50 years. I taught in Massachusetts and Vermont public schools for 35 plus years, and from 2007-until my retirement in August, 2002, in higher education as a library educator and the Coordinator/Program Lead for UVM School Library Studies Sequence. Libraries have always been my passion and sharing that passion with learners from pre K to high school, with my colleagues in school communities, and with undergraduates and graduate students has been an incredible pleasure and honor.

I have been invigorated by the challenges and changes that have emerged as the decades passed since I discovered that school libraries open doors for learners to explore themselves and worlds beyond school walls. I remember telling my students during the first few days of school each year-this is a candy store for your brain! Explore and choose lots of different ways to think about the world. Taste and savor new ideas. Become your new self!

During the arc of my career, I have invested in ways to improve my own learning. The Vermont educational and library communities have been essential venues for exploring innovations in improving my practice and understanding of learning and learners. Professional development opportunities crossed many boundaries-not just libraries and education. Many of these opportunities provided a gateway to take on leadership roles that allowed me to grow and learn from others, and to give back to my community.

My purpose in this testimony is to share thoughts about an example of a recent professional development opportunity sponsored for school librarians through the Vermont School Library Association and the Vermont NEA. *Mentoring Matters for School Librarians* is a grant funded program that meets many goals and targets for professional development in an organic and recursive environment to support the retention of novice school librarians through a roster of trained school librarian mentor/coaches who are matched with new hires in school districts statewide.

Overarching goals and targets in planning for professional development that have been addressed within the program include:

- To provide educational career pathways and support for educators and non-educators for attaining professional positions as certified school librarians in Vermont Schools.

- To provide opportunities for maintaining credential requirements that show evidence of new learning and advanced practice.

- To promote local, state, regional, and national conferences, online courses, webinars, and so on, designed to enhance knowledge of innovations and best practices for access to information, delivery of services, and teaching and learning that impact student success in Vermont educational communities.

- To collaborate with other organizations to provide support for school librarians and school patrons that offer expanded services and learning opportunities for students locally and statewide.

The Vermont School Library Association (VSLA), a volunteer-led organization of school librarians and other interested members, has been a source of support for librarians in practice in Vermont for more than 60 years. Periodic strategic planning by the VSLA Board identifies goals and targets for improving school libraries and enhancing the roles of school librarians to reflect changing educational initiatives and improved student learning in Vermont schools. A recent goal has been focused on developing a formal program for mentoring novice school librarians. Through persistent networking and problem solving, school librarian leaders took on the challenge of writing a grant to develop a pilot program that would establish goals for recruiting and training seasoned librarians who are committed to support the learning of new school librarians in Vermont.

And so, the mentoring stars aligned in Vermont in 2020 when The National Education Association (NEA) awarded a **Great Public Schools** grant submitted through a collaboration between the Vermont NEA and VSLA. The good news of receiving the $157,000 three year award was tempered by the emergence of the Covid 19 epidemic, but the program adapted from a face to face format to a virtual format through Zoom. [Details about the goals and framework for the program are found here in the slides](#) used in a presentation Nancy Daigle, the MM Grant Coordinator, and I did at the National School Library Conference (AASL), in October 2021.

We are currently in the final year of the grant and we have trained three cohorts of seasoned school librarians and there are 46 mentor/coaches who have been working with 68 mentees during the past three years. In a survey of mentors from year two, they reported a retention rate for new hires as 95% of those in school library positions remained working in school libraries the following year.

We are able to track openings for new hires through a regional database network that generates a list of positions in school districts, so that information about the available mentors can be shared with administrators.

There has been interest in the program from as far away as Oklahoma, and Australia, as well as closer to home in Maine. We are also consulting with some folks from the Vermont Agency of Education who are looking to develop mentoring programs for other school specialists.

The grant advisory committee is currently exploring post grant options for continuing to grow the roster of mentor coaches, and to sustain the regional approach to identifying new hires and to encourage administrators to employ trained mentor/coaches with experience in all aspects of school librarianship.   We are amazed and excited to be entering a new phase for providing support for a new generation of school librarians in Vermont.

Written Comments:
SOCIAL SERVICES
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Barbara Ball, Director
Windsor Public Library

March 14, 2023

Hello Working Group,

The week before Christmas in 2022, Windsor had a bad ice storm. Many Windsor residents found themselves without power. It took 3 days for many to get their power back. When I arrived at the library one morning during this time, the space was full of residents charging their devices, checking their emails, and one person was even filling up water jugs in the library's bathroom to tide themselves over.

Likewise, we are on the state list of heating and cooling centers and -- during the summer -- many residents have benefited from our air conditioning.

I had a few more thoughts on social services in libraries. I feel like, as a public library, we are like Swiss Army Knives that include some unexpected blades. Social Services? We help patrons connect with services they may need. We have helped folks determine if they're eligible for 3-Square VT and helped them apply. We have helped folks with finding transportation, food, and a warming shelter.
In the summer, we have a table outside with excess vegetables on it for the taking. These are from our own backyard children's program garden as well as from the Windsor Community Gardens. Our children's librarian and I are adept at setting boundaries and using de-escalation techniques when needed with patrons that may have mental health concerns. I have a history of previously working over 10 years in the mental health field -- I was a licensed social worker (LSW) in Massachusetts-- and find this background very applicable now in my work as a librarian.

Before I returned to the Windsor Public Library in February of 2020 (I was director here from 2012-2014 as well), the library had been heavily involved in supporting a local family that was involved with the Department of Children and Families: a single parent with 5 children. The children would all come to the library every day after school and take over the computer stations playing games (often to the unhappiness of adult patrons needing computers.) The library started offering these kids snacks after school because they were often hungry. However, this led to abandoned half-eaten snacks being left in unexpected places (the library stacks, the stowaway cupboard, etc.,) which then led to mice in the library. When this family was at the library daily, we would regularly find the paper towels in our bathroom had disappeared. For a while, the librarian-at-the-time's solution was to have a sign in the bathroom apologizing for the lack of towels and explaining the situation. The pandemic brought an end to this family coming in and we did end up changing our computer policy to limit the time someone spent on it to only half an hour. So, that family is certainly welcome to come in the library but -- with the time limit set on computer use -- they are choosing not to.

Last year, we were asked by the Windsor Food Pantry if we could be the distribution site for the summer free lunch program for kids. Unfortunately, we were not able to do this due to our library's small size and lack of space for the meals.

Finally, while we have been lucky in not finding used needles in our bathroom, etc., (as did happen when I was a board member at the Springfield Town Library 5 years ago,) I would love for our library to be able to have Narcan in case a patron needs it. We live in a society right now where opioid abuse is prevalent, and Narcan is a critical tool. I love it that the Vermont Department of Libraries was encouraging libraries to do this a few years ago. However, when I let our insurance company know we were going to do this, their response was, "If you have Narcan there, we will need to cancel your insurance policy. You are a

library not a hospital." We have an AED here and staff have been trained in CPR. Why is this any different?

Thanks so much again for all your work,
Barbara Ball, Director
Windsor Public Library

--
Barbara Ball, Director
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Carolyn Brennan, Director
Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier
March 14, 2023

Dear Working Group,

I am Carolyn Brennan, the Library Director for the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier. I'm happy to submit testimony on emergency preparedness in Public Libraries. The KHL participates in emergency preparedness in a variety of ways and operates as a de-facto social services organization. Please see my response for each of your topics below.

Public Health and Safety
Today is a fine example of the Library participating in public safety. Heavy snow led to multiple power outages in our service area as well as downed lines and widespread loss of internet connectivity creating work disruptions, heat disruptions and loss of essential communication. Because of its downtown location and high speed fiber line, the Library maintained power and internet and was _far_ busier than a typical Tuesday. Patrons were camped out in every available space, connecting to Zoom meetings, working, checking on the status of their power at home and staying warm if their heat was out. This is a common occurrence in our area, particularly in our more rural towns where loss of internet and power disruptions are more common; the Library stays open to offer shelter and services.

In Washington County, services for people experience homelessness or with housing insecurity are managed by a confederation of churches and nonprofits. The Library coordinates with other local service providers in a few different ways: first and foremost we are a warming or cooling station during all of our open hours, we keep accurate and up-to-date information about free meals in our area, and we offer one of only a few available local public bathrooms. To better meet the needs of some people who use the library, we rewrote our behavior rules to create a less restrictive environment that support more varied behaviors (as well as allowing inside voices), and we bought chargers for anyone who needs to charge a mobile device. As we are feeling the increasing effects of climate change, the Library is becoming more important as cooling and warming space. Our library is large and difficult to cool (we're working on this issue – but it's a large, complex, expensive project), but we do have one meeting room with air conditioning. Beginning last summer, we booked our meeting room to be used exclusively as a cool space for anyone needing a break from the heat and it proved very popular. We are in the regular winter rotation of daytime warming shelters available in Washington County, when the weather gets cold, we see more and more people using the Library as a space to relax and exist during our open hours.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Library served as a trusted information resource for the general public to ask questions about mask-wearing, current COVID conditions and other health and safety related questions. Now we are a distribution site for free covid rapid antigen tests through the Vermont Department of Health. Since that program began last fall, we have distributed roughly 500 rapid antigen tests per month. We also offer free masks, and have done so for the past three years.

Community Identity and Resiliency
At the KHL I have repeatedly heard versions of the same story: a person (or family) was moving, and before they settled in one of our member towns, they scoped out the public library. Because a busy, vibrant and beautiful public library was the number one indicator that this was the type of community they wanted to join, they moved to the area. The Library reflects, supports and amplifies community identity. For some communities it is the only anchor institution (full stop), or the only anchor institution outside the school or church community. It is that vital third space, where anyone can go and feel

welcome regardless of their background, belief system, age, gender, etc. During the pandemic we received frequent reports that curbside service from the library was the only thing keeping our patrons from climbing the walls. Organizing zoom programming was the only way, for a while, that our community could see each other and share their interests in a public forum. Now with the return of in-person programs we see parents with young kids (who might otherwise suffer from social isolation) meeting other parents and participating in story time; and we see adults with like interests being given the opportunity to meet, to connect with their neighbors and engage in discussions and activities. Free Library programs are a tremendous isolation fighter for rural communities, for senior citizens and for those with economic barriers to continuing education and other resources.

Economic Development
The Library, through the Vermont Department of Libraries, offers access to Learning Express.   Learning Express is a place where anyone can go, create an account, and take practice tests or train for certifications. We also offer, through the Department of Libraries, access to Universal Class, a place where our patrons can access free or very low cost educational resources. Both of these programs have impact on economic development of Vermonters. The Library collection keeps up-to-date books on small businesses, legal issues, job and educational training and other resources. Patrons and visitors use our public computers to search for jobs every single day. When they are out of work they use Library public computers to apply for benefits and submit unemployment claims. We offer programs on technology skills and financial literacy. We partner with VABIR and Hire-ability Vermont to offer job training and work experience opportunities to people who are trying to re-enter the workforce. We also partner with the two local high schools in our service area in their community-based learning programs, that offer work experiences and job coaching for students with disabilities.

Access to Public Programs and Services
We log around 750 connections to our public computers each month. Patrons use our computers for all sorts of activities, but we frequently help patrons file unemployment claims, scan and submit paperwork to VERAP (the emergency rental assistance program), Social Security and other benefits providers. In Washington County, mental health services are stretched pretty thin and our librarians frequently help patrons who are receiving services by fielding all kinds of benefits and life skills questions. Yesterday I helped a patron who had recently lost her job apply for 3squares VT.

Currently I'm partnering with Rachel Muse, the director of the Waterbury Public Library and Washington County Mental Health to offer a full-day Mental Health First Aid training for my librarians. This training fits in our budget this year, but this type of support and professional development goes beyond what we can typically offer, yet it's an ongoing request/need. Support for interacting with people in crisis is the number one training request from my librarians. Because we are a free, public space we are often called upon to act as de-facto social workers, and responding to issues with people in crisis, or who may be using controlled substances is becoming an increasing part of what we do.

Please let me know if you have follow-up questions.
Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Brennan

Carolyn Brennan
Co-Director, Library Director
[Kellogg-Hubbard Library](#)
(802) 223-3338 ext. 210

Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library
March 20, 2023

"The Working Group shall study: 2. the role that libraries play in emergency preparedness… public health and safety, community identity and resiliency, economic development, and access to public programs and services."

I have SO much I could say about this but I know the deadline is past. Perhaps this quick note will still help.

I believe that these issues are the ones that are hardest for non-library users to understand; including some of our board members and trustees.

For me, these issues are absolutely connected to **free access to information** and that is WHAT WE DO. It is why I am a LIBRARIAN. If people don't know that information exists, they can't even try to look for it.

Public Health? if people don't know how to find reliable information about health and their community, they just may not know. They may just rely on neighbors, friends and hearsay. Our small public library hosted 4 vaccine clinics. It cost us nothing and gained us good will from towns all around.

Identity? So much fun. I am collecting all the Starksboro tidbits I can find and publicize them. Every town has a unique history and character - we have to find those things and have fun with it. There's only one Starksboro in the US, really helps with online searching! That "Sam Hill" expression, supposedly it was named after an early surveyor and engineer from this town.

Emergency Preparedness? I had a former board chair say "don't talk to the local Emergency coordinator". Can you imagine?
The library is a heated and (sometimes cooled) space, we have electricity, charging cords, computers, printers. The library can offer so much in an emergency. Our library doesn't have a generator yet, but I hope to someday soon. Ditto for "Resiliency". We know people by name, by skill set and by face. We are a place where residents go to ask questions and express worries.

Economic Development? Again, access to computers for job applications and printers for printing resumes, shipping returns, etc. Internet for researching jobs and employers. Books on higher education and developing a business plan. We have access to Census Data and not just the ten year census.

PUBLIC programs and services. If the library hosts it - it is open to all - everyone. This small library is looking to improve our basic accessibility but I don't host events if it isn't free and on the first floor. Many people can't climb stairs and don't want to tell you why. I'm hearing that access to the Deaf is pretty awful everywhere in VT including major medical facilities! We've got to do better. We help publicize other organizations programs and collaborate as much as we can. We bought an OWL Meeting camera with our ALA Libraries Transform grant - it is being used 2-3 times a week in our little town. I am

so excited about bringing this resource to town.

Sorry for the exclamation points. Thanks for all your work. VT libraries are often small and funky but we are powerful! Thanks for gathering the data and getting the word to the legislature.

Best to all,
Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library

Margaret Woodruff, Director
Charlotte Public Library
March 16, 2023

Social Services and Emergency Preparedness in Libraries

We've been fortunate to work with our local program partners and offer a variety of programs and resources related to social services and emergency preparedness. We are also lucky to have received funding from the National Network Libraries of Medicine for a Charlie Cart and a website re-design.

I think it would helpful to corral all of the information from libraries so that we can better work together to respond to social service needs and emergency situations in our respective communities. A shared bank of information and how to negotiate various situations could help us all.

Social Services at the Charlotte Library

1. Food Security:
   a. School Lunch Pick-up: The library served as the pick-up spot for free lunches available during the summer of 2020 and 2021.
   b. Brownbag Pick-up: We work with the local Food Shelf and Congregational Church to put together brownbag meals of non-perishable items. These are available to pick up in the library lobby.
   c. Charlie Cart food literacy: We offer intermittent programs on using and cooking local foods that are available in gardens and at farmers markets. We would like to make this a more regular program.

2. Mental Health Resources:
   a. Information Outreach: We hosted a series of mental health information sessions with local professionals, funded by the National Libraries of Medicine.
   b. We have an iPad dedicated to health resources, available for patrons to use to access a variety of health information sites.

3. Accessibility:
   a. Visual Aids & Support: We co-hosted with two information sessions from the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired with our senior center.
   b. Children & Visual Impairment: Our children's librarian organized a story time with VABVI to show what visual impairment means.
   c. Website Accessibility: We are working on a new website design to make our website more accessible and aligned with the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Emergency Preparedness at the Charlotte Library

1. Emergency Management Team: The library is a member of the EMT here in Charlotte. Two staff members regularly attend meetings and trainings.
2. Heating/Cooling Site: The library serves as a cooling site in the summer and warming site in the winter for our community. We follow the guidelines from the Department of Health: https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ENV-CH-community-cooling-center-guidance.pdf In the past year, we have hosted 50 people as heating/cooling center.
3. CREW: The library has joined this network: of" local leaders building grassroots climate resilience working to equip families & communities with the resources and capacity to prepare for and respond to local climate changes equitably, sustainably, & collaboratively."
https://www.climatecrew.org/

Emergency Preparedness Resources recommended to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont by Monika Antonelli, Professor, MLS, MS, Outreach Librarian, Library Services, Minnesota State University, Mankato
3/15/2023

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NJ State Library. (2013). The librarian's disaster planning and community resiliency guidebook: Librarians fulfilling their role as information first responders.
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Randall Smathers, Director
Rutland Free Library
March 15, 2023

Testimony for the Working Group on Vermont Libraries

Social Services / Emergency Preparedness

When it comes to social services and emergency preparedness, libraries are the department stores of local government. If we were better funded and more ruthless, I would use WalMart as the metaphor, and Dollar General is just too sad. But why department stores in the first place?

We're not specialists in this stuff. The police, fire, ambulance, crisis hotlines, and any number of social service agencies are. It's their day job. To stretch the analogy just a little further, if you need a full set of tools to replace your plumbing, you go to a specialty store. But to fix a leaky faucet, you just need a wrench, and you can get one of those in any department store. So libraries get pressed into service, passing and sometimes wielding the wrench.

Libraries are not equipped as crisis intervention centers, and except possibly for the very largest (i.e. Fletcher Free in Burlington), are unlikely to have the resources to host a crisis response person or the need to have one on hand regularly. But we are also likely to need those resources urgently when we do need them. I adored Mikaela Lefrak's introduction to her Vermont Edition show on Vermont Public on the future of libraries, where after noting all the pleasant things available to her and her child in the library, she mentioned the staff working with the unconscious person in the lobby.

Specifically addressing the experience of Rutland Free Library: Rutland has an intermittently served high-need population, many of whom turn to the library for help with specific tasks:

They need a document printed (bus / Amtrak ticket, court filing, form for assistance, temporary license plate, Amazon return form, map / directions, picture, letter, concert ticket).

They need technical help with their phone (the state provides cheap phones from WalMart, but neither the state nor the country's largest retailer provides help getting them set up), accessing one of our computers, a photocopier, or – rarely – one of the many, many online services the library provides.

Wireless printing is in constant demand.

And while those are "print jobs" or "tech help,"" they are frequently also social service tasks. The IRS does not have an office in southern Vermont, nor does the VT Department of Taxes – both cost-cutting measures. So people come into RFL looking for forms, and answers. The entire state office building in downtown Rutland was closed during COVID (although Vermont.gov still referred clients there), and users came to the library on the rebound. Amtrak has a station – but no ticket kiosk. The DMV now sends a downloadable file instead of handing over a paper temp plate. The hospital sends people home with a diagnosis and further information on *encrypted* computer files (on a DVD). We've had users rush in because they were due in court – online only – and they can't get a signal at home.

In many of these cases, users are turning to the library to receive services that used to be provided by government-funded agencies that have been eliminated in cost-cutting measures. And that probably seems like a win in Montpelier – cut X service, save Y dollars – and for people of a certain income who have easy access to electronic services, that's fine. But they haven't resolved the need for the services, and people without the education or the money to successfully make the connection, it can be a health / safety / life-threatening problem. This isn't new, it's called the digital

divide. But libraries are one of the basic bridges across that divide, and that's a function that is rarely funded … or even discussed.

Those are relatively routine social service demands. More concerning are the emergency calls. RFL works diligently to build working relationships with our local emergency service providers. That usually means the police department, just because they usually show up. Sadly, I can count on my thumbs the number of times we've had a mental health crisis specialist show up in a decade-plus at RFL. That's not a knock on Rutland Mental Health; they're overworked. One of the two times they did answer the bell, their staffer showed up on her way home after work to help out. It was a heroic effort, well above and beyond … but we called at 2 PM and she arrived right around 6. So we skip steps and call the police.

The other occasion – recently – was how the system *should* work. A longtime, emotionally troubled, user arrived wailing loudly, sobbing about how her life was useless -- and hoping to print out a train ticket. Unable to work with her because of the level of her distress, we called the police, who referred us to Rutland Mental Health, who referred us to the crisis intervention team. Their staffer arrived promptly and between us we were able to calm the user down – and print her train ticket!

What worked? Communication, communication, communication:

1) They showed up. Again, twice in just over a decade. They're the right people … if they're available.

2) The case worker didn't plead HIPAA. Instead, she put me in contact with the person's case worker in Burlington, where the person was first entered into the crisis network. One of the things we try to do in terms of prevention when we have a troubled patron is contact the police to see if the patron is known to be high-risk for violence. Frequently we're told that PD cannot even tell us if they've heard of the person because of privacy concerns. Being told a potentially dangerous, clearly psychotic individual's privacy is more important than the physical well-being of my staff is *hard on morale*.

3) She treated me like a grown-up. Library staff are expected to screen potentially threatening behavior, intervene, call in the experts, de-escalate until they arrive … and are then routinely excluded from the solution. How do we keep our people and the public safe if we don't know what's going on?

Finally, a note on the most serious threat. Thanks to Bill McSallis, who has done countless active-shooter trainings for only the cost of gas mileage. How sad is it that in an era where the unthinkable is a daily occurrence in this country and Vermont libraries are dependent on the vast, wonderful, selfless charity of one person to train us how to survive a shooting?

As always, thanks for your efforts, and feel free to hit me up with any questions.

