

# NEBRASKA LIBRARY COMMISSION

Lincoln, NE

January 10, 2025

## MINUTES

The Nebraska Library Commission met on January 10, 2025. The meeting notice was posted on the Commission website and the Nebraska.gov public meeting calendar.

Commission members present: Tom Rolfes, Terri Cunningham-Swanson and Alan Wang; via Go To Meeting: Diane Downer, Tiffany Carter. Staff present: Rod Wagner, Christa Porter, Devra Dragos and Jennifer Wrampe. Tammi Thiem, Director, Three Rivers Library System

Diane Downer called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. This meeting complies with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and Governor's Executive Order Limited Waiver for Public Meetings.

**Approval of Minutes:** (November 1, 2024) A motion was made by Terri Cunningham-Swanson and seconded by Alan Wang to approve the minutes. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – aye; Terri Cunningham-Swanson – aye; Diane Downer – aye; Tom Rolfes – aye; Alan Wang – aye. Motion approved.

### Chair's Report and Commissioners' Comments

**Diane Downer** –no report

**Tiffany Carter** – no report

**Alan Wang** – visited with Tammi Thiem, Director, Three Rivers Library System, several libraries in the Omaha area.

**Tom Rolfes** – Tom submitted his bio and introduction for the Southeast Regional System newsletter, which was published in December. They have also invited him to present at a training extravaganza in Seward on May 7.

**Terri Cunningham-Swanson** – no report

### Director's Report

*Personnel* – Rod Wagner reported that Tessa Timperley, Communications Coordinator, and her husband have welcomed a new daughter. Tessa is currently on maternity leave.

*Library Development Grant Awards* – Christa Porter reported that the Nebraska Library Commission's 2025 grant applications closed on November 15. Review teams have finalized their decisions, and libraries have been notified of the awards:

- **CE/Training Grants:** No applications were approved, as all funding was allocated to previous conference applications.
- **Youth Grants:** 36 grants were awarded to 35 libraries, totaling \$30,000.
- **Internship Grants:** 21 grants were awarded to 16 libraries, totaling \$20,000.
- **Library Improvement Grants:** 27 libraries received a total of \$60,000. However, LSTA funding will not be distributed until the federal budget is finalized. Libraries were informed of this delay in their notifications.

*Big Talk From Small Libraries Online Conference* – Porter provided details about **Big Talk From Small Libraries**, an annual online conference hosted by the Nebraska Library Commission. Entering its 14th year in 2025, the event draws participants from across the country and internationally. All sessions are recorded and later divided into individual presentations, enabling attendees to revisit specific topics of interest. The next conference is scheduled for **February 28, 2025**.

*Technology & Access Services* – Devra Dragos provided an update on **Nebraska Memories** and **NebraskAccess**. Through **Nebraska Memories**, the Library Commission collaborates with institutions across the state to digitize and share historical Nebraska materials, making them accessible to the public. The platform currently hosts 37 collections, which can be explored using a simple search or by browsing the site. This resource is particularly valuable for genealogists and those interested in Nebraska history.

Dragos also provided an update on **NebraskAccess**, the public-facing portal for online resources. NebraskAccess was primarily created to provide access to databases, but it also includes links to other valuable resources. One of these is **Websites Selected by Librarians**, a curated collection compiled by the reference team. The site also features a **Frequently Asked Questions** page—if a question has been asked more than five times, a dedicated page is created to help users find accurate information.

Additional links on the site include **Nebraska Memories** and the **Nebraska State Agency Publications** page, as the Library Commission serves as the state’s clearinghouse for all government publications.

The **Databases for Nebraskans** page provides three access portals:

1. **General & Academic Databases** – designed for adult and academic users.
2. **High School Databases** – tailored to high school reading and interest levels.
3. **Elementary & Middle School Databases** – curated for younger students.

Each year, every library receives three passwords for access to each database.