Randal Smathers,

Director, Rutland Free Library

03/15/2023

Sharon Ellingwood White, Director
Alice M. Ward Memorial Library, Canaan
March 14, 2023

The Alice M. Ward Memorial Library in Canaan, VT plays a vital role in local public health and Emergency Preparedness. Canaan is the Northeast corner town in the state of Vermont, Essex County, bordering East Hereford, Quebec, Canada and West Stewartstown, NH. In over 575 square miles of the most rural and geographically isolated part of the state of Vermont: Essex County has 0 hospitals, 0 pharmacies, 1 high school, and one primary care office that is 40 minutes one way from Canaan on bare roads, and further on snowy roads. There is little health equity in this part of the state and the needs are often not recognized in Montpelier.

In addition to Canaan our patrons come from from the tiny VT towns of Norton, Lemington, Averill, the Gores and Unincorporated areas, Bloomfield & more as well as bordering NH towns.

To understand the role we play you must understand the inequities and health disparities in this area from the rest of Vermont. The "local" face of public health for this area is one hour and ten minutes- one way- from Canaan- in Newport, Vermont.

Recently, this library was contacted by a member of the Newport office from the volunteer Medical Reserve Corps for the Be Bright at Night Campaign, and the library connected them with a local community group to distribute their lights for walkers at a public meeting. It is often through our library that contacts are made to the rest of our community in the area of public health. It is often the library making these introductions and bringing the services to town. We are recognized as a partner with knowledge and integrity.

When COVID-19 vaccines first became available in 2021, our 80 & 90 year old age banded residents were being asked in winter to drive an hour and ten minutes *each* way to Newport or Derby or even St Johnsbury for a vaccine. All of our hospital, pharmacy and primary care services are located in New Hampshire due to our geographical isolation from Newport/St J but at the time- persons could only get a vaccine in their home state. NH would not take us. Even with a pharmacy just over the border. The inequity in this was astounding. It was the library that advocated to the AHS and the Governor and soon vaccine clinics came to the Beecher Falls VT (Canaan) Volunteer Fire Department station, the Upper CT Valley Hospital in Colebrook, NH went through many hoops to get in the VT vaccine system, and later vaccines came on mobile vans. The library worked hard to answer questions and phone calls, and to promote these sites.

Later, the same thing happened with COVID 19 test kits. Distribution sites again were in St J and Newport but not Canaan and the entire Eastern side of Essex County along the NH border. Again, we advocated for these kits, and to this day we are a busy test kit distribution site.

When there is not hard infrastructure in a rural area, there is our active, vocal, advocating library. At town meeting last week a resident stood up and said "our library is the best thing going in this town." We were thanked just not for our library work but for "what we do for the community."

We act as a heating center, a cooling center, we host meetings with local community members to have meetings with Hireability, or NH students who are VT residents, or who are adult learners, to meet with VSAC for their college plans to further their education. We open our space for family custody visits. We assist many adults with paperwork for the IRS, the DMV, Social Security, hunting & fishing licensing, sample election ballots, we promote & host meeting warnings on our sign, promote Efficiency Vermont

and the Heat Squad, NEKCA, fuel assistance and more. WIC and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library are offered at our weekly Playgroup for birth -5 year olds. During COVID-19 this library drove 40 minutes each way to food drops in Brighton VT from the VT Foodbank. We live in a desert for 3 Squares, Everyone Eats, Veggie Van Go, and the VT Foodbank. The library has used programming money in the past to help the school support a food backpack program. It would be nice if we could get equity in this area yet it does not come. Local dollars pay to meet the need.

With the Canadian border next door, we provided hundreds of encouters to local persons and visitors passing through Canaan to help with their ArriveCAN app services to cross in to Canada. We provided translation services, and wifi, and staff time to help stranded strangers from afar, and elderly residents trying to reconnect with their siblings and family after the length of the pandemic.

There is no end to what we do here as critical rural infrastructure to our community. A rural library with welcoming, professionally trained staff is well poised to pivot and help with whatever walks in the door. The hardest problem with this is I am staffed only 25 hours per week because of the difficulty in cost in local dollars to hire me full time. The staff paid full time with the luxury of benefits do not reach this area. I do not have time to respond to queries like this from the Working Group. Just this month I am working on VTLIB grants, Summer Reading plans, the annual report, plans for the Capital Project needs assessment and running a very busy library in half the time I need to run a library. Rural libraries need a lot of staff and to be funded where we can fill in the cracks for social infrastructure and Emergency preparedness. We do this, and more. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input, and if you have any questions, please contact me at any time.

Sincerely,
Sharon

Sharon Ellingwood White, Director
Alice M. Ward Memorial Library
P.O. Box 134, 27 Park Street
Canaan VT 05903 aliceward.org 802-266-7135

Wendy Hysko, Director
Brownell Library, Essex Junction
March 16, 2023

Dear Working Group-

As a Library Director at a large library in Vermont, I've seen a change in what types of visitors we have over the years, and how many more people are coming to public libraries because they have no other place to go as these visitors don't have the funds visit establishments that expect you to pay for food or drink to hang out in their spaces.

I started working at Brownell when the recession was happening in 2009, coming from out of state. I was used to having more struggling people visit the library I came from outside of Portland, Maine, but this change was new to Brownell. One staff who has since retired said she that staff rarely had to manage people visiting Brownell before the recession, and that changed drastically during the recession.

At Brownell, we aim to be as welcoming as possible. Unless actions include breaking the law, we try to educate people about our behavior guidelines. We have experienced theft and vandalism and occasional pedophiles and other adults who have assaulted staff, or exposed themselves to children. Sometimes they are recognized by news coverage, other times it's because of some sort of line crossed that makes staff uncomfortable and quick searches reveal a legal history that indicates we might want to proceed with caution.

The use of the Library has changed over the pandemic and we've seen an increase of adults struggling and looking for help at Brownell, with computers, wifi, taxes, government assistance applications, job hunts, phone use and other essential services people who have reliable housing take for granted. Prior to the pandemic we also had a handful of men who would spend their days drinking in different spaces in the library, sometimes it was obvious, other times we found the bottles left behind. Police can't search people without a warrant, so unless they are disruptive, we have to let them be.

We have a wayward group of kids that don't have the best home lives and find a warm place at Brownell to hang out after school, but they don't use resources, just our space and these kids need a lot of training on how to share a public space. Sometimes the kids have parents in prison, or solo parents who can't keep track of them because of work. Some of these kids have also gotten involved in vandalism, theft, fights (including fists and knives to date), substance abuse in our buildings and grounds, and running away from home, sometimes to our building. All this type of activity has resulted in a lot of regular staff training from professionals so we are able to deescalate when we can, connect visitors to services, and try to keep the library a safe, welcoming place. Many days it feels like an uphill battle.

We've had patrons who have been no trespassed everywhere else in the City, and we try to educate instead, and when that isn't successful, we do have to no trespass people, and it never feels good to do that.

I could go on forever about the many challenges we face with difficult patrons. The cuts to social services in our country make public libraries a front line of where people go to seek social interactions, or a warm safe space, on top of computers, and help from library staff to seek services. These are not people looking for the next great book to read, they are people really struggling with life and trying to survive. Forever we dreamed of how amazing it would be to have a social worker on staff to help these struggling people so we could focus on sharing resources and lifelong learning opportunities - the services that draw most people to work in libraries. They don't mention in graduate school how well you might get to know your police department that we call when we realize we need outside help. Our police department has long had a reputation for working with the community, and their efforts to not

escalate situations was noticeable, but a lot of people don't respond well to a person in uniform with a badge as someone who's trying to help because of their past experiences.

In 2018, the Essex Police department opted into participating in a pilot program with the Howard Center to embed outreach workers in their department. The plan was to hire an outreach team and 5 communities would share the outreach workers would share the cost, the the outreach workers would use the local police department as their home base. When I heard this news, I couldn't believe it. I knew our Police Chief was also feeling like more of their work was dealing with people in crisis, and they weren't the best people to navigate those situations when they were needed in so many other places to address traffic issues and crime. When the first outreach workers showed up at Brownell to introduce themselves, I resisted the urge to physically embrace them, we had trained mental health workers we could contact! They were thrilled we were happy to see them.

The hours to start weren't great - 8am to 4pm weekdays - that they were available. We are open nights and Saturdays, but there was assurance fromt he police if the outreach workers were making a difference, they could expand the hours. Within months of the launch of this program, we felt the difference. Not nearly as many people were visiting Brownell in crisis. When we did have people who were more difficult to deal with, we called the outreach team and they would come and talk to people. When people come in any sort of crisis, we can call the outreach workers who can connect them with resources and they decide if they need to be accompanied by the police depending on the person and situation. It's not always a win, some people don't want help, but also don't want to leave our building and continue to be disruptive, and the outreach workers have worked with us to navigate these situations. How many people we've had to no trespass has dropped significantly since the outreach program was launched. This outreach program now covers 9 towns with expanded hours of 8am-8pm week days. It's still not enough, but it has helped us a lot.

Not every library is allowed to take the time to train for difficult interactions, or have the funds to support that training. With libraries becoming one of the last safety nets for people looking to connect, we can never predict who will come in our doors. We have seniors who are looking for social interactions, adults with mental illness and substance abuse issues, and kids who do not have stable family lives that seek out their public library for a safe space, and transient people who know they can find some sort of sanctuary in a public library. Library staff need to be prepared to handle these different generations of people struggling, on top of providing traditional library services. I fear for the solo library staff that don't have anyone to back them up when they have a difficult person visit their library. Libraries mission is to welcome all, with so many people struggling, welcoming all comes at the price of spreading library staff thin. We face security issues most people could never dream of in a public library, while offering service to the rest of the community, doing our best not to miss a beat.

Wendy Hysko
Director, Brownell Library
President, Green Mountain Library Consortium
6 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
(802) 878-6955 (Main Desk))
www.brownelllibrary.org
http://www.facebook.com/brownelllibrary

Written Comments:
SAFETY

August 10, 2023

Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library

To the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont:

So many of us work alone in our small, rural libraries. I realize that "best practice" would be to eliminate this practice, but it isn't always possible. An anecdote from the past. Many years ago, while I was working in Chittenden County, a librarian in a neighboring library was knocked unconscious by a person with mental health issues who had hid from her while she closed up. It can happen anywhere. What concerned me in that instance is that her board wanted to keep the incident a secret. I don't know whether it got out eventually which is why I continue to tell the story as a cautionary tale.

Here in Starksboro, we generally don't worry when we are alone, but we always know where the box cutter is! (In the center drawer of our desk). This small town does not have police and the State Police barracks is 20 minutes away in New Haven. Recently, we finally got a "LifeFone" button bracelet that will set off an alarm tone and triggers a call center call to ask if we are OK or if we need help. If they get no answer, they will contact 911. It works on our landline and was much cheaper ($314 year one) than a commercial system ($1000 first year plus $300 ongoing subscription). I figure it is like an umbrella: if we have it, we won't need it. We also have interior lights that stay on after we leave the building and shut off automatically. The parking lot lights are decent.

We try not to climb ladders, counters and bookshelves while we are alone, especially when setting up for programs on off hours... We've all probably heard stories about those accidents.

Thank you for all of your efforts to gather information on the state of libraries in our brave, innovative, little state.

Catherine Goldsmith, Director
Starksboro Public Library
2827 Route 116, Starksboro, VT 05487
802-453-3732
Library hours: Monday 10-6, Thursday 10-5, Saturdays 9-2.
SPL is a courier library.

August 10, 2023

I am writing to urge local government and state support for 1) training for mental health stress mitigation and support for library staff who face increasing responsibilities and exposure to the devastating and relentless plight of opiate addiction. In librarian big and small, urban and rural, the multi-faceted burden and toll on library staff is grossly misunderstood and stated, and more funding is needed to hire extra hands on deck to respond to "the community living room" provisioning of local libraries. Simply calling staff "heroes " is woefully inadequate.

Also Vermont needs to establish safe injection sites apart from each town's local library, so that libraries can remain the safe, welcoming, free information-sharing spaces entire communities need and deserve.

Thank you,

Laura

Laura Massell
Director of Institutional Research and Planning
University of Vermont

Knowledge for Life.
Knowledge for All.

August 4, 2023

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over $2.3M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

Today, I write to you to share my perspective on the challenges our library staff has been facing over the last year. As a representative of our community's library, I feel it is important for you to understand the reality we confront on a regular basis.

Allow me to provide an overview of a typical week from my point of view, giving you a window into our daily struggles and the impact on our staff and patrons.

Tuesday

Upon returning from my vacation celebrating my 10th wedding anniversary, I encountered a situation at the library's door. Our full-time security had not yet started their shift, so the library staff often has to handle pre-opening incidents. One such incident involved two men smoking and blocking an emergency exit. I politely asked them to move, and one of the men appeared to be under the influence of substances.

Later, the same man's behavior escalated in our restroom, requiring us to call 911 for medical assistance. In another incident that day, a different man exhibited erratic movements and was sweating profusely. He wouldn't communicate with the staff as they were trying to keep him from hurting himself or accidentally hurting others. EMTs had to be called to attend to him. Both gentlemen seemed to have taken the same drug or drugs and their behavior became highly unmanageable.

Wednesday

I participated in a phone call meeting with a reporter to discuss the censorship challenges libraries are facing nationwide. There were no patron incidents this day.

Thursday

During our Library leadership meeting, we addressed safety and staff morale issues resulting from frequent challenging situations. We also ensured someone attended the Downtown Safety and Security meeting, where we collaborate with partners to address community concerns. During these meetings we learn of many people who have challenges, many with mental health issues as well as those suffering from addiction issues.

Friday

I attended the Sensory Friendly Hour program for youth, aiming to provide a calm and supportive environment for children with sensory processing differences. However, the day took a concerning turn when a person was found sleeping or perhaps under the influence on the lawn with a hatchet next to her, and another individual exhibited extreme behavior, prompting us to call the police.

Saturday

I worked at the library outreach table for Juneteenth and witnessed a person under the influence of substances. Later, I received reports of people injecting drugs on a vacant building's steps near the library, leaving our staff feeling helpless and concerned. I also learned later that day of two other incidents that had happened during the week that involved calls to the EMTs. The incidents were just coming through our online incident reporting form as our Youth Librarian only had found time to do them that night.

In the evenings, we often encounter challenging situations around closing time, impacting staff morale and stress levels. Incident reporting, tracking, and debriefing are crucial to ensure our staff's well-being and enhance safety protocols.

As I share these experiences, I want to emphasize that we are dedicated to providing compassionate and supportive service to our community. However, the impact of these challenging situations on our staff's mental health, morale, and well-being cannot be overlooked.

Our supervisors and managers have dedicated significant time providing support and training to our team. The role of librarians and library staff has undergone a remarkable transformation. In the past,

libraries were places of calm order, focused on providing information, books, and programming to the community.

However, today's librarians and library staff find themselves dealing with adrenaline-rushing situations that demand nuanced thinking around patron behavior, including mental health and substance abuse issues. Libraries cannot function as day shelters or social service providers, and we can't be constantly worried about potential overdoses or health hazards like needles in the library.

Despite these challenges, libraries remain valuable community resources. They can offer reliable and factual information on essential services, provide computer centers for internet access, faxing, printing, and scanning. Libraries can also host social workers and collaborate with various organizations to connect people with the services they need.

Moreover, libraries play a vital role in addressing societal issues through programming and community engagement. They can foster connections among diverse patrons through book discussions, special speakers, and recreational activities.

However, for libraries to fulfill these roles effectively, funding is crucial. We need the necessary resources to create safe public spaces and provide essential services, such as security guards, social workers, programming, security cameras, specialized training in dealing with escalated situations, trauma-informed assistance and more. We need additional staff to build relationships with other social service organizations.

In conclusion, libraries can continue to make a positive impact on communities, but to do so, we require adequate funding to support our mission and create a safe and beneficial environment for everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Danko
Library Director

VERMONT'S
LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT
GRANTS TO STATES
FIVE-YEAR PLAN (2023-2027)

Submitted by: Vermont Department of Libraries
Catherine Delneo, State Librarian and
Commissioner of Libraries
June 30, 2022

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) authorizes state program grants to certified state library administrative agencies (SLAAs). In order to be eligible for funding, SLAAs must submit a five-year plan for implementation that is consistent with the stated purposes of LSTA and with the priorities of the so-called "Grants to States" program. Each year, SLAAs throughout the nation carry out more than 1,500 projects that are supported by this program. Funds are distributed to the states and territories and are monitored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Following are purposes of LSTA and the priorities[1] of the Grants to States program.

Purposes of LSTA (20 U.S.C. § 9121)

1. Enhance coordination among Federal programs that relate to library, education, and information services;
2. Promote continuous improvement in library services in all types of libraries in order to better serve the people of the United States;
3. Facilitate access to resources in all types of libraries for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry;
4. Encourage resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public;
5. Promote literacy, education, and lifelong learning, including by building learning partnerships with school libraries in our Nation's schools, including tribal schools, and developing resources, capabilities, and programs in support of State, tribal, and local efforts to offer a well-rounded educational experience to all students;
6. Enable libraries to develop services that meet the needs of communities throughout the Nation, including people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, residents of rural and urban areas, Native Americans, military families, veterans, and caregivers;
7. Enable libraries to serve as anchor institutions to support community revitalization through enhancing and expanding the services and resources provided by libraries, including those services and resources relating to workforce development, economic and business development, critical thinking skills, health information, digital literacy skills, financial literacy and other types of literacy skills, and new and emerging technology;
8. Enhance the skills of the current library workforce and recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services;
9. Ensure the preservation of knowledge and library collections in all formats and enable libraries to serve their communities during disasters;
10. Enhance the role of libraries within the information infrastructure of the United States in order to support research, education, and innovation;
11. Promote library services that provide users with access to information through national, State, local, regional, and international collaborations and networks; and
12. Encourage, support, and disseminate model programs of library and museum collaboration.

Grants to States (20 U.S.C. § 9141) Priorities

1. Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;

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[1] https://www.imls.gov/grants/grants-state/purposes-and-priorities-lsta

2. Establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)(6), for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services;

3. (A) Provide training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services; and (B) Enhance efforts to recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services;

4. Develop public and private partnerships with other agencies, tribes, and community-based organizations;

5. Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills;

6. Target library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 9902(2) of title 42) applicable to a family of the size involved;

7. Develop library services that provide all users access to information through local, State, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks; and

8. Carry out other activities consistent with the purposes set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 9121, as described in the State library administrative agency's plan.

The following document presents the Vermont Department of Libraries' FFY 2023-2027 LSTA Plan for fulfilling the requirements of the LSTA Grants to States program. It summarizes the needs of Vermont's libraries as well as the library and information needs of Green Mountain State residents. These needs have been identified through an examination of a variety of factors including demographic data, relevant societal indicators, and findings and insights from the recently completed evaluation of the Department of Libraries implementation of its 2018-2022 LSTA Five-Year Plan. The new 2023-2027 LSTA Five-Year Plan sets forth goals and identifies anticipated projects designed to address these needs.

In crafting its LSTA Plan, the Department of Libraries also looked at how its efforts might address state-level priorities, which overlap considerably with the goals of the LSTA Grants to States program. The state's three key strategic priorities as expressed by Governor Phil Scott in his January 2022 budget address are to:
- grow and strengthen the workforce,
- give kids more opportunities, and
- help communities recover and thrive long into the future.

The work of the Department of Libraries can positively contribute to statewide efforts to achieve each one of the Governor's priorities. For example, the Department can help strengthen and grow the workforce and support "workers who are learning new skills for a future career" by making available resources that support job-focused training and education through the Vermont Online Library.

In his January 2022 State of the State address, Governor Scott shared his goal that "kids in the smallest communities have as many opportunities as kids in the largest." An example of the Department of Libraries' contribution toward that goal is that the Department provides support for early childhood literacy programs at public libraries across the state. These programs administered by the Department of Libraries help to ensure that parents and caregivers have access to information and resources vital to their children's development as readers and learners regardless of the size of the community they live in or their household budget.

The Department of Libraries' work also supports the Governor's goal that Vermont's "communities recover and thrive." For example, through cultural programming grants to libraries and partner organizations, the Department of Libraries contributes to civic discourse in Vermont. The cultural programming supported by the Department of Libraries provides people of all ages not only with opportunities to learn, but with opportunities to participate in community conversations around topics of interest and concern.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Vision

The Department of Libraries will support Vermont libraries' ability to become hubs of lifelong learning, offering free, universal, and convenient access that will improve quality of life and strengthen our communities. Our services will help grow the Vermont economy, reinforce and support various approaches to literacy, and make library services more accessible to vulnerable and underserved populations.

Mission

Guided by 22 V.S.A. §601-635, the mission of the Department of Libraries is to provide, administer, and maintain access to information in a variety of formats to the three branches of State government, libraries statewide, the general public, and Vermonters with special needs; to support, strengthen, and foster new means for statewide cooperation and resource sharing among all types of libraries and government agencies; to lead a service of advice and consultation to all libraries, in order to assist them in realizing their potential; and to increase public awareness of libraries and their services.

Inherent in this mission is the belief that libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every Vermonter should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits of libraries.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A variety of data sources were used to develop the needs assessment portion of this Plan. Sources of information include 2020 U.S. Census, 2021 America's Health Rankings, and the Vermont government website (vermont.gov).

General Demographic Characteristics

The State of Vermont has roughly 645,570 people and trails only Wyoming as the least populous state in the nation. Vermont's population growth (2.77%) lagged behind the national rate (7.35%) for the period between 2010 and 2020. Within New England, both New Hampshire and Maine have approximately twice as many people as the Green Mountain State, and Massachusetts' population is ten times larger. Rhode Island is slightly more than one-tenth the size of Vermont but is 15 times as densely populated; Connecticut is approximately half the size of the Green Mountain State but has more than ten times as many people per square mile.

The median age of Vermont residents (42.80 years) is considerably higher than the U.S. average (38.31 years) and educational attainment (both high school and college completion) in the state is also higher than the national average.

The median household income for 2020 ($63,477) was slightly below the national mark. Although Vermont's poverty rate is lower than the national rate, nearly one in ten residents (9.40%) of the state are considered to be impoverished.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's "Diversity Index," more than ninety-four percent (94.20%) of Green Mountain State residents are classified as "White Alone," a much higher percentage than the U.S. average (76.30%). Vermont is the third least racially diverse state in the nation and only Maine and West
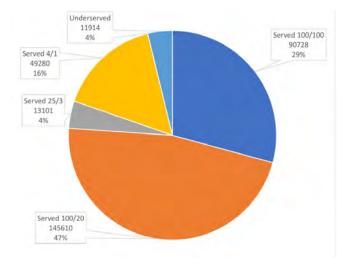
Virginia rank lower in diversity. The percentage of the State's population that is "Black or African American Alone" (1.40%) is almost ten times lower than the national norm (13.40%) and the percentage of individuals classified as "Asian Alone" (1.90%) is also much lower than the national percentage (5.90%).

The percentage of the Vermont population that identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino in the 2020 Census (2.00%) was considerably lower than the U.S. mark of 18.50%.

The percentage of the State's population that was foreign-born (4.60%) was considerably below the U.S. figure of 13.50%. It is estimated that 5.60% of Vermonters over the age of five reside in households where a language other than English is spoken.

Although the percentage of Vermont households with a computer (91.30%) nearly mirrors the national mark of 91.90%, the percentage of households with a broadband internet subscription (83.00%) lags the national percentage of 85.20%. While this number of households lags the national percentage of 85.20% only slightly, a deeper look is necessary to understand Vermont's broadband challenges more fully as not all broadband services Vermonters subscribe to qualify as high-speed or "advanced broadband service." Vermonters who subscribe to lower-speed broadband services face severe limitations when using their home internet to meet their daily work, education, and telehealth needs.

This chart from the Vermont Department of Public Service breaks down access by download and upload speeds. It shows that in Vermont, 20% of households with access have download speeds of less than 25 Mbps or less and upload speeds of 3 Mbps or less. In Vermont 15.9% of households experience download speeds of 4 or less Mbps and upload speeds of 1 Mbps or less. Having access to broadband internet service in the home does not necessarily mean that one has access to internet service adequate to perform essential daily tasks, including telehealth visits, use of online education platforms and resources, and remote work.

In Vermont, geographic location greatly determines access to high speed broadband sufficient to perform daily tasks - with access to this resource being most prevalent only in the more densely populated northwest region of the state and being far more limited in the other regions of the state, which are generally more rural.

Finally, Vermont has a slightly higher percentage of veterans among its residents than the nation as a whole (5.41% for Vermont vs. 5.37% nationally). The Department of Libraries takes its commitment to supporting those who have served in the armed forces seriously and recognizes that access to information resources are a vital component of this support.

Basic Demographics	Vermont	United States
Population Estimate (July 1, 2021)	645,570	331,893,745
Percentage of Persons Under 5 Years of Age	4.70%	6.00%
Percentage of Persons Under 18 Years of Age	18.30%	22.30%

Basic Demographics	Vermont	United States
Percentage of Persons 65 Years of Age and Over	20.00%	16.50%
Median Age	42.8 Years	38.31 Years
White Alone Percentage	94.20%	76.30%
Black or African-American Alone Percentage	1.40%	13.40%
Asian Alone Percentage	1.90%	5.90%
Percentage Identifying as Hispanic or Latino	2.00%	18.50%
Percentage Foreign-Born Persons	4.60%	13.50%
Language Other than English Spoken at Home - Percentage of Persons % Over 5 Years of Age	5.60%	21.50%
Percentage of Persons 25+ High School Graduate or Higher (2016 - 2020)	93.50%	88.50%
Percentage of Persons 25+ Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2016 - 2020)	39.70%	32.90%
Percentage of Veterans	5.41%	5.37%
Median Household Income (in 2020 dollars)	$63,477	$64,994
Percentage of Persons in Poverty	9.40%	11.40%
Percentage of Households with a Computer (2016 - 2020)	91.30%	91.90%
Percentage of Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription (2016 - 2020)	83.00%	85.20%

Library Metrics

Public library statistics as reported in the 2019 Public Libraries Survey (PLS) reveal an overall picture of the status of Vermont's libraries that is mixed. On some measures such as visits per capita and programming, Vermont libraries are at the top or near the top among the states. However, on other critical metrics such as operating income and circulation of materials per capita, Vermont lags behind. Vermont is tied for last place with several other states that lack direct state aid to local public libraries. Coupled with only moderate local operating revenues, (28th rank at $37.05), Vermont's public libraries strive to provide library services comparable to those provided in other states, but have less funding than their counterparts to do so.

Vermont's high ranking on print materials per capita (2nd) may be an indicator of a weakness rather than a strength. Coupled with a comparatively low ranking (31st) in collection expenditures per capita, the high number of print volumes, in at least some instances, likely reflects local collections that are prime candidates for "weeding." This conclusion is supported by Vermont's 25th place ranking on circulation per capita. To the credit of hard-working Vermont library staff, the state's circulation per capita measure (7.25 items per capita for the year 2019) was still above the national average of 6.86 items per capita. It should also be noted that a survey conducted as part of the planning process indicated an additional factor that stretches staffing capacity: library staff reported that they often need to spend a great deal of time in fundraising activities to supplement their tax-based support.

The 2019 PLS shows that 16.00% of Vermont's 185 public libraries serve populations of under 1,000 and that an additional 41.4% serve populations of between 1,000 and 2,499. This means that well over half

(57.4%) of Vermont's public libraries have service populations of less than 2,500 people. Almost ninety-two percent (91.90%) of the libraries serve communities with fewer than 10,000 residents.

Vermont's percentage of public library jurisdictions having at least one staff member with a master's degree in library science from an American Library Association (ALA) accredited program is well below the national average (15.68% vs. 45.53%). This translates to just 29 of the state's 185 public libraries having an individual on-staff with a master's degree in library science. The widespread lack of formal training of many who work in Vermont's libraries results in a high demand for professional consulting and staff development services from the Department of Libraries.

Vermonters have varying degrees of access to libraries depending on which community they live in. Because local public operational hours are based on such varied funding and staffing levels, it is even more important in Vermont that community members have access to shared online resources that are available to the community regardless of whether the library is open or not.

Public Libraries Survey (2019) Metrics	Vermont Rank	Vermont	United States
Total Library Operating Revenue	24	$44.91	$44.88
State Operating Revenue	46 (tied for last)	$0.00	$2.99
Local Operating Revenue	28	$37.05	$38.55
Collection Expenditures per Capita	31	$4.25	$4.51
Library Visits per Capita	2	5.89/capita	3.93/capita
Print Materials per Capita	2	4.74/capita	2.17/capita
Circulation per Capita	25	7.25/capita	6.86/capita
Total Programs Offered per 1,000 Population	1	52.91	18.65/ 1,000 pop.
Total Program Attendance per 1,000 Population	1	750.63/ 1,000 pop.	394.29/ 1,000 pop.
Total Paid Full-Time Equivalent Staff per 25,000 Population	9	16.33/ 25,000 pop.	11.37/ 25,000 pop.
Percentage of Paid Full-Time Equivalent Staff with ALA-Accredited Master's Degree		20.10%	23.64%
Percentage of Public Library Jurisdictions with ALA-Accredited Master's Personnel		15.43%	45.53%

Some Other Relevant Measures

Vermont's basic "prose literacy" rate is 93.40%, the fourth highest among the states. With 37% of fourth graders and 40% of eighth graders at or above the proficiency level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Vermont ranks well above the national average (although most would agree that these numbers are not good enough). At 37% proficiency, Green Mountain State fourth graders outperform fourth graders nationally by 3%. Likewise, eighth graders in Vermont are 8% higher in proficiency than the national average.

Vermont residents can also take pride in having some of the highest ranking on a variety of health measures. According to the United Health Foundation's ***America's Health Rankings***, the state rates first in exercising, first in the consumption of fruits and vegetables, fourth in overall public health funding and fifth in primary care providers per 100,000 population. Vermont ranks fifth in childhood immunizations and

sixth in flu vaccinations and colorectal cancer screening. In short, Vermont is an exemplar in terms of preventative care.

Nevertheless, ***America's Health Rankings*** report also reveals some shortcomings. The state ranks 19th in dental health care providers per 100,000 population and 33rd in "frequent mental distress." The Health Rankings also look at societal shortcomings of significance that contribute to overall health and well being. Several of these are indicated in the table below. These are factors that, in addition to affecting health outcomes, can also impact many other public services. Many of the measures in the table below reveal racial or socioeconomic disparities. Vermont ranks 18th in income inequality, 26th in high-school graduation racial disparity, 26th in residential segregation, and 35th in severe housing problems (affordable housing availability). Many of these factors have a direct, negative, and often disproportionate impact on quality of life issues for children, persons of color, foreign-born populations, and individuals with disabilities.

Selected Social Indicators	Vermont	United States
4th Grade - Percentage at or Above National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient Level	37%	34%
8th Grade - Percentage at or Above National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient Level	40%	32%
Basic Prose Literacy Rate (Based on data from the National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES])	93.40% (4th)	88.00%
Exercise (America's Health Rankings)	1	
Fruit and Vegetable Consumption (America's Health Rankings)	1	
Public Health Funding (America's Health Rankings)	4	
Primary Care Providers per 100,000 Population (America's Health Rankings)	5	
Dental Care Providers per 100,000 Population (America's Health Rankings)	19	
Income Inequality (America's Health Rankings)	18	
High School Graduation Racial Disparity (America's Health Rankings)	26	
Residential Segregation (America's Health Rankings)	26	
Severe Housing Problems - Housing Availability (America's Health Rankings)	35	

Summary of Needs
- Support for resource sharing between libraries is essential in Vermont, where many libraries are small and have limited space to house physical collections that adequately meet the needs of the residents they serve.
- Training resources for new library staff are needed as many Vermont communities face challenges recruiting and retaining qualified library staff.
- The specialized services provided by the ABLE (Audio, Braille, Large-Print, and Electronic) Library continue to be essential to many Vermonters who are blind or otherwise print disabled.

- Support for librarians who serve youth and their families in public and school libraries is needed to ensure the early literacy success of Vermont's youth and to support children and teens as they embark on a path of lifelong learning.
- Continuing education and resources are needed to support library staff in reaching traditionally underserved populations (including children and families living below the poverty line) and meeting their needs for library service.
- Workforce development resources are needed to support Vermonters to build their careers within the state.
- Free access to high speed internet and technology is needed by many Vermonters, particularly those in remote areas who lack access to adequate broadband internet service in their homes.
- Consultancy support to library boards and trustees is needed to address significant variations in access to library materials and services that can be found between Vermont's municipalities.
- Databases, eBooks, and eAudiobooks are needed by public, school, and academic libraries both to meet the needs of the communities outside of open library hours and to ensure Vermonters have access to resources in their preferred formats.
- Technology consultancy services are needed by public and school librarians to keep current with the ever-evolving technological environment.
- Continuing education and professional advisory services are needed to support library staff, particularly those who have not had a formal library science education, in serving the emerging needs of their communities.

GOALS OVERVIEW

The Vermont Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States Five-Year Plan for 2023 - 2027 includes three goals. The goals are focused on desired outcomes for Vermonters and for the libraries that serve them. It is recognized that neither the Vermont Department of Libraries nor the Department's local partners (public, school, and academic libraries) have adequate resources to completely realize these goals. Achievement of the goals will necessarily be measured in terms of the degree of progress that is made toward these ultimate ends.

The stated goals are not simply goals for a state library administrative agency (SLAA). Instead, they attempt to capture a shared vision for transformative library services. The Vermont Department of Libraries will use its Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States funding to encourage, support, and enhance the efforts made every day by local libraries that each serve unique communities.

Following is an outline of the Goals and Projects that Vermont Department of Libraries anticipates will be carried out with LSTA support using Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 - FFY 2027 funds.

GOAL 1 - Strengthening Libraries
> Project 1.1 - Staff and Leadership Development and Training
> Project 1.2 - Professional Consulting Assistance
> Project 1.3 - Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Library Statistics
> Project 1.4 - Enhancing Connectivity

GOAL 2 - Enhancing Access to Information
> Project 2.1 - Statewide Resource Sharing - Discovery and Sharing Tools
> Project 2.2 - Statewide Resource Sharing - Physical Materials Delivery Systems
> Project 2.3 - Electronic Information Resources
> Project 2.4 - Digitization and Preservation
> Project 2.5 - Library Services to Individuals with Print Disabilities

Project 2.6 - Services to Underrepresented Populations

GOAL 3 - Fostering Learning and Building Community
Project 3.1 - Summer Reading Program Support
Project 3.2 - Cultural Programming Grants for Libraries
Project 3.3 - Book Awards
Project 3.4 - Early Childhood Literacy Support
Project 3.5 - Public Performance Licenses
Project 3.6 - Workforce Development Resources

It should also be noted that the three goals that are presented are linked together. They are essentially building blocks designed to ultimately further the twin objectives embodied in Goal 3 (Fostering Learning and Building Community). Goal 1 (Strengthening Libraries) recognizes that local public libraries are essential to the success of the plan. They represent the basic library service delivery infrastructure. Goal 2 (Enhancing Access to Information) is about providing the tools that libraries and the individuals who use them need to achieve success. By building a strong foundation with Goals 1 and 2, the Plan paves the way to the learning and engagement that are earmarks of thriving communities.

The three goals also align closely with four of the IMLS Measuring Success focal areas. Goal 1 (Strengthening Libraries) directly addresses the Institutional Capacity focal area. Goal 2 (Enhancing Access to Information) aligns with the Information Access focal area. Goal 3 concentrates on projects related to several of the intents that are included under the Lifelong Learning and Civic Engagement focal areas. Finally, it should be noted that elements of many projects positively impact all six of the Measuring Success focal areas. For example, some online resources that fall under Goal 2 (Enhancing Access to Information) are specifically included because they address economic and employment development concerns. Likewise, outreach efforts undertaken under Goal 2 (Enhancing Access to Information), programming and special resources provided under Goal 3 (Fostering Learning and Building Community) cross over into intents included under both the Human Resources and Economic & Employment Development focal areas.

GOALS

GOAL 1 - Strengthening Libraries

The Vermont Department of Libraries will support library staff members and libraries throughout the state by delivering relevant, high-quality, and community-focused services that incorporate up-to-date technologies and are based on best practices in the field of librarianship.

Identified Needs Addressed by Goal 1:
- Many, if not most, Vermont libraries of all types are financially challenged due to inadequate funding support.
- Most Vermont libraries are led by directors without formal library science education. This results in significantly higher staff-development and professional advisory needs in Vermont as compared with other states.
- Poor funding levels for libraries negatively impacts the ability of libraries to recruit and retain qualified library staff on an ongoing basis.
- Many Vermonters lack access to adequate broadband internet service.

LSTA Purposes Addressed by Goal 1:
- Promote continuous improvement in library services in all types of libraries in order to better serve the people of the United States.

- Enhance the skills of the current library workforce and recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services.
- Enhance the role of libraries within the information infrastructure of the United States in order to support research, education, and innovation.

Grants to States Priorities Addressed by Goal 1:
- (A) Provide training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services; and (B) Enhance efforts to recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services.
- Establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)(6), for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services.

IMLS Measuring Success Focal Area for Goal 1: Institutional Capacity
- IMLS Measuring Success Intents Addressed
  - Improve the library workforce
  - Improve library's physical and technological infrastructure
  - Improve library operations

Project 1.1 - Staff and Leadership Development and Training

Focal Area: Institutional Capacity

Intent: Improve the Library Workforce

Summary: This project provides professional development and leadership training to library directors, library staff, and library trustees. Content is provided through in-person sessions and through both synchronous and asynchronous online training opportunities such as webinars and presentations available from a wide variety of sources.

Audience: Library staff and library trustees

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Library directors, school librarians, public library staff, and trustees who are well-equipped to successfully fulfill their responsibilities and ensure continuity in library services. Other desired outcomes involve building a sense of community between and among library directors, library staff, and library trustees throughout the state and fostering the leadership skills necessary to position libraries as vital civic hubs.

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating in staff development and leadership training sessions. Number of individuals participating in staff development and leadership training opportunities broken down by type of contact (in-person workshop, live webinar, archived webinar, etc.). Number of individuals participating in the Certificate of Public Librarianship program. Number of individuals completing the Certificate of Public Librarianship program. Pre- and post-participation surveys may be conducted to assess the impact of group training experiences and with Certificate of Public Librarianship participants.

Examples of Potential Project 1.1 Activities:
> Certificate of Public Librarianship for library workforce
> Continuing Education for Vermont library workforce
> Training for Trustees and Friends

Project 1.2 - Professional Consulting Assistance

Focal Area: Institutional Capacity

Intent: Improve Library Operations

Summary: This project supports a variety of activities designed to improve library operations at the local level. Both personal contact and online tools are used to make school librarians, library directors, library staff, and trustees aware of best professional practices, to help them solve specific problems, and to alert the library community of grant and staff development opportunities. The professional consulting assistance is provided by Department of Libraries staff who specialize in specific topics.

Audience: School libraries, public libraries, library support organizations, municipalities, and other governmental entities

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Libraries that offer relevant, responsive, library services based on sound professional practices and that utilize techniques and technologies that increase efficiency and add value to end-users of libraries.

Evaluation: Number of libraries requesting assistance. Number of personal consultations (both in-person and via phone or virtual contact. Number of group sessions conducted and number of participants. Pre and post-participation surveys may be used to assess the impact of group training experiences.

Examples of Potential Project 1.2 Activities:
> Consultation to Vermont library workforce
> Consultation to Vermont library Trustees and Friends
> Consulting Collaboration with Statewide Partners

Project 1.3 - Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Library Statistics

Focal Area: Institutional Capacity

Intent: Improve Library Operations

Summary: This project involves the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data and information that can be used by the Department of Libraries, local libraries, and elected officials to inform their decision making. Data and information collected includes, but is not limited to, the data elements required by the annual Public Libraries Survey (PLS) and biennial State Library Administrative Agency Survey (SLAAS).

Audience: Libraries, library support organizations, municipalities, other governmental entities, and the general public

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: An increase in the application of a data-driven decision-making process in an effort to identify deficiencies and improve performance.

Evaluation: Number of libraries providing complete PLS and SLAAS information for submission. Timeliness of submission of PLS and SLAAS data and release of validated state-level data to the library community. Quality and quantity of derivative tools created (info-graphics, brochures, inclusion in reports, etc.).

Examples of Potential Project 1.3 Activities:
> Data Collection and Reporting (CollectConnect)
> Annual Report

Project 1.4 - Enhancing Connectivity

Focal Area: Institutional Capacity

Intent: Improve Libraries' Technological Infrastructure

Summary: This project includes, but may not be limited to the management of the FiberConnect Wide Area Network which currently affords access to broadband service for forty public libraries in Vermont. This project may also support other initiatives to expand broadband access to both libraries and to library users.

Audience: Libraries, library staff, and library users

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Provide broadband Internet connectivity for libraries and individuals that would have inadequate or excessively costly connections without this support.

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating. In the case of FiberConnect libraries, the estimated number of individuals benefiting from the service (measured by use of public computers). Other measures may be applied if additional connectivity initiatives are launched either as a supplement to or a replacement for the FiberConnect Network WAN.

Examples of Potential Project 1.4 Activities:
>
> Support Statewide Broadband Enhancement Initiatives
>
> Continue Support of Existing FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)

GOAL 2 - Enhancing Access to Information

The Department of Libraries will provide Vermont residents with convenient access to relevant, high-quality information resources in formats that they can use for their educational, occupational, and personal/recreational needs.

Identified Needs Addressed by Goal 2:
- Many, if not most, Vermont libraries of all types are financially challenged due to inadequate funding support.
- Many Vermont libraries are small and lack the collection depth necessary to adequately meet the needs of the residents they serve.
- There are significant disparities in the resources and services available to Vermont residents through their libraries depending on where they live and how many hours their local library is open.
- There are many Vermonters who are blind or otherwise print disabled who depend on the specialized services provided by the ABLE (Audio, Braille, Large-Print, and Electronic) Library.
- Some Vermonters, including many children and families living below the poverty line and those who reside in State institutions, have unique library and information needs.

LSTA Purposes Addressed by Goal 2:
- Facilitate access to resources in all types of libraries for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry,
- Encourage resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public.
- Promote literacy, education, and lifelong learning, including by building learning partnerships with school libraries in our Nation's schools, including tribal schools, and developing resources, capabilities, and programs in support of State, tribal, and local efforts to offer a well-rounded educational experience to all students.
- Enable libraries to develop services that meet the needs of communities throughout the Nation, including people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, residents of rural and urban areas, Native Americans, military families, veterans, and caregivers.
- Ensure the preservation of knowledge and library collections in all formats and enable libraries to serve their communities during disasters.
- Enhance the role of libraries within the information infrastructure of the United States in order to support research, education, and innovation.
- Promote library services that provide users with access to information through national, State, local, regional, and international collaborations and networks.

Grants to States Priorities Addressed by Goal 2:

- Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong
- learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;
- Establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)(6), for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services.
- Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills.
- Develop library services that provide all users access to information through local, State, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks.

IMLS Measuring Success Focal Area for Goal 2: Information Access

- Measuring Success Intents Addressed
  - Improve users' ability to discover information resources
  - Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Project 2.1 - Statewide Resource Sharing - Discovery and Sharing Tools

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to discover information resources

Summary: This project provides an efficient and cost-effective platform for resource sharing in Vermont. The project covers several components including Cooperative Libraries of Vermont (CLOVER), which is an Auto-Graphics SHAREit-based interlibrary loan system and VERSO (a shared integrated library system used primarily by small libraries). Together, these applications provide the foundation for statewide resource sharing of physical materials between libraries.

Audience: Libraries, library staff, and the general public

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Efficient sharing of resources between and among Vermont libraries. Expanded availability of resources for individuals living in communities served by libraries with limited resources.