*Nebraska State Poet Nomination Status* – Wagner reported that Governor Pillen has appointed Jewel Rodgers as Nebraska State Poet. Jewel was one of four finalists considered for the position. The nomination and selection process was coordinated by the Nebraska Arts Council,

Humanities Nebraska, and the Library Commission. An installation event is planned for February at the Capitol.

*Regional Library System Report* – Tammi Thiem, Three Rivers Library System Director, reported on the system's operations. TRLS is funded through both state and federal sources by contract with the Library Commission. A two-year service plan is submitted to ensure the system's goals and mission align with those of the Library Commission.

TRLS is governed by a nine-member board, which meets quarterly in virtual sessions and holds an annual in-person meeting. TRLS serves 21 counties in the northeast region of the state, including the Omaha metro area. Within the region, there are 95 public libraries, 20 academic libraries, 20 special libraries, and over 460 school libraries.

Tammi has visited all public libraries in the system. TRLS distributes a monthly newsletter and communicates with libraries through social media and a listserv. During library visits, she assesses their needs to develop relevant workshops. The system holds monthly **SKILLS** (Sharing Knowledge, Ideas, Learning, and Library Solutions) meetings virtually, with in-person meetings held quarterly. Additionally, TRLS organizes annual Summer Reading Program workshops.

Tammi frequently attends library board meetings and conducts continuing education presentations. TRLS also provides scholarships to support librarians in pursuing professional development opportunities. The system offers book club kits featuring over 200 titles, as well as STEAM kits available for lending.

*December Financial Report* – Wagner reported that the state fiscal year is at its midpoint, with major expenditure categories remaining within budgeted amounts for state operating expenses. Some expenses, such as accounting and auditing costs, are paid in full at the beginning of the fiscal year.

For federal funds, the first quarter has ended, and spending remains below budget at this time. State aid **expenses** are distributed in the final quarter of the fiscal year and will be allocated this spring. Regional system contract payments are made on a quarterly basis.

*LSTA FY 2025 Funding Update* – Wagner reported that Congress passed a resolution to extend funding for federal agencies and programs until **March 14**. To prevent a government shutdown, appropriations must be made before that deadline.

## **New Business**

*State Advisory Council on Libraries Appointments* - Wagner presented recommendations for appointments (first term) and re-appointments (second term) to the State Advisory Council on Libraries for three-year terms beginning in January 2024 and continuing until December 31, 2026.

*New Appointment Recommendations – Three-Year Term*

- **Christine Fullerton** – Public Services Librarian, Chadron State College
- **Shannon McDonald** – Library Resource Center Supervisor, Central Community College - Columbus

*Re-Appointment Recommendations – Three-Year Term*

- **Laura England-Biggs** – Director, Keene Memorial Library (Fremont)
- **Lisa Irwin** – Librarian, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center (Kearney)
- **Rachel Steiner** – Assistant Director, Omaha Public Library

A motion was made by Tom Rolfes and seconded by Alan Wang to approve the State Advisory Council on Libraries appointments and re-appointments. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – nay; Terri Cunningham-Swanson –nay; Diane Downer – aye; Tom Rolfes – aye; Alan Wang – aye. Motion approved.

*Out of State Travel Request* – Wagner reported that members of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) will meet on March 4-5 in Washington, D.C. On March 6, members will meet with their state’s representatives and senators to discuss federal funding for libraries, the reauthorization of the *Museum and Library Services Act*, and other library-related legislation and policies. Wagner requested approval to attend the COSLA membership meetings.

A motion was made by Tom Rolfes and seconded by Alan Wang to approve the out of state Travel request with expenses not to exceed \$2200. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – aye; Terri Cunningham-Swanson –nay; Diane Downer – aye; Tom Rolfes – aye; Alan Wang – aye. Motion approved.

*Next Meeting Dates* –March 17

**Adjournment**

Diane Downer adjourned the meeting.

Jennifer Wrampe