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating in resource sharing activities. Number of items loaned - by library. Number of items borrowed - by library.

Examples of Potential Project 2.1 Activities:

        Collaborative Libraries of Vermont (CLOVER)
        Verso shared catalog

Project 2.2 - Statewide Resource Sharing - Physical Materials Delivery Systems

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Summary: This project facilitates the physical delivery of resources shared between and among libraries. At the current time, the primary mode of physical delivery is a contracted courier system. However, other mechanisms may be explored to supplement this system.

Audience: Public, school, and academic libraries and the people they serve

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Timely, cost-effective delivery of materials shared between and among libraries.

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating. Number of days per week delivery service is received - broken down by library. Number of items delivered. Turnaround time (average time between request for an item and delivery to the borrowing library).

Examples of Potential Project 2.2 Activities:
        Courier Service
        Other Delivery Mechanisms

Project 2.3 - Electronic Information Resources

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Summary: This project provides equitable access to a wide range of electronic resources including licensed databases and other e-content. It helps to level the information resource playing field for all Green Mountain State residents by offering a solid foundation of extensive content. By providing a core group of online resources to all Vermonters, the project also enables some libraries to direct their resources toward securing other supplementary electronic resources and/or content that is highly relevant to the community they serve.

Audience: The general public directly and through their libraries.

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: The ultimate outcome of this project is enabling individuals to access information that can help them succeed in achieving their educational, occupational, and/or personal goals. These services are accessible to Vermonters regardless of where they live, their socio-economic status, or ability to read standard print. This project addresses all six of the IMLS Measuring Success focal areas as well as all of the Measuring Success intents.

Evaluation: Number and nature of databases provided. Number of accesses, pageviews, retrievals, downloads, etc. (vendor-statistics). Source of access (individual, through libraries, etc.). The Department of Libraries may explore the feasibility of conducting periodic pop-up surveys of database users

Examples of Potential Project 2.3 Activities:
        VT Online Library
        Statewide platform for eBooks and eAudiobooks
        Continued collaboration with consortia that provide e-content and other online resources

Project 2.4 - Digitization and Preservation

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Summary: This project, which will be carried out if funding and staff capacity allow, will enable the Department of Libraries to support efforts to preserve and/or digitize documents, photos, or other content of historical significance or of importance to the work of Vermont governmental agencies.

Audience: Libraries, museums, historical societies, researchers, state agencies, and the general public

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: The content of important documents, photos, and records will be preserved, appropriately described, and made more discoverable and accessible.

Evaluation: Number of items/pages/photos digitized. Number of partner organizations.

Examples of Potential Project 2.4 Activities:
        Support for Green Mountain Digital Library

Support for other statewide digitization efforts

Provide continuing education and consultation on topics related to digitization and preservation

Project 2.5 - Library Services to Individuals with Print Disabilities

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Summary: This project supports the work of Vermont's **A**udio, **B**raille, **L**arge-Print, and **E**lectronic Books (ABLE) Library. The ABLE Library is Vermont's network affiliate of the Library of Congress' National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. The program offers access to reading materials in many alternate formats for individuals who cannot use traditional print resources. Included are digital cartridges that can be played on a specialized reader supplied by the federal government, access to downloadable audio and refreshable Braille content (BARD), as well as other services designed to ensure equity of access to reading resources.

Audience: Individuals with print disabilities, their families, and support organizations

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Provide equitable access to reading materials and information resources for the Blind and those with visual impairments. These materials will be offered in the format and reading level that each ABLE library patron needs and wants.

Evaluation: Number of program users by category/format of content used. Number of items loaned by category/format of content. Number of new certified users. Number of program users by category of print disability. Number and nature of outreach efforts. Number of items (books, magazines, etc.) recorded.

Examples of Potential Project 2.5 Activities:

Circulate eAudio and special format materials

Circulate large print materials

Support Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD)

Expand and modernize Vermont recording program

Provide outreach and programs to individuals with print disabilities

Pilot, test, and promote emerging technologies

Support access to Braille materials

Project 2.6 - Services to Underrepresented Populations

Focal Area: Information Access

Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Summary: Enhance the ability of Vermont public library staff to support the needs of underrepresented populations in the communities they serve which will strengthen connections between individual members and their local public libraries and foster a life-long love of reading.

Audience: Individuals whose personal circumstances (location, economic status, disability, etc.) prevent or impede their use of traditional library services

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Increase awareness of underrepresented populations and to make consideration of their needs an integral part of program planning and collection development at libraries. This project should provide libraries with tools and connections to statewide partners to help achieve this outcome.

Evaluation: Number of training sessions offered. Number of library staff members participating in training and evaluation of training by participants. Number of programs and resources shared with state agencies and libraries.

Examples of Potential Project 2.6 Activities:

> Provide continuing education to library staff on the topic of inclusion and service to underrepresented populations
>
> Collaborate with departments within the Agency of Human Services to serve residents and clients
>
> Collaborate with state and federal agencies to reach diverse communities

GOAL 3 - Fostering Learning and Building Community

The Vermont Department of Libraries will provide libraries with the resources and training needed to help Vermonters achieve their occupational and personal goals and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

Identified Needs Addressed by Goal 3:

- Many, if not most, Vermont libraries of all types are financially challenged due to inadequate funding support.
- Many Vermont libraries are small and lack the collection depth necessary to adequately meet the needs of the residents they serve.
- There are significant disparities in the resources and services available to Green Mountain State residents through their libraries depending on where they live and how many hours their local library is open.
- Some Vermonters, including many children and families living below the poverty line and those who reside in State institutions have unique library and information needs.
- Vermont's high median age highlights the need for workforce development and for providing an environment that enables young Vermonters to build their careers within the state.

LSTA Purposes Addressed by Goal 3:

- Promote literacy, education, and lifelong learning, including by building learning partnerships with school libraries in our Nation's schools, including tribal schools, and developing resources, capabilities, and programs in support of State, tribal, and local efforts to offer a well-rounded educational experience to all students.
- Enable libraries to develop services that meet the needs of communities throughout the Nation, including people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, residents of rural and urban areas, Native Americans, military families, veterans, and caregivers.
- Enable libraries to serve as anchor institutions to support community revitalization through enhancing and expanding the services and resources provided by libraries, including those services and resources relating to workforce development, economic and business development, critical thinking skills, health information, digital literacy skills, financial literacy and other types of literacy skills, and new and emerging technology.

Grants to States Priorities Addressed by Goal 3:

- Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills.
- Develop public and private partnerships with other agencies, tribes, and community-based organizations.
- Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills.

- Target library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 9902(2) of title 42) applicable to a family of the size involved.

Primary IMLS Measuring Success Focal Areas for Goal 3: Lifelong Learning, Civic Engagement
- Primary IMLS Measuring Success Intents Addressed
  - Improve users' formal education
  - Improve users' general knowledge and skills
  - Improve users' ability to participate in their community
  - Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern

Secondary IMLS Measuring Success Focal Areas for Goal 3: Economic & Employment Development and Human Resources
- Secondary IMLS Measuring Success Intents Addressed
  - Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support
  - Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills

Project 3.1 - Summer Reading Program Support

Focal Area: Lifelong Learning

Intent: Improve users' general knowledge and skills

Summary: This project enables libraries, including small libraries with very limited resources, to offer a high-quality summer reading program. In addition to supplying professionally developed materials, the Department also encourages participation in a number of other ways including access to an online reading challenge platform and support for public events.

Audience: Potential readers of all ages with a particular emphasis on children, tweens, teens, and families

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Summer reading programs have a positive impact in turning kids into lifelong readers. The ultimate desired outcome from summer reading is creating communities of readers of all ages and encouraging parents and caregivers to become actively involved in supporting reading behaviors in their households.

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating. Number of participants by age categories. Number of programs offered. Program attendance. Other metrics that may be sampled include increased circulation of materials, and number of books/pages read. In addition to the collection of anecdotal reports of the impact of summer reading on specific children. Libraries will be encouraged to carry out a post-participation survey of parents/caregivers if possible to determine whether reading behaviors are changed after the summer program ends.

Examples of Potential Project 3.1 Activities:
Provision of reading and programming materials to public libraries
Intergenerational initiatives
Encourage participation through interactive online reading challenge platform
Supplement local programming resources to support summer reading programming for youth.

Project 3.2 - Cultural Programming Grants for Libraries

Focal Areas: Lifelong Learning and Civic Engagement

Intents: Improve users' general knowledge and skills

Summary: This project builds on a longstanding tradition of support for substantive adult and family programming in Vermont libraries. In particular, the Department of Libraries plans to continue its collaboration with Vermont Humanities to offer an extensive series known as "First Wednesdays" that provides an amazing array of topics hosted by libraries scattered across the state. Moving forward, the cultural programming grants will support both in-person and virtual/hybrid events. The VTLIB/Humanities collaboration has expanded to jointly hosting residencies for nationally renowned YA writers, which the Department plans to continue.

Audience: The general public

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Providing opportunities for personal learning and discovery and prompting stimulating community conversations are goals of this program. Providing opportunities for Vermont youth and adults to engage with well-known YA writers (e.g. Angie Thomas, Jason Reynolds).

Evaluation: Number of libraries participating. Number of live programs offered. Number of live attendees. Number of synchronous virtual attendees. Number of views of archived programs. When possible, post-event participation surveys will be conducted.

Examples of Potential Project 3.2 Activities:
> First Wednesday Programs
> Speaker Residency Events

Project 3.3 - Book Awards

Focal Area: Lifelong Learning

Intent: Improve users' general knowledge and skills

Summary: This project provides an opportunity for Vermonters to be involved in selecting and recognizing their favorite books written by authors associated with the Green Mountain State. The Department of Libraries cooperates with partners in multiple award programs, each targeting a different age group.

Audience: Children, teens, adults, educators, and librarians

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Awareness of Vermont authors and their works. Encouragement of reading. Opportunities for community dialog based on shared reading experiences.

Evaluation: Number of participants in voting for each of the book award programs. Number of libraries and schools participating. Number of participants by age group.

Examples of Potential Project 3.3 Activities:
> The Red Clover Book Award (grades K-4)
> The Vermont Golden Dome Book Award (grades 4-9)
> The Green Mountain Book Award (grades 9-12)
> Vermont Book Award (Fiction, Non-Fiction, and Poetry for adults)

Project 3.4 - Early Childhood Literacy Support

Focal Area: Lifelong Learning

Intent: Improve users' general knowledge and skills

Summary: Support the delivery of early childhood literacy programs and services through Vermont's libraries

Audience: Children from birth to five (5) years of age and their parents/ caregivers

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Enhance the ability of Vermont public library staff to support the early childhood literacy needs of the communities they serve which will strengthen connections between children, parents, and caregivers and their local public libraries and foster a life-long love of reading among Vermont's youth

Evaluation: Number of early literacy childhood trainings provided, number of public library staff who attend, and evaluation of early childhood literacy trainings by participants. Number of programs and resources shared with state agencies and libraries.

Examples of Potential Project 3.4 Activities:
> Provide early childhood literacy training opportunities to public library staff
> Work with state agencies to share early childhood literacy information and resources with Vermonters.

Project 3.5 - Public Performance Licenses

Focal Area: Lifelong Learning

Intent: Improve users' general knowledge and skills

Summary: This project enables libraries to legally offer public performances of a wide array of cinematic content by underwriting the cost of public performance licensing.

Audience: Libraries and the people they serve

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Public libraries will offer enhanced public programming at a reasonable cost. Opportunity for the residents of communities to see movies of interest at no cost.

Evaluation: Number of libraries providing movie programs. Number of movies shown. Number of attendees. Anecdotal reports from library directors, staff, and/or attendees.

Examples of Potential Project 3.5 Activities:
> Motion Picture Performance Licenses

Project 3.6 - Workforce Development Resources

Focal Area: Economic & Employment Development

Intent: Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support

Summary: Make resources that support job-focused training and education available through the Vermont Online Library.

Audience: Individuals exploring careers and/or searching for employment

Timetable: Anticipated ongoing 2023-2027

Desired Outcomes: Support the state's workforce development efforts.

Evaluation: Number of workforce development-related sessions on the Vermont Online Library. Number of workforce development training sessions offered.

Examples of Potential Project 3.6 Activities:
> Provide online workforce development training and resources to Vermonters
> Enhance awareness of workforce development resources through newsletters and training for library staff
> Partner with state agencies to promote use of workforce development resources

COORDINATION EFFORTS

Crosswalk tables that map goals and projects to the IMLS Measuring Success focal areas and intents are provided in APPENDIX A.

The Department of Libraries coordinates its efforts with a number of state and federal agencies as well as with other governmental and non-profit organizations. The following list, which is by no means exhaustive, is indicative of the scope and nature of these cooperative relationships.

Partnerships
- Departments, agencies, and commissions within the State of Vermont including:
  - Vermont Agency of Administration
  - Vermont Agency of Education
  - Vermont Agency of Human Services
- Vermont Humanities Council
- Vermont Arts Council
- Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled
- Schools and institutions of higher education
- Vermont Municipalities
- Historical Societies
- U.S. Veterans Affairs Department (VA)
- Non-Government Agencies and Associations
- Other State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAAs)
- Miscellaneous affinity groups

EVALUATION PLAN

The Department of Libraries will annually review this LSTA Plan with its staff, the Vermont Board of Libraries, and other stakeholders. If changes are needed, the Department will submit requests to IMLS. Program results have been emphasized in the State of Vermont for the last several years and the kind of evaluation carried out by the Department of Libraries in implementing its LSTA plan fits into this state-wide culture. The Department of Libraries takes a holistic approach to its evaluation of programs, incorporating both quantitative data and qualitative feedback received through its work directly with libraries. Both formal (e.g. survey responses) and informal (e.g. conversations) feedback are welcomed by Department staff. The pandemic opened communications between the Department of Libraries and library staff throughout the state in unexpected ways and placed the Department into more focus as a resource for libraries in Vermont. Increased communication with stakeholders enhanced the ability of Department of Libraries staff to gather feedback on both the value of the support it provides to the community of Vermont libraries and the needs of libraries. The Department plans to maintain this heightened level of communication and responsiveness.

Specific information regarding the anticipated evaluation efforts have been included under each proposed project. However, in an effort to ensure that the development of strategic partnerships and meaningful efforts are made to consider equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in every service the Department provides, an additional evaluation protocol has been developed that may be applied to projects as appropriate. The framework for this protocol is presented in APPENDIX B.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027)* is based on extensive input from the library community, from independent evaluators, and from other stakeholders. This includes information and data gathered through individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

In June of 2021, the Vermont Department of Libraries participated with nine other states in the issuance of a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) for a "Cooperative Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year Plan Evaluation 2018-2022." The RFP was issued through the Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE) and QualityMetrics LLC, headquartered in Silver Spring Maryland, was selected to carry out individual evaluations of each state's implementation of their LSTA plans. The assessment of the Department's efforts in carrying out the 2028-2022 Plan was conducted by QualityMetrics Chief Executive Officer Dr. Martha Kyrillidou assisted by associate researcher William Wilson. The process used in the assessment included both retrospective and prospective components and gathered valuable information both for the evaluation and for the subsequent planning process. Interviews, focus groups, and a web-based survey were conducted in addition to an extensive review of State Program Report (SPR) data.

QualityMetrics was subsequently engaged to facilitate the Department of Libraries' LSTA planning process. An additional web-based survey of state residents and libraries was carried out as part of this process. Frequent Zoom sessions were conducted by QualityMetrics that involved the Vermont State Librarian, the Assistant State Librarian for Advancement, and the Assistant State Librarian for Information and Access. A total of 621 individuals responded to the web-based survey that was part of the planning phase between May 10 - May 23, 2022.

In short, *Vermont's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027)* is based on stakeholder input secured through a variety of quality sources over the span of the last several years.

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC AVAILABILITY

Once the *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027)* has been approved by IMLS, the Department of Libraries will post the Plan on the agency website where it will remain throughout the duration of its implementation. Department Leadership will share the plan with Department of Libraries staff and the State Librarian will present the Plan to both the Vermont Board of Libraries and Agency of Administration Leadership.

The Plan's goals may be amended if such an alteration is dictated by community needs. Budgets, specific activities, and anticipated products and services may also be adjusted based on the Department of Library's capacity to carry out the Plan as proposed. However, any substantive revisions to the Plan will be submitted to IMLS in accordance with IMLS guidelines and the provisions of the Museum and Library Services Act. The Department will publicize the achievement of significant milestones identified in the Plan as well as ongoing results of its efforts. The Department of Libraries will also comply with reporting requirements through the SPR. Finally, both achievements and shortcomings will be shared with stakeholders within the state as part of an ongoing effort to improve performance and to increase the positive impact of projects and activities.

MONITORING

The implementation of Vermont's *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States Five-Year Plan (2023-2027)* will be monitored on a continuous basis. Appropriate Vermont Department of

Libraries staff will be assigned to track the execution of all aspects of the Plan. Specific staff will be tasked with preparing and generating relevant reports as required as well as to inform decision making. A component of this tracking will be the monitoring of any sub-grant projects that are funded with LSTA dollars. Depending on the nature of a given activity, sub-grantees may be asked to submit semi-annual status reports. Final reports on the status and results of each project will be required. This formal process will be supplemented with a combination of on-site monitoring visits, phone calls, emails, and other virtual contacts.

All projects, including any sub-grant projects as well as those directly administered by the Department will be monitored on a regular basis as ongoing activities are conducted, documented, and measured. Information and data collected as part of this process will be used to inform the Department of Libraries' reporting to IMLS in the annual SPR.

As required, monitoring will comply with the requirements and procedures outlined in 2 CFR 200.327-332

- 2 CFR 200.327 - Financial Reporting
- 2 CFR 200.328 - Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance
- 2 CFR 200.329 - Reporting on Real Property
- 2 CFR 200.330 - Subrecipient and Contractor Determination
- 2 CFR 200.331 - Requirements for Pass-Through Entities
- 2 CFR 200.332 - Fixed Amount Subawards

ASSURANCES

The following assurances have been submitted with the plan:
- Program Assurances for 2023 Grant Award (Includes compliance with Internet Safety; Trafficking in Persons; Nondiscrimination; Debarment and Suspension; Drug-Free Workplace; Federal Debt Status; and Lobbying requirements)
- Non-Construction Assurance Form (SF-424B)
- State Legal Officer's Certification of Authorized Certifying Official
- Internet Safety Certification for Applicant Public Libraries, Public Elementary and Secondary School Libraries and Consortia with Public and/or Public School Libraries

APPENDIX A - CROSSWALK TABLES

VERMONT Goal 1 - Strengthening Libraries
Measuring Success Focal Areas and Intents

	1.1 Staff and Leadership Development and Training	1.2 Professional Consulting Assistance	1.3 Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Library Statistics	1.4 Enhancing Connectivity
Lifelong Learning				
Improve users' formal education				
Improve users' general knowledge and skills				
Information Access				
Improve users' ability to discover information resources				
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources				
Institutional Capacity	YES	YES	YES	YES
Improve the library workforce	YES			
Improve the library's physical and technological infrastructure				YES
Improve library operations		YES	YES	
Economic & Employment Development				
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support				
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources				
Human Resources				
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances				
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness				
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills				
Civic Engagement				
Improve users' ability to participate in their community				
Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern				

VERMONT Goal 2 - Enhancing Access to Information
Measuring Success Focal Areas and Intents

	2.1 Statewide Resource Sharing - Discovery and Sharing Tools	2.2 Statewide Resource Sharing - Physical Materials Delivery Systems	2.3 Electronic Information Resources	2.4 Digitization and Preservation	2.5 Library Services to Individuals with Print Disabilities	2.6 Services to Underrepresented Populations
Lifelong Learning						
Improve users' formal education						
Improve users' general knowledge and skills						
Information Access	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Improve users' ability to discover information resources	YES					
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Institutional Capacity						
Improve the library workforce						
Improve the library's physical and technological infrastructure						
Improve library operations						
Economic & Employment Development						
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support						
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources						
Human Resources						
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances						
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness						
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills						
Civic Engagement						
Improve users' ability to participate in their community						
Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern						

VERMONT Goal 3 - Fostering Learning and Building Community
Measuring Success Focal Areas and Intents

	3.1 Summer Reading Program Support	3.2. Cultural Programming Grants for Libraries	3.3 Book Awards	3.4 Early Childhood Literacy Support	3.5 Public Performance Licenses	3.6 Workforce Development Resources		
Lifelong Learning	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			
Improve users' formal education								
Improve users' general knowledge and skills	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			
Information Access								
Improve users' ability to discover information resources								
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources								
Institutional Capacity								
Improve the library workforce								
Improve the library's physical and technological infrastructure								
Improve library operations								
Economic & Employment Development						YES		
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support						YES		
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources								
Human Resources								
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances								
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness								
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills								
Civic Engagement								
Improve users' ability to participate in their community								
Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern								

APPENDIX B - SAMPLE EVALUATION PROTOCOL

Project Number and Title: Project 3.2 - Cultural Programming Grants for Libraries	**Question(s) to be Answered**	**Method of Assessment**	**Data/Information to be Collected**
Focal Areas and Intents: **Lifelong Learning** Improve users' general knowledge and skills **Civic Engagement** Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern	Was new knowledge and/or skill gained? If so, what? Will the conversation continue after the initial program is complete?	Pre and post-participation questionnaires - either online or onsite	Number of participants in attendance (in-person, virtually, and archived versions) Nature and magnitude of impact of program on individual participants
Potential Partnerships: Local Libraries Vermont Humanities Vermont Department of Libraries	Were any other partnerships involved? Were there potential partnerships that could have been developed?	Post event online response form distributed to major partners	Additional future potential partners
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion:	Were viewpoints and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented groups included in the program? What efforts were made to ensure that underrepresented groups were aware of the program and would feel welcomed?	Pre-program questionnaire to presenter(s) or to presenting organization Pre-program EDI guidelines shared with presenter(s) or presenting organization and post-event assessment of success of efforts to engage underrepresented groups.	Indication that alternative perspectives were or were not included Evidence of success of outreach efforts

Vermont Department of Libraries

**Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)
Grants to States Program Implementation Evaluation
Federal Fiscal Year 2018 - Federal Fiscal Year 2022**

Evaluators:
Martha Kyrillidou, Ph.D., M.Ed. M.L.S.
William Wilson, M.L.S.

QUALITYMETRICS

Helping libraries achieve success
www.qualitymetricsllc.com

Date: March 22, 2022
Commissioned by: Vermont Department of Libraries
Catherine Delneo,
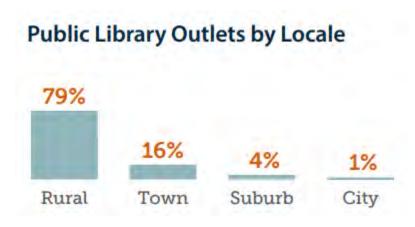State Librarian

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

Summary Introduction

The 2019 Public Libraries Survey (PLS) reported that Vermont had a total of 185 public library jurisdictions employing 252.15 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff categorized as librarians (77.09 FTE are reported as having an American Library Association [ALA] accredited Master's degrees). Similarly, the Academic Libraries Survey (ALS) reported that 15 institutions of higher education employ 99.83 FTE librarians.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' (NCES) Elementary/Secondary Information System (ElSi), Vermont's 187 public school districts employ 205.43 full-time librarians.

The total FTE library staff is about 360 in Vermont's public library outlets and the majority of these libraries (79%) are in very rural environments. In fact, recognizing the rural nature of the state is essential to understanding the context within which library services are provided in the Green Mountain state. The largest public library in Vermont (Burlington) has a service population of fewer than 45,000 people and is the only public library in the state with a print collection of more than 100,000 volumes. Only 15 of Vermont's 185 public libraries (8.15%) have service populations in excess of 9,000 people.

Public Library Outlets by Locale

79% Rural 16% Town 4% Suburb 1% City

Given Vermont's population of 643,077[1], the state's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States[2] program allotment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) of approximately $ 1 million[3] per year translates into $ 1.53[4] per person on an annual basis. LSTA funds alone are inadequate to meet the library and information needs of Vermont's approximately 645,000 residents. The Vermont Department of Libraries' (VTLIB) challenge is to find ways to make $ 1.53 per person transformative in terms of library services; to leverage a relatively small amount of money to accomplish major results by strategically

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[1] United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)
[2] The report will refer to the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program simply as LSTA throughout this report
[3] Four year LSTA Grants to States allotment average ((FFY [Federal Fiscal Year] 2018 State Allotment + FFY 2019 State Allotment + FFY 2020 State Allotment + FFY 2021 State Allotment) / 4)
[4] Four year LSTA Grants to States allotment average / United States Census Bureau Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

deploying funds and leveraging other public and private monies in support of high-quality library and information services.

There are four goal statements in the ***Library Services and Technology Act: Five-Year State Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2018-2022***. They are:

> ***GOAL 1: Vermonters will have access to resources and available statewide through interconnected platforms that share content/collections across libraries.***
>
> ***GOAL 2: Vermont libraries will have opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services and resources to all citizens.***
>
> ***GOAL 3: Vermont libraries will enhance workforce readiness programs, including entrepreneurial endeavors, using materials and services available through libraries.***
>
> ***GOAL 4: Vermont libraries will build partnerships, programs, and services that enhance access to early childhood and family literacy, digital literacy, and lifelong learning library resources, particularly to populations facing barriers to traditional library services.***

Retrospective Question A-1 Summary

Agency's Internal Assessment and Evaluator's Assessment

As part of the assessment process, the evaluators asked the former Vermont State Librarian, the Interim State Librarian, and the Vermont Department of Libraries' LSTA Coordinator to offer their joint appraisal of progress their agency had made toward achieving each of the four goals included in the Vermont Department of Libraries' 2018-2022 five-year plan. The evaluators prefaced their request for this internal assessment by noting the fact that the state was only three years into the implementation of the five-year plan. Consequently, it was acknowledged that it was unlikely that any of the goals would be completely or finally achieved.

Table 1 offers a summary of both the Vermont Department of Libraries' internal assessment and the evaluators' conclusions.

Table 1 - Vermont Department of Libraries' and Evaluator's Assessment of Achievement		
GOAL	**Vermont Department of Libraries' Internal Assessment**	**Evaluators' Assessment**
GOAL 1: Vermonters will have access to resources and available statewide through interconnected platforms that share content/collections across libraries.	Achieved	Achieved

GOAL 2: Vermont libraries will have opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services and resources to all citizens.	Partly Achieved	Achieved
GOAL 3: Vermont libraries will enhance workforce readiness programs, including entrepreneurial endeavors, using materials and services available through libraries.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 4: Vermont libraries will build partnerships, programs and services that enhance access to early childhood and family literacy, digital literacy, and lifelong learning library resources, particularly to populations facing barriers to traditional library services.	Partly Achieved	Achieved

Evaluator's Goal 1 Summary

GOAL 1: Vermonters will have access to resources and available statewide through interconnected platforms that share content/collections across libraries.

Vermont expends the lion's share of its LSTA funding (81.77%) to further objectives related to Goal 1. One project, entitled *Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER* (Collaborative Libraries of Vermont) alone accounts for almost thirty percent (29.45%) of total expenditures for the FFY 2018 - FFY 2020 period covered by this evaluation. Other truly significant projects are also included under Goal 1. These encompass a major electronic database initiative that provides access to a wide array of resources to the users of all types of libraries, the ABLE (Audio, Braille, Large Print and Electronic Books) Library, which is Vermont's library services to the blind and print-disabled, consulting services, and a host of other smaller efforts.

An examination of all of these programs reveals that VTLIB largely achieved Goal 1 on the basis of the *Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER* and *Statewide Databases for Public, School, and Academic Libraries* alone. In fact, the highly-integrated resource sharing project, which includes Integrated Library System (ILS), Interlibrary Loan (ILL), and a physical delivery system, has transformed the face of resource sharing in Vermont in a few short years. The evaluators believe that the Vermont Department of Libraries has **ACHIEVED** Goal 1.

Evaluator's Goal 2 Summary

GOAL 2: Vermont libraries will have opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services and resources to all citizens.

Only one project, *Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce*, has routinely been reported in the SPR under Goal 2 (Capacity). However, several other projects reported under other goals have contributed significantly to VTLIB's performance in meeting its objectives of increasing the capacity of local libraries to serve. In particular, the *Building Library Capacity*

(Consulting and Statistics) project categorized and reported on under Goal 1 (Access to Resources) and the *Summer Reading Program* project evaluated under Goal 4 (Literacy and Lifelong Learning) clearly offer local libraries "opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services."

Taken together, these programs enabled VTLIB to deliver on its goal of enhancing the capacity of Vermont libraries to deliver quality library and information services. Based on a review of both the Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce project and several others including the two specifically mentioned above lead the evaluators to conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ***ACHIEVED*** Goal 2

Evaluator's Goal 3 Summary

GOAL 3: Vermont libraries will enhance workforce readiness programs, including entrepreneurial endeavors, using materials and services available through libraries.

Discussion of Goal 3

VTLIB placed very limited LSTA resources into its Goal 3 effort. Furthermore, the single project funded, the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant* program was only marginally successful. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that some progress toward the goal of "enhancing workforce readiness programs… using materials and services available through libraries" was made when the Job Hunters Helpers Grant and Digital Literacy for Job Seekers are taken together. The evaluators believe that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ***PARTLY ACHIEVED*** Goal 3.

Evaluator's Goal 4 Summary

GOAL 4: Vermont libraries will build partnerships, programs, and services that enhance access to early childhood and family literacy, digital literacy, and lifelong learning library resources, particularly to populations facing barriers to traditional library services.

Discussion of Goal 4

Vermont's efforts in achieving Goal 4 can be described as small but mighty! VTLIB expended an average of under $80,000 per year on all three of the Goal 4 projects (*Summer Reading, Book Awards*, and *Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries*). Nevertheless, each of these projects had an even greater impact than anticipated as VTLIB and VHC staff creatively and quickly moved to reimagine how the programs could be delivered. The evaluator's conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ***ACHIEVED*** and exceeded the objectives of Goal 4.

Retrospective Question A-2 Summary

A-2. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities achieve results that address national priorities associated with the Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

The Vermont Department of Libraries' activities during the period evaluated have impacted four of the Measuring Success focal areas: Information Access, Institutional Capacity, Lifelong learning, and Economic and Employment Development. While no specific projects were directed at either the Human Resources of Civic Engagement focal areas, a strong argument can be made that many of the activities undertaken under Vermont's Literacy and Lifelong Learning goal (Goal 4) also promote Civic Engagement.

Efforts related to Information Access were robust, while those focusing on Economic and Employment Development were meager. Several projects undertaken took on more of a Institutional Capacity focus as the pandemic unfolded.

"Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources" was the the intent most frequently cited and also accounted for a significant portion of Vermont's LSTA expenditures. When combined with the closely related "improve users' ability to discover information resources," these two intents were present in three of the four most costly projects undertaken: *Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER; Statewide Databases for Public, School and Academic Libraries; and Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired.* At the other end of the cost spectrum, VTLIB realized a tremendous return of investment in its three Lifelong Learning focused projects: *Summer Reading Program, Book Awards, and Cultural Programming for Vermont Public Libraries*. These projects had a notable effect in the "Improve users' formal education" and "Improve users' general knowledge and skills" at a very modest cost.

Retrospective Question A-3 Summary

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)

Only one project, Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired (ABLE Library), which is Vermont's implementation of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled program, qualifies as being a substantial focus on the basis of percentage of expenditure specified by IMLS in the evaluation guidelines.

EVALUATION REPORT

The 2019 Public Libraries Survey (PLS) reported that Vermont had a total of 185 public library jurisdictions employing 252.15 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff categorized as librarians (77.09 FTE are reported as having an American Library Association [ALA] accredited Master's degrees). Similarly, the Academic Libraries Survey (ALS) reported that 15 institutions of higher education employ 99.83 FTE librarians.

Public Library Outlets by Locale

79% Rural
16% Town
4% Suburb
1% City

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' (NCES) Elementary/Secondary Information System (ElSi), Vermont's 187 public school districts employ 205.43 full-time librarians.

The total FTE library staff is about 360 in Vermont's public library outlets and the majority of these libraries (79%) are in very rural environments. In fact, recognizing the rural nature of the state is essential to understanding the context within which library services are provided in the Green Mountain state.

Legend:
- Less than 1,000
- 1,000 to 2,499
- 2,500 to 4,999
- 5,000 to 9,999
- 10,000 to 24,999
- 25,000 to 49,999
- 50,000 to 99,999
- 100,000 to 249,999
- 250,000 to 499,999
- 500,000 to 999,999
- 1,000,000 or more

The largest public library in Vermont (Burlington) has a service population of fewer than 45,000 people and is the only public library in the state with a print collection of more than 100,000 volumes. Only 15 of Vermont's 185 public libraries (8.15%) have service populations in excess of 9,000 people. The majority of libraries serve communities with less than 2,500 people in them.[5]

Evaluation Introduction

Given Vermont's population of 643,077[6], the state's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States[7] program allotment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) of approximately $ 1 million[8] per year translates into $ 1.53[9] per person on an annual basis. LSTA funds alone are inadequate to meet the library and information needs of Vermont's approximately 645,000 residents. The Vermont Department of Libraries' (VTLIB) challenge is to find ways to make $ 1.53 per person transformative in terms of library services; to leverage a relatively small amount of money to accomplish major results by strategically deploying funds and leveraging other public and private monies in support of high-quality library and information services.

There are four goal statements in the *Library Services and Technology Act: Five-Year State Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2018-2022*. Each of the goals is stated below and LSTA-funded activities carried out in support of the goal are described. Finally, the evaluators' assessment of whether each goal has been achieved, partly achieved, or not achieved is presented.

Goal 1 Retrospective Assessment - Access to Resources

GOAL 1: *Vermonters will have access to resources and available statewide through interconnected platforms that share content/collections across libraries.*

Goal 1 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 1.

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[5] Public Library Survey (2019). Table 1A. Percentage of distribution of public libraries, by population of legal service areas and state: Fiscal year 2019.
[6] United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)
[7] The report will refer to the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program simply as LSTA throughout this report
[8] Four year LSTA Grants to States allotment average ((FFY [Federal Fiscal Year] 2018 State Allotment + FFY 2019 State Allotment + FFY 2020 State Allotment + FFY 2021 State Allotment) / 4)
[9] Four year LSTA Grants to States allotment average / United States Census Bureau Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER	$845,415.64
Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)	$498,744.81
Statewide Databases for Public, School, and Academic Libraries	$414,557.22
Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions	$327,517.01
Digital Literacy for Job-Seekers	$119,405.73
Motion Picture Public Performance License	$48,925.56
FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)	$43,195.75
e-Book and e-Audiobook Collection Development Grant	$22,440.00
Streaming Movie Licenses for VT Schools (Partially LSTA and Partially CARES Act Funded)	$17,506.50
Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm	$9,549.29
Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Placed 2018 under Goal 2)	$0.00
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$2,347,257.51**

Goal 1 expenditures represent 81.77% of Vermont's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period.

Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER

Vermont allocates the lion's share of its LSTA allotment (81.77%) to initiatives carried out in support of Goal 1. The largest of the efforts in this category is entitled *Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER*. CLOVER is an acronym for "Collaborative Libraries of Vermont." This project, which has several interlinked modules, alone accounted for almost thirty percent (29.45%) of Vermont's LSTA expenditures in the FFY 2018 - FFY 2020 period covered by this evaluation. Together, the three major components of this program: the CLOVER (SHAREit) interlibrary loan system, the VERSO integrated library system, and a robust courier service to move physical materials, have literally transformed resource sharing in the Green Mountain state in recent years.

When the same team of evaluators conducted the 2013 - 2017 LSTA five-year evaluation for Vermont, the VTLIB was about to replace its mechanism that ensures that even the smallest of libraries can benefit from a wealth of resources held by the vast majority of the public libraries as well as approximately one-third of academic and school libraries. The former resource sharing system, which might charitably be characterized as a legacy system, provided access to limited holdings, offered minimal functionality and presented a highly unfriendly interface. In its place Vermont has now implemented a well-integrated system resources sharing system.

Interlibrary loans fell from 75,643 for FFY 2018 to 53,157 in FFY 2019. With the implementation of CLOVER in 2017, materials sharing between Vermont libraries initially soared. However, with concerns about whether the COVID19 virus could spread on physical surfaces and the closure of many libraries in 2020, interlibrary loans suffered in 2020. However, interlibrary loans rebounded in FFY 2020 to 66,496 and are eventually expected to exceed 2018 levels since more libraries, resources, and courier stops have been added.

In a web survey of the library community conducted by the evaluators between October 26 and November 9, 2021, almost half (48.9%) of the 104 library directors, library staff members, and trustees identified interlibrary loan support as the most impactful program that the state funds with LSTA dollars. This mirrors the findings from the internal SLAA self-assessment carried out by the evaluators in August 2021 when the then State Librarian and his key staff indicated that the interlibrary loan program as a whole was the most successful or impactful carried out during the period covered by the assessment.

Comments from the library community in the online survey underscore the importance of the program. One librarian said:
       "The CLOVER and courier services have had a huge impact on our patrons."
Another added:
       "The courier service and interlibrary loan is essential to us. As a small library, the access that interlibrary loan provides our patrons helps us to ensure an equity in service to that of larger libraries."

Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)

The second largest percentage of Vermont's LSTA funding (17.37%) has been devoted to a project entitled *Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)*. While this project has regularly been reported to IMLS under state Goal 1 (Access to Resources) in the State Program Report (SPR), there is a strong argument to be made that it impacts Goal 2 (Capacity) to an even larger degree.

This project enables VTLIB to offer a wide variety of support and assistance to Vermont's libraries (primarily to public libraries) in categories including governance and management, youth services, technology, issues directly impacting rural library services, and efforts to meet the needs of individuals with special needs including the blind and otherwise print-disabled.

While the Coronavirus pandemic heavily impacted the way in which consulting services were offered, there is ample evidence that, if anything, adjustments made by VTLIB to cope with library closures and travel restrictions actually enhanced the effectiveness and reach of services. Although the mechanisms used to interact with the library community changed dramatically as COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) emerged, the number of direct consultations between the VTLIB consulting corps and local libraries actually increased.

CONSULTING SESSIONS	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020
Number of Direct Individual Consultations	2,344	2,556	2,414

Furthermore, overall contact with individual libraries soared as VTLIB used its online presence to monitor and report the local status of library services throughout the state and to disseminate helpful resources to assist library directors and their boards in making critical decisions. VTLIB developed a Library Service and Status Survey and reported the information gathered from libraries. VTLIB reported that they developed the tool: "To inform libraries what their peers are doing and help them make their own decisions." Results of the survey and other relevant information is being reported on an ongoing basis at: https://libraries.vermont.gov/covid19.

One respondent to the online survey targeting the library community said:

> "Throughout the pandemic we had access to information, communication and resources for our individual libraries."

Another component of the *Building Library Capacity* project is the collection and analysis of library statistics on a statewide basis. The information gleaned from this activity serves both the State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA) and local library decision-makers in that it provides longitudinal data regarding the status of library services in the state. The full picture of the impact of the pandemic on library services is just beginning to emerge and it is likely that the information collected prior to as well as during the pandemic period will help shape both the 2023 - 2027 LSTA Plan as well as other new and ongoing services.

Statewide Databases for Public, School, and Academic Libraries

An important element of Vermont's effort to achieve Goal 1 (Access to Resources), VTLIB uses LSTA funds to help support a robust array of electronic information resources to all Vermont residents. Individuals can access a suite of 49 Gale Cengage databases at public, school, and academic libraries, as well as at their homes or offices by getting login credentials through their local public library or through the school or academic institution they attend.

Although usage of the databases is healthy on a per capita basis compared to some other states, both the number of sessions and searches declined as the pandemic emerged and settled in. While usage has begun to rebound since 2020, it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. The following table summarizes that trend.

	Vermont Online Library			
Year	Sessions	Avg. Session Length (min)	Full Text Retrievals	Searches
Calendar 2018	454,742	14.45	285,183	863,467
Calendar 2019*	353,490	9.89	227,186	725,387
Calendar 2020*	260,811	9.08	166,286	477,241
Calendar 2021	320,395	9.42	196,035	469,449

* 2019 and 2020 statistics reflect incomplete data. GALE database totals are lacking data for August and September 2019 and for October 2020. Adding estimated totals for the missing months reduces, but does not reverse, the downward trend for 2019 and 2020.

Like many other states, Vermont is examining its return on investment in electronic databases. There is no question that the products are highly valued by regular users of the resources and that they help individual libraries extend the impact of their local resources by offering a core of quality information. It is recognized that the databases also ensure a level of information access equity that would not be possible without them. One concern expressed by VTLIB staff was that it was "hard to drive public library users to a more academic product like Gale." There has been some experimentation in offering some additional targeted products such as HeritageQuest. VTLIB offered this product for several years but dropped it because usage was disappointing and the more robust Ancestry.com product was deemed too costly.

One offering that has proven popular among public library users is the Universal Class product. Users have started courses on a wide variety of topics and have completed a large number of lessons and submitted tens of thousands of assignments.

	Universal Class					
Year	Registrations	Courses Started	Logins	Lessons Viewed	Videos Watched	Student Submissions
Calendar 2018	698	1,539	25,826	24,160	26,200	19,890
Calendar 2019	1,221	2,829	60,982	78,279	44,340	43,079
Calendar 2020	1,241	3,280	58,306	91,281	55,216	45,994
Calendar 2021	698	2,361	24,755	75,505	50,725	30,736

Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions

In the three years covered by this evaluation, VTLIB invested just under fourteen percent (13.95%) of its LSTA funds on *Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions.* The core activity under this project is Vermont's implementation of the Library of Congress' (LOC) implementation of the National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). Vermont has delightfully branded its regional library for the blind effort as the ABLE (Audio, Braille, Large Print, and Electronic Books) Library.

The ABLE Library is an essential component of VTLIB's endeavors to fulfill Goal 1 (Access to Resources). In addition to providing the typical talking book program, VTLIB does an excellent job of linking the NLS-oriented services to local libraries by providing access to a collection of large print materials that are offered both to individuals and as rotating deposit collections. This appears to result in a greater awareness among local library staff of core talking book services. The ABLE Library garnered a number of positive mentions in the web survey of the broader library community.

The evaluators had the privilege of interacting with both the staff of the ABLE Library and with the ABLE Library Advisory Committee composed of advocates for individuals with disabilities and users/consumers of the talking book program.

One member of the Advisory Committee offered what might be the ultimate endorsement of the talking book program. They said, "Talking books is the best part of being blind!" Users of the program were unanimous in praising the ABLE Library staff for their performance during the pandemic. Staff members established a rotating on-site schedule to ensure minimal disruptions in service and consumers of the program noticed the result. One person called the effort "heroic" and another added that they had read 180 books during the "COVID year."

The ABLE Library has managed some notable successes during the pandemic period. One example of this has been the implementation of the Duplication on Demand (DOD) program that gives traditional cartridge-based talking book users access to a wider array of titles and benefits both program patrons and increases staff efficiency. The availability of DOD directly translated into higher circulation.

One aspect of the ABLE Library's service has been severely disrupted by the pandemic. Vermont has traditionally engaged in an active program of recording monographs by Vermont authors and/or of Vermont interest for eventual inclusion in the national talking book collection. In FFY 2018, Vermont reported completing 14 titles. Due to the pandemic, the recording studio closed in 2020. While the program has continued with a tech savvy volunteer recording materials from their home, the output of the effort dropped to only one title in FFY 2020. However, there may, in fact, be a silver-lining to this disruption. VTLIB and the ABLE Library staff have pivoted to embrace the remote recording scenario and the future of the program looks promising.

The chart below tracks the ABLE Library's performance in the three-year evaluation period. It clearly demonstrates that there was little disruption in services due to the pandemic.

VERMONT ABLE LIBRARY	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020	CHANGE 2018 2020
Braille Readers (Individuals)	16	17	13	-18.80%
Cartridge (DB) Readers (Individuals)	1,080	1,099	1,071	-0.80%
BARD Audio Book Readers	244	234	234	-4.10%
Non-BARD Braille Circulation (includes books & interlibrary loan - does not include NLS magazines)	4	33	7	75.00%
Cartridge (DB) Circulation (includes books & interlibrary loan - does not include NLS magazines)	41,590	43,977	48,555	16.70%
BARD Braille Circulation (Downloads)	560	562	766	36.80%
BARD Audio Circulation (Downloads)	12,649	12,419	14,025	10.90%
TOTAL READERS	1,340	1,350	1,318	1.60%
TOTAL CIRCULATION & DOWNLOADS	54,803	56,991	63,353	15.60%
CIRCULATION/DOWNLOADS PER READER	40.9	42.22	48.07	17.50%
ESTIMATED STATE POPULATION	624,358	623,989	643,077	3.00%
READERS IN PROGRAM AS PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION	0.22%	0.22%	0.21%	-4.50%

Overall, the *Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired* significantly contributes to VTLIB's excellent performance in achieving its Goal 1 objectives as well as effectively reaching a targeted audience.

Digital Literacy for Job Seekers

Because this project provides statewide access to EBSCO's Learning Express Library product, it fits very well under Goal 1 (Access to Resources). However, the evaluators would also like to point out that there is also ample justification for placing it under Goal 3 (Workforce Readiness). Consequently, we have chosen to report on this program under Goal 3 along with the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program*. In short, VTLIB expanded access to EBSCO's Learning Express Library from five libraries to 541 libraries of all types in the State less than a year before the COVID pandemic emerged. This effort paved the way for broad access to a valuable digital job-hunt-related tool that remained accessible after almost all libraries were forced to close their doors.

Motion Picture Public Performance License

In an effort to enhance the ability of local libraries to offer programming for all ages and to expand access to different types of resources, VTLIB has licensed public performance rights for public libraries that enables them to legally show an extensive array of movies. Furthermore, offering licenses for all 185 public libraries in the State also opened the door to providing a 50% discount to school libraries wishing to acquire licenses.

Unfortunately, the COVID crisis impacted this program heavily. The chart below shows the number of libraries acquiring licenses, number of performances and attendance.

	Motion Picture License Results				
Year	Libraries Participating	Number of Movies Shown to Adults	Number of Movies Shown to Children and Young Adults	Adults Attending	Children and Young Adults Attending
FFY 2018	154	493	576	6,639	5,708
FFY 2019	151	377	269	5,708	3,467
FFY 2020	129	70	47	765	843

In an effort to make the best of a bad situation, permission was granted to allow for outdoor showings on library grounds. Of the 117 movies shown during the 2020 - 2021 season, 42 were shown outdoors. It is hoped that this popular program will once again return to generating large audiences as in-person programming begins to be restored.

FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)

The FiberConnect Wide Area Network Project is an outgrowth or continuation of efforts begun under the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP). This project affords 41 Vermont public libraries (about 22% of the total) access to high-speed Internet access at a reasonable cost. VTLIB works with the State of Vermont's Agency of Digital Services to ensure technical support for the network and continues to assist the FiberConnect consortium in managing E-Rate applications. The program continues to be vital to many libraries in securing Internet access that provides the capacity and speed necessary to serve the public well.

e-Book and e-Audiobook Collection Development Grant

This project helps subsidize the efforts of the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) in providing affordable access to e-resources. The consortium, which began in 2008 with 15 members has grown to a membership of 155 libraries of all types. While the majority of the funding to support licensing of e-books and e-audiobooks comes from member libraries, VTLIBs small subsidy helps expand and enrich the collections that are offered. This use of LSTA funds is consistent with the Goal 1 objective of providing the public with a wide array of quality resources.

Streaming Movie Licenses for Vermont Schools

VTLIB also negotiated streaming movie licenses for schools to help them mitigate the effect of COVID-related remote learning through a variety of funding sources as a one one-time activity, including a small amount of LSTA Grants to States dollars as well as CARES ACT funding.

Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm

A small amount of LSTA funding was used to microfilm the Rutland Herald Newspaper to add to the State's extensive archive of in-state newspapers.

Goal 1 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1
A-1. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 1?

Vermont devotes most of its LSTA resources to Goal 1. While some of the projects undertaken further multiple goals, the level of achievement reached in increasing access to resources statewide is outstanding. The highly integrated interlibrary loan/delivery system meets statewide needs that are significant in a rural state with mostly small libraries with limited resources. ABLE Library (Library for the Blind) services reach both a very targeted special needs population as well as a more general population through its large print offerings. Other smaller projects such as the *Motion Picture Performance Licensing*, *e-Book and e-Audio Book Collection Development Grant*, and *Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm* ensure that materials in many different formats are available. The Evaluators' conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ACHIEVED Goal 1.

Goal 2 Retrospective Assessment - Capacity

GOAL 2: Vermont libraries will have opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services and resources to all citizens.

Goal 2 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 2.

PROJECT TITLE	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Under Access to Resources in 2018)	$216,339.37
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$216,339.37**

Goal 2 expenditures represent 7.54% of Vermont's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period.

Only one project, *Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce* has been reported under Goal 2 (Capacity). However, several other projects including *Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)* categorized as Goal 1 (Access to Resources) and Summer Reading Program categorized as a Goal 4 (Literacy and Lifelong Learning) project also contribute significantly to the achievement of Goal 2. Please see the discussion of these programs under Goals 1 and 4 respectively.

Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce

Perhaps the best word to describe VTLIB's performance in carrying out this project is agility! While the core objective of equipping Vermont library staff members with the knowledge and skills they need to offer quality library and information services remained unchanged, the methods used to carry out the objective were altered significantly, and in some regards, have been changed permanently.

The introductory paragraphs in this evaluation highlighted the rural nature of Vermont and the small size of its libraries. The directors in the majority of public libraries in the Green Mountain State lack a Master's degree in library or information science. Directors often come to their positions with little or no prior library experience and no formal training in the field. Consequently, VTLIB is faced with the ongoing challenge of ensuring that the residents of the State are served by well-trained individuals.

One way in which the SLAA has met this challenge is through its Certificate of Public Librarianship (CPL). This program certifies individuals who have completed coursework in four core areas (public library administration, collection development, cataloging, and reference) plus a supplementary class in the area of technology. Additional electives are also available.

The most impressive fact related to the implementation of the *Continuing Education* project during the pandemic was the rapidity of the pivot to a nearly fully virtual model for CPL offerings and other related staff development efforts. VTLIB staff quickly became highly proficient in using Microsoft Teams™ software, shifted funding from scholarships to attend in-person conferences to scholarships to participate in virtual conferences and webinars, and added resources such as Niche Academy to their toolbox.

A shift was also instituted in the content of the learning experiences offered. As a response to COVID, additional webinars and other virtual sessions focused on Human Resources,labor issues, and self-care. The application process for scholarships to participate in webinars offered by national organizations was streamlined to maximize the number of people involved in learning activities.

The results from these changes were outstanding. The COVID period resulted in an increase rather than a decrease both in terms of number of library staff members participating in staff development activities and in the number and breadth of topics covered. The number of CPL-related sessions increased from 51 in 2018 to 257 sessions in the 2019-2020 period.

Registrations for formal events offered by outside organizations increased from 112 to 232. VTLIB also experienced an increase in the number of non-library directors who participated in a training experience. More support staff took advantage of training and the traditional Trustee and Friends training events transitioned to an online mode.

One interviewee praised the VTLIB staff's nimbleness in shifting to virtual learning and a web survey respondent characterized the continuing education offered as invaluable. In short, the evaluators found that the Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce project was, if anything, more successful because of the pandemic than it had been in the past.

Goal 2 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1

A-1. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 2?

While only one project, *Continuing Education for the Vermont Library Workforce* is formally listed under Goal 2, VTLIB carried out several other significant projects during the FFY 2018 - FFY 2020 time period covered by this evaluation. The most notable of these efforts that clearly contributes to the goal of building the capacity of local libraries is the appropriately titled *Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)* project which funds a variety of consulting and library development activities described in the discussion of this project under Goal 1 (Access to Resources). The consultants would have concluded that VTLIB had met its Goal 2 objectives based solely on its continuing education/staff development activity; however, the consideration of capacity building efforts carried out under Goal 1 simply underscores the fact that Vermont's performance far exceeds the basic expectations outlined in its five-year plan. The evaluator's conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has **ACHIEVED** Goal 2.

Goal 3 Retrospective Assessment - Workforce Readiness

GOAL 3: Vermont libraries will enhance workforce readiness programs, including entrepreneurial endeavors, using materials, and services available through libraries.

Goal 3 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 3.

Goal 3 Projects & Expenditures

PROJECT TITLE	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program	$2,433.51
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$2,433.51**

Goal 3 expenditures represent 0.08% of Vermont's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period.

Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program

Only one small project was categorized in the SPR as being directed toward the achievement of Goal 3 (Workforce Readiness). Furthermore, the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program* was supported with LSTA funding in only one of the three years (FFY 2018) included in this evaluation. However, it should be noted that one other project, *Digital Literacy for Job Seekers,* was funded in all three years as a Goal 1(Access to Resources) project.

While the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program* was at best marginally successful in achieving its intended goal of helping library patrons search for and apply for jobs as well as identify career opportunities, VTLIB gained considerable insight from the effort. The concept behind the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant* had several positive characteristics. It represented a three-way partnership among the SLAA, the Community College of Vermont, and twelve (12) local public libraries. The idea was to involve trained students to assist library patrons in job and career search activities.

Several factors contributed to the limited success of the endeavor. A dearth of publicity about the program, a mismatch between the students/helpers skill training and the needs of job hunters, student class schedules that didn't always correspond to job hunters' availability and Vermont's low unemployment rate all contributed to lower than hoped for participation. Those who did receive assistance in 145 sessions reported in surveys that were conducted with participants that they were helped in resume preparation, conducting job searches, exploring career opportunities, filling in job applications, and in learning some computer basics. One outgrowth of the modest results of the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant* program proved to be fortuitous: VTLIB expanded access to EBSCO's Learning Express Library from five libraries to making it available to 541 libraries of all types in the State under the *Digital Literacy for Job Seekers* project less than a year before the COVID pandemic emerged. In effect, the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant*'s demise after only one year paved the way for broad access to a valuable digital job-hunt-related tool that remained accessible after almost all libraries were forced to close their doors.

Goal 3 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1

A-1. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 3?

VTLIB placed very limited LSTA resources into its Goal 3 effort. Furthermore, the single project funded, the *Job Hunt Helpers Grant* program was only marginally successful. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that some progress toward the goal of "enhancing workforce readiness programs… using materials and services available through libraries" was made when the Job Hunters Helpers Grant and Digital Literacy for Job Seekers are taken together. The evaluator's conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ***PARTLY ACHIEVED*** Goal 3.

Goal 4 Retrospective Assessment - Literacy and Lifelong Learning

GOAL 4: Vermont libraries will build partnerships, programs and services that enhance access to early childhood and family literacy, digital literacy, and lifelong learning library resources, particularly to populations facing barriers to traditional library services.

Goal 4 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 4.

PROJECT TITLE	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Summer Reading Program	$88,461.28
Book Awards	$82,398.28
Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries	$68,402.63
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$239,262.19**

Goal 4 expenditures represent 8.33% of Vermont's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period.

Although projects undertaken in support of Goal 4 represent less than ten-percent (8.33%) of Vermont's total LSTA expenditures, to a large degree, they define the essence of the Green Mountain State's unique nature. The three projects: *Summer Reading Program*; *Book Awards*; and *Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries*, speak to the historical importance that Vermonters place on their libraries as local hubs that celebrate learning, literacy, and culture.

Summer Reading Program

Vermont's approach to supporting summer reading in the past has been similar to what has been observed by the evaluators in many other states. It has consisted primarily of linking local libraries to the national Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) and coordinating and subsidizing the acquisition and distribution of program materials to local libraries. However, during the evaluation period, VTLIB has expanded its efforts by adding statewide access to the Beanstack reading-tracking program and making other shifts to accommodate COVID realities such as more virtual programming, grab-and-go curbside programming, and the prevalence of outdoor as opposed to indoor programming. Vermont also extends the impact of its LSTA-funded efforts by providing additional support for summer programming using non-LSTA

sources. One librarian did a wonderful job of summing up the impact of this project in the comments they offered in the web-based survey of the library community when they said:

"The Summer Reading Program is a community builder and a way of building joy of reading as well as maintaining and increasing (reading) skills."

Book Awards

Vermont has a longstanding history of supporting several notable book award programs. While the names of the awards have changed a bit over the years, the three current programs: The Red Clover Book Award (graded school age); The Vermont Golden Dome Book Award (middle school age); and the Green Mountain Book Award (high school age) engage thousands of school children, teachers, librarians, and community members in selecting, promoting, and, most importantly, reading the award-winning books. As an example, for FFY 2020, approximately 7,400 students participated in the voting process used to select award winners. Again, one of the librarians responding to the web-based survey offered a cogent summary of the project impact by saying:

"Book awards are great motivators for the students in Vermont to expand the types of books they read and explore."

Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries

This project entails a longstanding collaboration between VTLIB and the Vermont Humanities Council (VHC). The centerpiece of this project has historically been a series of lectures referred to as "First Wednesdays Talks" in nine libraries geographically scattered around the entire State. Topics of the talks offer something for everyone and "First Wednesdays" has become a venerable Vermont tradition. Examples of programs for the 2021-2022 season range from Women's Suffrage to Star Wars and from Film Noir to Why We Eat What We Eat at Thanksgiving.

	First Wednesdays Programs			
Year	Number of Talks	Number of In Person Attendees	Number of Virtual Attendees	Total Attendance
2018 - 2019	68	6,144	0	6,144
2019 - 2020	54	3,369	0	3,369
2020 - 2021	75	0	11,653	11,653

Although the pandemic curtailed the 2019 - 2020 season offerings a bit and resulted in lower overall participation, the quick pivot to virtual programming via zoom broadened the audience tremendously. Although it is difficult to precisely estimate participation because more than one

person was often watching zoom sessions from a single device, VTLIB and VHC conservatively estimate that 11,653 individuals participated either in live zoom sessions or by watching archived recorded talks. See https://www.vermonthumanities.org/first-wednesdays/recorded-talks/.

This program is now moving into a hybrid in-person/virtual mode for the 2021 - 2022 season and anticipates acquiring an even broader audience that includes attendees residing in Vermont and now, from well beyond the Green Mountain State's borders. Participants in the program offer the greatest endorsement of its impact:

> "Fabulous! The program is a regular and tangible way… to reach out to people
> -- to bring what matters to all Vermonters. The range is impressive. And the
> way it's being delivered during these tough times is perfect -- enabling all of us
> to remain safe.

<div align="center">and,</div>

> "I think it speaks very highly of our little state that we value continuous learning
> about all sorts of topics. That's what keeps democracy vibrant!"

There have been several other exciting aspects to the *Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries* project during the evaluation period. In the fall of 2020, the Vermont Humanities Council adopted the state's Center for the Book affiliated with the Library of Congress. VTLIB had previously supported a local non-profit that served as the Center for the Book. The Center for the Book's new home with VTLIB's premiere collaborator promises great things for the future. VTLIB provided funding to the Vermont Humanities Council and there is great promise and opportunities explored through this continuing and strengthened partnership.

Finally, in what may be Vermont's best example of outstanding success in the midst of a trying situation, VTLIB and VHC partnered to sponsor the zoom appearance of acclaimed author Angie Thomas as part of the "Vermont Reads" program. Ms. Thomas' presentation, The Hate U Give netted a participation of somewhere in the neighborhood of 400 (this is 400 logins many of which likely had multiple participants). Students in the State were given the opportunity to participate in a students only conversation with the author the following day. Since participation in this event was on the basis of classrooms as opposed to individuals, it is estimated that approximately 2,000 students participated. In addition to live-stream participants, the video of the programming had 125 video views after the event.

Goal 4 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1

A-1. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 4?

Vermont's efforts in achieving Goal 4 can be described as small but mighty! VTLIB expended an average of under $80,000 per year on all three of the Goal 4 projects. Nevertheless, each of these projects had an even greater impact than anticipated as VTLIB and VHC staff creatively and quickly moved to reimagine how the programs could be delivered. The evaluator's conclude that the Vermont Department of Libraries has ***ACHIEVED*** and exceeded the objectives of Goal 4.

Retrospective Assessment Questions A-2 and A-3

Retrospective Question A-2

A-2. To what extent did VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities achieve results that address national priorities associated with the Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

The Vermont Department of Libraries activities during the period evaluated have impacted four of the Measuring Success focal areas. They are: Information Access, Institutional Capacity, Lifelong Learning, and Economic and Employment development. While no specific projects were directed at either the Human Resources of Civic Engagement focal areas, a strong argument can be made that many of the activities undertaken under Vermont's Literacy and Lifelong Learning goal (Goal 4) also promote Civic Engagement.

Efforts related to Information Access were robust, while those focusing on Economic and Employment Development were meager. Several projects undertaken took on more of a Institutional Capacity focus as the pandemic unfolded.

"Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources" was the the intent most frequently cited and also accounted for a significant portion of Vermont's LSTA expenditures. When combined with the closely related "improve users' ability to discover information resources," these two intents were present in three of the four most costly projects undertaken: *Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER; Statewide Databases for Public, School, and Academic Libraries; and Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired.* At the other end of the cost spectrum, VTLIB realized a tremendous return of investment in its three Lifelong Learning focused projects *(Summer Reading Program, Book Awards, and Cultural Programming for Vermont Public Libraries)*. These projects had a notable effect in the "Improve users' formal education" and "Improve users' general knowledge and skills" at a very modest cost.

Retrospective Question A-3

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for VTLIB's Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)

Only one project, Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired (ABLE Library), which is Vermont's implementation of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Diabled program, qualifies as being a substantial focus on the basis of percentage of expenditure specified by IMLS in the evaluation guidelines. While many other projects undertaken by VTLIB have had significant impacts on specified groups including the library workforce and both children aged 0-5 and school-aged youth aged 6-17, these additional

projects and activities either target general audiences or fall substantially below the 10% expenditure threshold. The ABLE Library accounts for 11.41% of LSTA program expenditures in the period that includes FFY 2018, FFY 2019, and FFY 2020 and reaches several categories of individuals with disabling conditions. Primary among these categories are individuals with visual impairments; however recent changes in eligibility requirements and the certification process have resulted in additional clients with other print and reading disabilities.

Vermont's LSTA expenditures also have a significant impact in the area of professional and staff development. For the period from FFY 2018 - FFY 2020, expenditures aimed at the development of the library workforce amounted to 7.54% of the total.

Process Questions B-1, B-2, and B-3

Process Question B-1

B-1. How has VTLIB used any data from the State Program Report (SPR) and elsewhere (e.g., Public Libraries Survey) to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan?
Data and information gathered in preparation for submitting the annual SPR in addition to statistics reported in the Public Libraries Survey (PLS) is used periodically to assess the state library agency's progress. As a result of this review, some adjustments have been made at the activity level to reflect actions that have shown themselves to be more or less effective in achieving the overarching goals. SPR data has also been shared with specific outside evaluators, including QualityMetrics LLC, in their roles in evaluating Vermont's implementation of the LSTA Grants to States program and other programs and initiatives.

Process Question B-2

B-2. Specify any modifications VTLIB made to the Five-Year Plan. What was the reason for this change?
No formal changes or amendments were made to the Five-Year LSTA Plan since it was submitted to IMLS in June 2017; however, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered how some specific activities were carried out and, in a few cases, prevented VTLIB from fully achieving the results that were originally envisioned. Nevertheless, the goals specified in the Plan remained in place and served as guiding principles toward progress.

Process Question B-3

B-3. How and with whom has VTLIB shared data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources? How has VTLIB used the last Five-Year Evaluation to inform data collected for the new Five-Year Evaluation? How has VTLIB used this information throughout this five-year cycle?
Data derived from the State Program Report (SPR) is used both internally for planning and evaluation purposes and is indirectly shared with the Vermont Agency of Administration and

indirectly with legislators through periodic reports from the Vermont Department of Libraries. SPR and PLS data and information has also been incorporated into the Department of Libraries' annual report, which serves to inform the library community, State government officials and federal agencies like the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), and the general public regarding VTLIB's efforts to achieve the goals outlined in the 2018-2022 Five-Year LSTA Plan. SPR data has also been shared with outside evaluators including QualityMetrics LLC in their role as independent evaluators of the LSTA Grants to States program.

Methodology Questions C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4

Methodology Question C-1

C-1. Identify how VTLIB implemented an independent Five-Year Evaluation using the criteria described in the section of this guidance document called Selection of an Independent Evaluator.

To ensure rigorous and objective evaluation of the Vermont Department of Libraries' (VTLIB) implementation of the LSTA Grants to States program, VTLIB, in cooperation with eight other state library administrative agencies (SLAAs) in the northeast United States, participated in the issuance of a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) for a "Cooperative Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year Plan Evaluation 2018-2022" through the Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE). The RFP was issued on June 14, 2021 with proposals due by July 12, 2021.

As a result of a competitive bidding process, QualityMetrics LLC, a library consulting firm headquartered in Silver Spring Maryland, was awarded the contract to conduct the independent LSTA evaluation. QualityMetrics LLC does not have a role in carrying out other LSTA-funded activities and is independent of those who are being evaluated or who might be favorably or adversely affected by the evaluation results.

QualityMetrics LLC has in-depth evaluation experience and demonstrated professional competency in conducting LSTA Grants to States evaluations. QualityMetrics Director and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Martha Kyrillidou, carried out more than 20 such evaluations for the 2013-2017 cycle. In addition, QualityMetrics associate consultant, Bill Wilson, has been part of more than 50 LSTA evaluations in each five-year cycle since 2002 both as a partner in Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants and as a research consultant with QualityMetrics.

Principal consultant Dr. Martha Kyrillidou has deep experience in library evaluation over her 22 years of service at the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Dr. Kyrillidou has taught Research Methods and Assessment, and Evaluation courses at the University of Maryland and at Kent State University and has extensive practical experience in mixed methods, evaluation

and outcomes assessment. Martha is a current member of the Library Statistics Working Group (LSWG), chair of the NISO Z39.7 standard, and mentoring the next generation of public library staff and evaluators.

Mr. Wilson has extensive experience with federal funding programs for libraries dating back to the 1970s and interactions with state library administrative agencies since he served as Wisconsin's State Librarian in the 1990s. Mr. Wilson has also completed extensive graduate/doctoral-level coursework in statistics and research methods.

Methodology Question C-2

**C-2. Describe the types of statistical and qualitative methods (including administrative records) used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation. Assess their validity and
reliability.**

QualityMetrics, LLC deployed a mixed methods protocol for data collection that is multi-faceted and rigorous. Reviewing demographic data, quantitative PLS data, and State Program Report (SPR) data formed the basis of our knowledge from the stage of responding to the RFP for an independent evaluator and throughout the evaluation process. Providing a cloud-based storage space for VTLIB to deposit additional data and files and reflections on the program was the basis of our initial interaction. After conducting an initial Zoom conference call with representatives of the Vermont Department of Libraries at the beginning of the evaluation process and a second phone call to discuss the agencies self-reflection on whether goals have been achieved, partly achieved, or not achieved, the evaluators stayed in regular touch (monthly sessions) with the agency as the evaluation team was gathering data. In addition to updating VTLIB leadership on progress, the sessions were used to resolve emerging questions and to solicit additional relevant information. Data gathering included (a) interviews with agency staff members, (b) interviews with project managers for various SPR reported projects and activities, (c) focus group discussions with project teams, (d) focus group discussions with project and activity beneficiaries, (e) a broad based short survey for library staff and stakeholders with some knowledge and engagement with LSTA funded activities collecting primarily qualitative contextual information about past activities and future needs.

Researchers and evaluators across the globe are adjusting to the new realities that accompany the pandemic. The technical note below is merely an example.

> COVID-19 presented special circumstances and a number of considerations had to be taken into account. The crisis brought the imperative of changing how evaluation work is done and how we engage policymakers, programme managers and beneficiaries as restrictions on travel and 'social distancing' are expected to last.[10]

[10] OECD/DAC and IEO/UNDP (2020) Guidance Note: Good practices during COVID-19; UNICEF Evaluation Office (2020) Technical Note: Response of the UNICEF Evaluation Function to the COVID-19 Crisis; WFP

While no on-site visit to the State Library was conducted during this evaluation period, both of the primary investigators for QualityMetrics (Dr. Martha Kyrillidou and Mr. William Wilson) had visited the Vermont Department of Libraries in Montpelier, VT as part of the 2013-2017 LSTA evaluation cycle and consequently were somewhat familiar with VTLIB's operation. Virtual (Zoom) one-on-one interviews were held with the former State Librarian, with the Interim State Librarian and with other key staff engaged in LSTA and in specific projects carried out under the LSTA Five-Year Plan. The Five-Year Evaluation is a summative assessment and as such the availability of the SPR data was extremely useful more so than other times.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 circumstances have strengthened the state library agency role -- during a time of crisis the profession and the communities were seeking advice and often turned to the state library for answers. Many SLAAs responded by holding frequent and regular statewide community meetings with various groups which elevated the importance of the LSTA activities even when they were disrupted by the pandemic. Creative solutions were identified in most instances as most programs had to turn into virtual delivery for most of the pandemic period. In some ways, the record of virtual programming is more evident and its impact more readily documented. However, we do run the danger of minimizing the adverse effects on marginalized communities which often are more difficult to reach during times of crisis such as COVID-19 presented.

The toll on the mental health of our communities has also been evident as these restrictions are establishing new norms for interacting in person. Student learning and well-being have been concerns as the education life cycle was disrupted. Opportunities to help students catch up with unfinished learning were plentiful and many state library agencies, including VTLIB, have adjusted or augmented their database offerings to better support home-schooled children and teens. Monitoring community behaviors took place frequently during the pandemic often resulting in people feeling over-surveyed in many instances.

A web-based survey targeting the library community was conducted between October 26, 2021 and November 9, 2021. The survey provided some supplementary quantitative information as well as considerable qualitative information. Additional corroborative evidence from comments collected in the survey served to triangulate the evidence gathered.

Validity and reliability analysis reflect a positivist worldview and in a qualitative naturalistic approach they are being redefined with some divergent views on whether and how one ensures quality and rigor in qualitative inquiry. The notion that naturalistic inquiry needs to exhibit quality, rigor, and trustworthiness is more widespread nowadays.

Office of Evaluation (2020) Technical Note for {Planning and Conducting Evaluations During COVID-19; UNFPA Evaluation Office (2020) Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic; UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2020) Event planning and implementation during COVID-19; ILO Evaluation Office (2020) Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO; FAO Office of Evaluations (2020) Risk analysis and guidance for the management and conduct of evaluations during international and national level COVID-190 crisis and restrictions.

The evaluators engaged in numerous conversations through Zoom and phone interviews. The quality and rigor of the phone interviews in the LSTA evaluation of VTLIB's LSTA implementation has been enhanced by references to external website links, google maps, internal triangulation and, in some instances, by asking interviewees to allow the conversation to be recorded with assurances for confidentiality by the evaluators. Quality and rigor were also enhanced by having two evaluators attend most focus groups and interviews. Shared note-taking was available in real time through shared Google Docs and Google Drive. This approach has allowed evaluators to refine their inquiry and tailor it as knowledge of VTLIB's LSTA program was accumulating from one interaction to the next. Recorded conversations also allow the evaluators to reflect and refine their interpretations in a reliable manner. The validity of the inquiry was strengthened with the informed selection of the subjects by the VTLIB leadership team and staff.

Methodology Question C-3

C-3. Describe the stakeholders involved in the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation. How did QualityMetrics in cooperation with VTLIB engage them?

Numerous small-group virtual sessions and telephone interviews were conducted with librarians and other persons with knowledge of LSTA-funded initiatives in Vermont. Oftentimes, these interactions were enhanced by virtual tours of their library buildings and physical facilities through Google Maps. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with consumers of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled program.

The focus groups and interviews provided both qualitative evidence and context that supplemented a review of agency-supplied statistical data and information and data submitted in the form of the State Program Reports (SPRs).

Interviewees shared their knowledge of LSTA utilization, enhancing interactions and depth and quality of the conversations. Furthermore, principal investigators Martha Kyrillidou and Bill Wilson conducted both separate and joint interviews and group sessions and shared and discussed their observations in order to develop a shared understanding of the meaning of the library experience in Vermont and how it was supported by the State Library with LSTA support. Both investigators participated in many of the agency interviews, allowing for the concept of triangulation to be implemented as evaluators debriefed and compared interpretations and understandings.

Methodology Question C-4

C-4. Discuss how VTLIB will share the key findings and recommendations with others.

The results will be used to inform the next LSTA planning process; Vermont is a small state and achieved to serve effectively a large number of the population during the pandemic with programs that have general appeal bringing together public and school libraries more closely than in earlier years. Results and recommendations for the future plan will be shared by the new State Librarian with all the stakeholders and partners in the state to continue to strengthen the collaborative fabric among libraries in this state. The report will be posted on the agency website and on the IMLS website and will inform future legislative efforts related to libraries.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Acronyms

ABLE - Audio, Braille, Large Print, and Electronic Books - Vermont's Talking Books Library
ACS - American Community Survey
ALA - American Library Association
ALS - Academic Libraries Survey
ARL - Association of Research Libraries
BARD - Braille and Audio Reading Download
BTOP - Broadband Technology Opportunity Program
CCV - Community College of Vermont
CLOVER - Collaborative Libraries of Vermont
COSLINE - Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast
COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPL - Certificate for Public Librarianship
CSLP - Collaborative Summer Library Program
DB - Digital Book
DOD - Duplication on Demand
DPLA - Digital Public Library of America
E-Rate - Schools and libraries universal service support program
EISI - Elementary/Secondary Information System
FTE - Full-Time Equivalent
GMBA - Green Mountain Book Award
GMLC - Green Mountain Library Consortium
ILL - Interlibrary Loan
ILS - Integrated Library System
IMLS - Institute of Museum and Library Services
LOC - Library of Congress
LSTA - Library Services and Technology Act
LSWG - Library Statistics Working Group
NAAL - National Assessment of Adult Literacy
NCES - National Center for Educational Statistics
NLS - National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled
OBE - Outcome-Based Evaluation
OCLC - Online Computer Library Center
OPAC - Online public access catalog
PLS - Public Libraries Survey
POP - Patron Outreach Project
RFP - Request for Proposal

ROI - Return-on-investment
SLAA - State Library Administrative Agency
SPR - State Program Report
STEAM - Science Technology Engineering Arts Mathematics
STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
VHC - Vermont Humanities Council
VTLIB - Department of Libraries
WAN - Wide-Area Network

Appendix B: Interviewees/ Focus Groups

	Stakeholder interviews and focus groups	Title	Day
#1	Jason Broughton	Former State Librarian	8/23/2021
#2	Bruce Post, Chair, and members Maxie Ewins and Deb Grandquist	Members of Library Board of Trustees	8/24/2021
#3	Board of Libraries		8/24/2021
#4	Leadership team	Three members present	8/26/2021
#5	Janette Shaffer	Assistant State Librarian/Advancement	9/29/2021
#6	Tom McMurdo	Interim State Librarian	10/1/2021
#7	ABLE Library Board		10/21/2021
#8	Library Advancement Consultants (Joy Worland, Jonathan Clark, Karen Gravlin) and division assistant Jennifer Johnson	Consultants	10/26/2021

Appendix C: Bibliography of Documents Reviewed

State Agency Sources

- SPR data (FFY 2018-2020)
- Stats Over Time (FY 2018 - 2020)
- Agency website and social media
- LSTA Plan 2018-2022
- LSTA Evaluation 2013-2017

Federal Government Publications

Federal Agency Data Sources

- Institute of Museum and Library Services, State Program Report (SPR) report
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, Public Library Statistics
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, State Profiles
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Grants to States" Conference
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, State Library Administrative Agency Survey
- National Center for Education Statistics, Academic Libraries
- National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary and Secondary Information System
- United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

Evaluation Resources and COVID-19

- OECD/DAC and IEO/UNDP (2020) *Guidance Note: Good practices during COVID-19.*
- UNICEF Evaluation Office (2020) *Technical Note: Response of the UNICEF Evaluation Function to the COVID-19 Crisis.*
- WFP Office of Evaluation (2020) *Technical Note for Planning and Conducting Evaluations During COVID-19.*
- UNFPA Evaluation Office (2020) *Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2020) *Event planning and implementation during COVID-19.*
- ILO Evaluation Office (2020) *Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO.*
- FAO Office of Evaluations (2020) *Risk analysis and guidance for the management and conduct of evaluations during international and national level COVID-19 crisis and restrictions.*

Other Resources

- Ethel Himmel and William J. Wilson. The Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies. American Library Association, Chicago, 2000.
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- Pelczar, M., Frehill, L. M., Nielsen, E, Kaiser, A., Hudson, J., & Wan, T. (2021). Characteristics of Public Libraries in the United States: Results from the FY 2019 Public Libraries Survey. Institute of Museum and Library Services: Washington, D.C. Results from the SDC E-Resources Survey (received January 2022).
- Sarah Mervosh, "The pandemic hurt these students the most." In print "Pandemic widened U.S. Educational Gap into a Gulf, Research Suggests." *New York Times*, July 28, 2021, Section A, Page 13.
- The School Librarian Investigation: Decline or Evolution? https://libslide.org/

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

Focus groups

General Questions

1. What stands out as being the most effective use of LSTA in Vermont over the last three years?
2. Are there specific examples of projects that you think were the most impactful on the lives of the citizens of Vermont?
3. Are there specific changes in how LSTA funds should be expended in the future? Are there new or emerging needs that are unmet that need to be addressed?

Potential Follow-up Questions

1. What type of programs work for library patrons and staff, in general?
2. What type of programs work for public library patrons, school and academic library clientele, and library staff specifically?
3. What do non-participating libraries and borderline participants need to be able to participate in, grant funded projects or statewide programs?
4. How will the library patrons and library staff be satisfied with the delivery of services?
5. What programs will result in cost savings for participating libraries?

Outcome Questions

1. Will more patrons use the library services because of the grant programs?
2. Will there be an increase in community involvement in relation to the grant programs?
3. Will customer service improve due to staff training from LSTA funded events?
4. Will the statewide programs enhance libraries' abilities to serve patrons?

Interview guidelines

1. Introductions (include that you are working for QualityMetrics, a library consulting firm headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, established in 2016). Ask them to tell you a bit about themselves.
2. Ask about their familiarity with the LSTA program. If they are unfamiliar you can provide some or all of the below info -
   a. *The Library Services and Technology Act's (LSTA) "Grants to States" program is the single largest source of ongoing federal funding for libraries. Many states spend funds on a combination of statewide initiatives and on subgrants awarded to individual libraries to enable them to launch innovative efforts or to extend services to populations that are difficult to reach.*
   b. *The LSTA program requires that each state conduct an evaluation of its LSTA program every five years. These evaluations are overseen by the Institute of*

Museum and Library Services but are conducted by independent evaluators. QualityMetrics was selected to conduct the state-level evaluations for nine states in the Northeast and our company is also working with more than a dozen additional states and territories. The results of our review are due to be submitted to IMLS in March of 2022.

3. FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK FOR THE SLAA (who manage a project):
   a. Ask them to talk about the particular grant/s they worked with. Allow them to lead the conversation in an exploratory fashion. Ask follow up questions.
   b. Identify where there are materials or data from their projects that it would be useful for us to see.
4. FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK FOR THE SLAA (high level stakeholder):
   a. Go through the plan goal by goal, remind them of the goal wording and the percent of funds the state spent on it, get their reflections on progress toward each goal.
   b. Are there any future needs we should be emphasizing in the evaluation?
5. FOR SLAA STAFF on specific projects:
   a. Ask them to talk about the particular programs they are responsible for
   b. Let them know the data available (SPR, output, etc.) and verify that there is no other data or materials they have that would be helpful to us. If they only listed outputs in the SPR outcomes data, ask about plans for outcome data in the future.
   c. What do you see as the needs moving forward for the next seven years?
6. ALL: What impact have you seen LSTA dollars have on your state?
7. ALL: Is there anything you think we should have asked that we didn't?

Appendix E: Web-Survey Instrument

Vermont LSTA Survey 2021

WELCOME

Every five years, each state library administrative agency (SLAA) in the nation (the Vermont Department of Libraries [VTLIB] is Vermont's official SLAA) is required to conduct an independent evaluation of its implementation of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) "Grants to States" program. This evaluation must be submitted to qualify for ongoing Federal funding.

Following close on the heels of the evaluation is the federal requirement for the submission of a new state-level five-year plan for the LSTA program. QualityMetrics, LLC, a library consulting firm that specializes in evaluation and planning, is carrying out the evaluation.

QualityMetrics has been gathering information and data from a number of different sources including the State Program Report (SPR) that VTLIB submits annually to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), internal statistical and narrative reports, survey data, and personal interviews with VTLIB staff as well as with representatives of the library community in the state. We'd like your help in assessing the impact of the LSTA program on your library and on the people that your library serves.

You are invited to share your thoughts and ideas by answering three short questions. The survey should take you no more than five to ten minutes to complete. The first question asks you to look back over the last few years and to consider how the LSTA program has benefitted libraries and library users. Second, we'd like to invite you to think about the future and to suggest new ways in which you think LSTA funds should be invested in the years to come. Finally, we want to give you an opportunity to offer any other observations about Vermont's LSTA program (positive or negative). Thank you in advance for helping the Vermont Department of Libraries serve your community better!

BACKGROUND

Vermont receives approximately one-million dollars in LSTA Grants to States funding each year. The largest portion of this funding (about 87%) has been allocated to support of programs under the category of Access to Resources such as Statewide Resource Sharing including CLOVER and the courier service, consultant services, the ABLE Library (services to the blind and

individuals with print disabilities), and licensing of databases for public, school and academic libraries.

The second largest portion (9%) of the budget supports Literacy and Lifelong Learning including programs such as the Summer Reading Program, book awards, and cultural programming grants for libraries.

The third largest portion (about 4%) supports Strengthening Library Capacity through continuing education and staff development for librarians and library staff.

A small amount has also been allocated in recent years to support Workforce Readiness with programs such as the Digital Literacy for Job Seekers program.

1) Think back over the past three years (2018, 2019, and 2020). Which, if any, of the LSTA-supported programs mentioned above have had the greatest impact on your library and on the people your library serves? How is library service in your community better because of the investment of LSTA funds?

_____

_____

_____

_____

LOOKING FORWARD

2) Look ahead to the five years that will be covered in the next LSTA Plan (2023 - 2027). Are there changes in the way that LSTA dollars are invested that you think would significantly improve library services in Vermont? If so, what are they and why do you think that the change(s) would make a difference. (Note that LSTA funding cannot be used for construction and other building improvements or for advocacy purposes.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

OTHER COMMENTS

3) Please feel free to offer any additional comments about Vermont's LSTA program. What do you like or dislike about the program? What could be improved? (Note that your responses are confidential, and comments will not be identified with an individual or with a specific library.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

4) The library that I represent is:

( ) A public library

( ) A school library

( ) A community library

( ) An academic library

( ) A special library

( ) Other (Please specify below.)

If you responded "Other" to the question above, please specify the type of library you represent in the text box provided below.

_____

5) My role in the library that I represent is:

( ) Director

( ) Manager or Department Head

( ) Youth Services Librarian

( ) Adult Services Librarian

( ) Technical Services Librarian

( ) Technology Specialist

( ) Library Trustee

( ) Other (Please specify below.)

If you responded "Other" to the question above, please specify your role in the library you represent in the text box provided below.
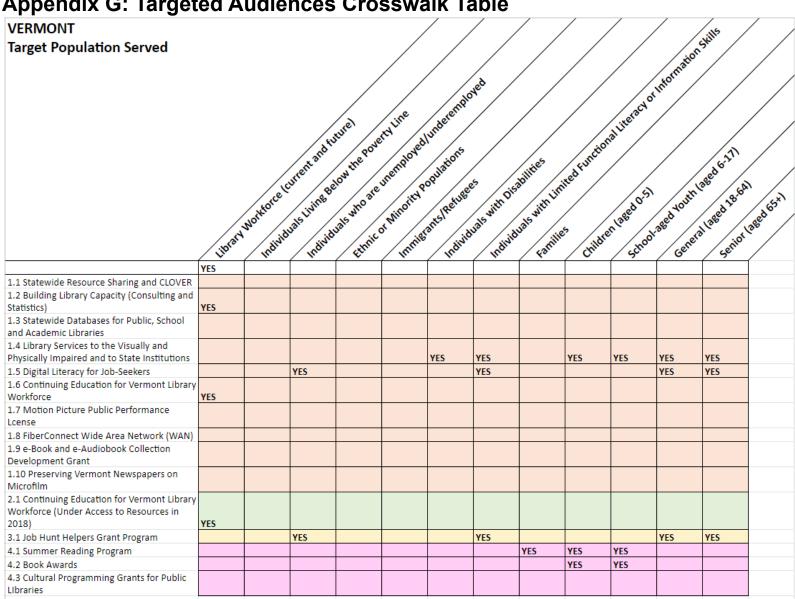
_____

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

Appendix F: Measuring Success Crosswalk Table

VERMONT
Measuring Success Focal Areas and Intents

Column key:
- 1.1 Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER
- 1.2 Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)
- 1.3 Statewide Databases for Public, School and Academic Libraries
- 1.4 Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions
- 1.5 Digital Literacy for Job-Seekers
- 1.6 Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce
- 1.7 Motion Picture Public Performance License
- 1.8 FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)
- 1.9 e-Book and e-Audiobook Collection Development Grant
- 1.10 Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm
- 2.1 Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Access to Resources in 2018)
- 3.1 Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program
- 4.1 Summer Reading Program
- 4.2 Book Awards
- 4.3 Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries

Focal Area / Intent	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.10	2.1	3.1	4.1	4.2	4.3
Lifelong Learning													YES	YES	YES
Improve users' formal education														YES	
Improve users' general knowledge and skills													YES		YES
Information Access	YES		YES	YES				YES	YES						
Improve users' ability to discover information resources		YES													
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources	YES		YES					YES	YES						
Institutional Capacity		YES				YES	YES	YES			YES				
Improve the library workforce		YES				YES					YES				
Improve the library's physical and technological infrastructure								YES							
Improve library operations		YES			YES										
Economic & Employment Development					YES							YES			
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support					YES							YES			
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources															
Human Resources															
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances															
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness															
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills															
Civic Engagement															
Improve users' ability to participate in their community															

Appendix G: Targeted Audiences Crosswalk Table

VERMONT
Target Population Served

	Library Workforce (current and future)	Individuals Living Below the Poverty Line	Individuals who are unemployed/underemployed	Ethnic or Minority Populations	Immigrants/Refugees	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with Limited Functional Literacy or Information Skills	Families	Children (aged 0-5)	School-aged Youth (aged 6-17)	General (aged 18-64)	Senior (aged 65+)
1.1 Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER	YES											
1.2 Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)	YES											
1.3 Statewide Databases for Public, School and Academic Libraries												
1.4 Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions						YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES
1.5 Digital Literacy for Job-Seekers			YES				YES				YES	YES
1.6 Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce	YES											
1.7 Motion Picture Public Performance Lcense												
1.8 FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)												
1.9 e-Book and e-Audiobook Collection Development Grant												
1.10 Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm												
2.1 Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Under Access to Resources in 2018)	YES											
3.1 Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program			YES				YES				YES	YES
4.1 Summer Reading Program								YES	YES	YES		
4.2 Book Awards									YES	YES		
4.3 Cultural Programming Grants for Public LIbraries												

Appendix H: Expenditure Tables

VERMONT LSTA PROJECT EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

	State Goal Short Title	PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020	FFY 2018 LSTA EXPENDITURE	FFY 2019 LSTA EXPENDITURE	FFY 2020 LSTA EXPENDITURE	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL	PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE WITHIN GOAL	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL LSTA EXPENDITURES
Goal 1	Access to Resources	Statewide Resource Sharing and CLOVER	X	X	X	$214,522.26	$276,195.20	$354,698.18	$845,415.64	36.02%	29.45%
		Building Library Capacity (Consulting and Statistics)	X	X	X	$206,327.38	$147,024.42	$145,393.01	$498,744.81	21.25%	17.37%
		Statewide Databases for Public, School and Academic Libraries	X	X	X	$172,816.45	$111,912.75	$129,828.02	$414,557.22	17.66%	14.44%
		Library Services to the Visually and Physically Impaired and to State Institutions	X	X	X	$106,904.53	$103,107.95	$117,504.53	$327,517.01	13.95%	11.41%
		Digital Literacy for Job-Seekers	X	X	X	$47,433.51	$34,307.28	$37,664.94	$119,405.73	5.09%	4.16%
		Motion Picture Public Performance License	X	X	X	$21,160.54	$15,248.97	$12,516.05	$48,925.56	2.08%	1.70%
		FiberConnect Wide Area Network (WAN)	X	X	X	$8,962.29	$12,944.67	$21,288.79	$43,195.75	1.84%	1.50%
		e-Book and e-Audiobook Collection Development Grant		X	X	$0.00	$11,220.00	$11,220.00	$22,440.00	0.96%	0.78%
		Streaming Movie Licenses for VT Schools (Partially LSTA and Partially CARES Act Funded)			X	$0.00	$0.00	$17,506.50	$17,506.50	0.75%	0.61%
		Preserving Vermont Newspapers on Microfilm	X			$9,549.29	$0.00	$0.00	$9,549.29	0.41%	0.33%
		Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Placed 2018 under Goal 2)	X	X	X	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00%	0.00%
		GOAL SUBTOTAL				$787,676.25	$711,961.24	$847,620.02	$2,347,257.51	100.00%	81.77%
Goal 2	Capacity	Continuing Education for Vermont Library Workforce (Under Access to Resources in 2018)	X	X	X	$73,184.29	$67,345.21	$75,809.87	$216,339.37	100.00%	7.54%
		GOAL SUBTOTAL				$73,184.29	$67,345.21	$75,809.87	$216,339.37	100.00%	7.54%
Goal 3	Workforce Readiness	Job Hunt Helpers Grant Program	X			$2,433.51	$0.00	$0.00	$2,433.51	100.00%	0.08%
		GOAL SUBTOTAL				$2,433.51	$0.00	$0.00	$2,433.51	100.00%	0.08%
Goal 4	Literacy and Lifelong Learning	Summer Reading Program	X	X	X	$20,736.37	$45,834.88	$21,890.03	$88,461.28	36.97%	3.08%
		Book Awards	X	X	X	$16,954.53	$41,393.56	$24,050.19	$82,398.28	34.44%	2.87%
		Cultural Programming Grants for Public Libraries	X	X	X	$15,730.05	$17,941.11	$34,731.47	$68,402.63	28.59%	2.38%
		GOAL SUBTOTAL				$53,420.95	$105,169.55	$80,671.69	$239,262.19	100.00%	8.33%
		LSTA PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION		X	X	$0.00	$36,558.00	$28,799.45	$65,357.45	100.00%	2.28%
		GRAND TOTAL				$916,715.00	$921,034.00	$1,032,901.03	$2,870,650.03		100.00%

Appendix I: Web-Survey Report

Vermont LSTA Survey Summary

https://reporting.alchemer.com/r/71852_61892bf343f556.24319406

Findings

Two hundred and forty-one individuals responded to the Vermont State Library LSTA evaluation web survey. Of the total respondents, one hundred and four fully completed the survey. Eighty-one (representing 77.1 percent of the total respondents) were in public libraries. Thirteen individuals were in a school library, five individuals were in a community library, four individuals were in an academic library, and two individuals indicated "other" libraries. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of types of libraries respondents work in.
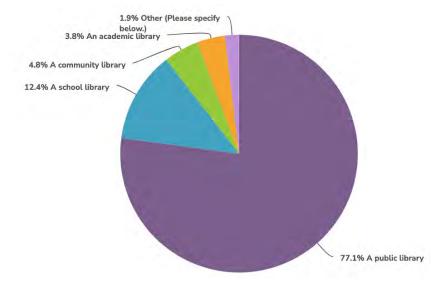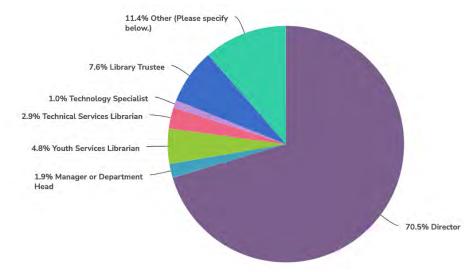
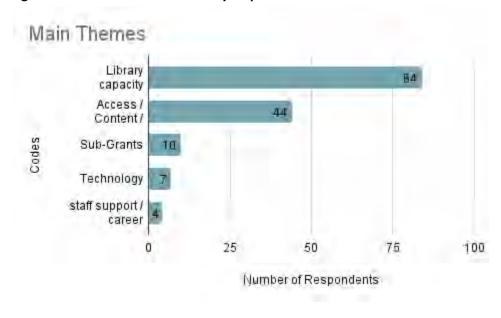**Figure 1. The type of library in which respondents work**

Seventy-four (70.5 percent) of the respondents identified themselves as library directors. Two (1.9 percent) identified themselves as a manager or department head. Five (4.8 percent) indicated they were youth services librarians. Three individuals indicated they were a technical services librarian and another individual indicated they were a technology specialist. Eight (7.6 percent) indicated they were library trustees. Twelve (11.4 percent) indicated "other" roles within their library. Figure 2 below shows the breakdown of roles of respondents within their library.

Figure 2. Role of respondent within their library

Looking Back

When asked to indicate LSTA programs that have been the most successful at their respective libraries, several were mentioned multiple times. General themes throughout the comments are shown in figure 3 below. Figure 4 shows LSTA program impact by percentage of respondents, further discussion of these programs continues below.
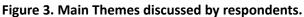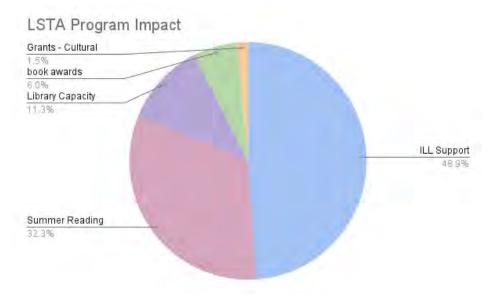
Figure 3. Main Themes discussed by respondents.

Figure 4. LSTA Program Impact.

LSTA Program Impact

Grants - Cultural
1.5%
book awards
6.0%
Library Capacity
11.3%

ILL Support
48.9%

Summer Reading
32.3%

The most popular LSTA programs indicated were interlibrary loan services like Clover, Courier, and ABLE. Of the total respondents, sixty-five individuals mentioned the positive impact that the interlibrary loan services have had on their respective communities and patrons. Some comments on the positive impact of these services include:

> *The CLOVER and courier services have had a huge impact on our patrons. Because of these services, we were able to join the Catamount Network and supply our patrons with far more items than our small library could provide any other way. I truly think subsidizing the courier and organizing CLOVER is resource sharing at its best.*

> *The ILL services of the ABLE library are also very important to our patrons, as we have a small but very well-read group of patrons who utilize a large print deposit library that is offered by ABLE.*

> *The courier service and interlibrary loan is essential to us. As a small library, the access that interlibrary loan provides our patrons helps us to ensure an equity in service to that of larger libraries.*

> *Always, but especially through these pandemic years we have relied on CLOVER to help us meet the needs of our patrons. WE especially relied on this service as there was an increase in the number of parents homeschooling their children. WE were able to support their curriculum needs through Clover, as well as our regular patrons who increased their usage because it was harder to get to the library.*

Forty-three respondents indicated that the Summer Reading Program has been vital to their community to encourage literacy throughout the summer. Some feedback on this program includes:

> *The summer reading program helps the library engage with the children and parents in the community during those crucial summer months when the schools are closed.*

> *The Summer Reading Program has inspired young people to read during the summer months and this I have been told by educators helps prevent diminished reading skills during the summer vacation.*

> *Our community benefits greatly from this due to our geographic location and the lack of extra curricular activities available in our community. The summer reading program is well attended.*

> *In addition, over the past three summers our library has been able to provide engaging programs and theme-related activities to patrons of all ages as a result of the funds given to us for the Summer Reading Program.*

Fifteen individuals shared that continued education programs for library staff has been essential to ensure that staff are prepared and able to fully support library patrons. Eight respondents indicated that the Book Awards program has been impactful in engaging students. Comments that express the importance of this program include:

> *The Continuing Education for the Vermont library Workforce Program is always important for library staff but was invaluable in 2020 during the pandemic, keeping librarians up to date with accurate information and resources through virtual webinars and meetups with Vermont Department of Libraries staff. Libraries were better able to provide services to their community in an ever changing situation with this state support.*

> *Licensing of databases and continuing education - I was able to attend a full day of PD focused on global studies and early literacy in partnership with the public library where my school is located, and it changed the way I embed social studies into my curriculum.*

> *Library staff members who were required to work from home through the COVID-19 pandemic and were trying to forge a way forward through a lot of uncertainty and change benefited immensely from continuing education and staff development opportunities.*

> *The coordination of the state book award programs is also very helpful. I have students who look forward to the new list every year.*

Looking Forward

Regarding changes in LSTA funding to improve library services, many respondents indicated that opportunities to invest in aiding the communities they serve would be the most beneficial, such as continued and expanded access to electronic resources and digital content such as streaming services (8 respondents), offsetting the cost of courier services (4 respondents), specialized staff training that

includes Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (3 respondents), and continued funding for existing programs such as the Summer Reading Program and ABLE (4 respondents). Some specific comments include:

> *If Covid has shown us one thing, it's that we need to expand access to digital content.*

> *Continued support for Clover, continued support or expansion of resources offered through Vermont Online Library, basic monetary support for all schools to participate in the Shared Schools Collection (Overdrive), and continued support of book awards programs (Golden Dome, Red Clover and GMBA).*

> *I would love to see more choices in publicly available audio book resources. Many people enjoy an audio book, but no longer have CD players, and now rely on streaming. However, the wait times for streamed audio books is quite unwieldy*

COVID-19

> *The John G. McCullough Free Library secured an emergency COVID relief grant to pay for a year of this service, and it was enthusiastically embraced by our members. I had more people taking advantage of this resource in one year than have used Universal Class in a decade. Our patrons understood the value of this resource, especially because the pandemic has required those who are employed to develop new skills to adapt, and those who sought employment came to understand that potential employers were/ are looking for candidates with a new set of skills. When this resource was described to local business owners and Chamber of Commerce employees, the description was met with intense enthusiasm. The McCullough Library was unable to secure grant funding to renew this resource in May of 2021.*

> *Because of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic the library has found an increase in the use by patrons of GMLC Overdrive, (downloadable e-books and audio books). Increased funding for this program for increased content and availability of e-books and audio books for the public would be terrific. Increased funding for the Summer Reading Program Grant enabling libraries to provide both more presentations and materials, including free books for children would make a positive difference.*

Additional Comments

> *I think we should rethink children's summer reading programs. I think their opportunities to improve how they are done- both how we incentivize the programs, how we account for their reading and ways to capitalize and connect with local resources.*

> *I also value the courier grant money, because it does fray our cost. We have a larger collection than most, so are lending a lot of materials, but as mailing and other operating costs are built into our budget, we most likely would continue without the courier grant. However, I understand that not all libraries have that capacity. Again, the most impactful for our library is training for staff, volunteers, board members, etc. and the availability of the Vermont State Librarian Certification process.*

> *Keep on with the support you are giving us now. I am still amazed at the high level of support and help that is always forthcoming. If I write to someone and they do not have the answer, they will*

ALWAYS pass on my question until my problem gets solved. I find that this is sometimes rare in many fields.

I think that you are doing it. Keep listening. Keep responding to what you learn from the greater library community. The VT Department of Libraries' service and approach has been improved 300% from what it was a decade ago. I applaud and honor these strides. Your support during the pandemic has exemplified grace, skill and resilience under pressure. VTLIB continues to evolve and become the service it was meant to be. Well done, thank you, and please keep up the good work.

The post-grant reporting is very easy, please keep it as such. Federal money should be flagged a bit more for our town treasurers. When it comes from the state, it is seen as state money and they often forget to file the correct paperwork on their end. We have almost lost out on grants for being in non-compliance over that. The ABLE library has been without leadership for a while. Hopefully the new leader will do more to reach out to libraries and people across the state to offer their services. They have great offerings, just not many people know about them.

There are many small rural school libraries in the state that need services, but are underserved because staffing for schools is so limited. Staff do not have the capacity to access what is available that larger libraries are able to access. Anything we can do to boost access to youth services in rural communities is critical.

At ARSL last week, I was intrigued to learn that Iowa requires CEU for trustees in order for the library to be certified/endorsed at a particular level. The units seem quite flexible including reading an assigned book or series or articles. Could this be incorporated into VT standards when the standards return? The best of my trustees work and have children at home - they cannot attend a conference. The other trustees just won't make training a priority especially those who have sat on the board for a long, long time.

Reduce the paperwork, labor hours to report on funding is sometimes not worth the funding. For example, $200 for a summer performer is sometimes not enough for a performance, let alone having to make sure you do not miss the email that you are required to respond to at the end of the summer.

I do think that the lack of direct funding support to libraries (which seems to be unique to VT) creates a very uneven system in our state, with the communities that can and will fully support a library receiving vastly better services than residents in towns who don't.

I really appreciated all of the classes that I was able to take to attain my Vermont Certificate of Librarianship. Before COVID it was a bonus to meet with many librarians and share what we had been doing. Virtual meetings are not the same. I especially love the various conferences that I was able to attend like the Red Clover Conference and the DCF Conference. Meeting authors and illustrators and receiving help with using books in the curriculum has been key to my work with the many homeschoolers that use the library and esp. the ILL services. Thank you for all you do for us. IN general, the support I have received from other librarians and all of the consultants has made me feel like I belong to a great and supportive team. I never feel alone.

Appendix J: Databases in Vermont

Prepared by Genya O'Gara, Library Consultant and VIVA Deputy Director

Background

Statewide database programs are a crucial service supported at various levels by the vast majority of state library programs across the United States.[11] Meeting user needs in virtual as well as physical spaces is a critical component of state library services; even as physical visits and circulation decline at public libraries (a trend likely to be further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), both the usage and availability of electronic resources has expanded.[12]

To understand the snapshot of the database resources and programs provided by the state agency, it is important to note that funding models for statewide databases have shifted considerably in the last few decades. For example, between 2000 and 2020 state libraries' overall spending on statewide database licensing increased from 42.29 million to 74.04 million dollars (spent by 48 state libraries). Within this increase however, state libraries were very unlikely to be the sole source of support for statewide databases; in fact, in 2020 89.6 percent of statewide database licensing was carried out by multiple entities and funding sources.[13] In an informal 2021 survey of state data coordinators, it was found that although the majority of states offer support for a statewide databases program (41 of 44 respondents), many of those are not managed through the state library (only 33 reported state library management). Thirty-six of these respondents also noted the existence of a local e-resource consortium in the state.

Often these statewide database programs are supported in part through LSTA funding, as well as state funding, library cost-shares, grants, and external, but often complementary, consortial programs.[14] Each statewide database program is approached, funded, and supported in slightly different ways. The following snapshots note where LSTA funds have likely supported a particular resource or platform to some extent, but they do not note what other funding or percentage of support this comprises, as this information is beyond the scope of the LSTA evaluation.

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[11] The Institute of Museum and Library Services. 2021. Functions and Roles of State Libraries: 2000 and 2020. Washington, DC: The Institute of Museum and Library Services, p.14.; Results from the SDC E-Resources Survey.

[12] The Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2021). *The Use and Cost of Public Library Materials: Trends Before the COVID-19 Pandemic.* Washington, DC: The Institute, p. 6.

[13] The Institute of Museum and Library Services. 2021. Functions and Roles of State Libraries: 2000 and 2020. Washington, DC: The Institute of Museum and Library Services, p.14.; Results from the SDC E-Resources Survey, p.14.

[14] Results from the 2021 SDC E-Resources Survey

State: Vermont

Project details/URLs:
- 2019: https://imls-spr.imls.gov/Public/Details/83928
- 2018: https://imls-spr.imls.gov/Public/Details/82192
- In FFY 2018 & FFY 2019, $284,729.20 was spent on database resources, comprising 15.81% of total LSTA expenditures.

1. Table of Resources:

Italicized resources are either newly added (since the period of evaluation), discontinued (during the period of evaluation), or not provided via LSTA funds.

Vendor/Provider	Resource	Vendor/Provider	Resource
Gale/Cengage	Business Insights: Essentials	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Gardening and Horticulture
Gale/Cengage	ChiltonLibrary.com	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Gender Studies
Gale/Cengage	Gale Academic OneFile	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Home Improvement
Gale/Cengage	Gale Academic OneFile Select	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Hospitality and Tourism
Gale/Cengage	Gale Books and Authors	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Information Science
Gale/Cengage	Gale Business: Entrepreneurship	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Insurance and Liability
Gale/Cengage	Gale General OneFile	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: LegalTrac
Gale/Cengage	Gale Health and Wellness	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Military and Intelligence
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: Biography	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: News
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: Elementary	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Nursing and Allied Health
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: High School	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: Middle School	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Pop Culture Studies
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: Opposing Viewpoints	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Popular Magazines
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: Science	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Psychology
Gale/Cengage	Gale In Context: U.S. History	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Religion and Philosophy
Gale/Cengage	Gale Literary Index	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Science
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Agriculture	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: U.S. History

Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Business	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Vocations and Careers
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Communications and Mass Media	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: War and Terrorism
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Criminal Justice	Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: World History
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Culinary Arts	Gale/Cengage	Gale Power Search
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Diversity Studies	Gale/Cengage	Gale Presents: Peterson's Career Prep
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Economics and Theory	Gale/Cengage	Gale eBooks
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Educator's Reference Complete	Universal Class	Universal Class
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Entrepreneurship	*EBSCO*	*Learning Express (Just added)*
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Environmental Studies and Policy	*ProQuest*	*HeritageQuest (Discontinued)*
Gale/Cengage	Gale OneFile: Fine Arts	*VDL, UV, VHS*	*Vermont Digital Newspapers Project*

2. Access/Scope/Population:

The Vermont Online Library (VOL) offers a wide array of electronic information databases and scholarly article databases on many topics geared to a variety of age levels, for both generalists and specialists that are made available to all Vermont citizens. The statewide licensed subscription-based electronic resources are also included at all of Vermont's 185 public libraries. As of 2019, the VOL served a Vermont population of 623,989 (US Census). Resources cover academic topics, including psychology, history, religion & philosophy, and science, to more practical information, including gardening, career preparation, and auto repair. Additionally, over 500 classes are offered from office skills to algebra, baking to self-help, and spiritual studies to painting. For the time examined resource providers included Gale Cengage Learning databases (via Vermont academic, school and public member libraries) and Universal Class online learning (only via Vermont public libraries), and, until December 2019, HeritageQuest genealogy and local history databases. (ProQuest's HeritageQuest was discontinued when it was determined that access was not significantly more useful than similar and freely available resources.) Additionally, the VOL has recently added EBSCO's Learning Express to its available resources. Databases can be accessed by all Vermont citizens 24-hours-a-day at participating libraries, as well as anywhere Internet access is available. Authentication happens in a variety of ways, including through library IP authentication OR home and business IP addresses that are Vermont based. Users may also authenticate via geo-authentication by allowing the browser to share their user location. Alternately, users may choose their library from a dropdown menu

and enter their library barcode to login OR contact their local library for a password. Resources are well used -- in 2018 Gale databases had over 440,000 sessions, over 765,000 searches, and over 2300 classes started through Universal Class. In 2019 Gale database sessions decreased somewhat, but still maintained over 300,000 sessions, over 585,000 searches, and Vermonters started over 3,200 classes and logged in for over 59,000 sessions through Universal Class.

3. URLs:

Links to all Gale product information, as well as personalized links for libraries are available here: https://support.gale.com/vol/products . For Universal Class offerings, patrons must register: https://vermontstate.universalclass.com/ .

4. URLs usage:

Usage stats are available from Gale here: https://c-usagereports.galeusageportal.com/cognos11/bi/ . Login information is provided by joshua.muse@vermont.gov . Public libraries use the Gale Usage Summary for resources to complete the annual Public Library Survey.. Information includes: total sessions, total connect time, average connect time, total full text, total retrievals, and total searches. The Public Library Survey information is available here, but does not break out usage information by specific resource: https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public_statistics