

# NEBRASKA LIBRARY COMMISSION

Lincoln, NE

November 1, 2024

## MINUTES

The Nebraska Library Commission met on November 1, 2024. The meeting notice was posted on the Commission website and the Nebraska.gov public meeting calendar.

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

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:** (September 6, 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.

### Chair's Report and Commissioners' Comments

**Diane Downer** –no report

**Tiffany Carter** – said that she received a concern from someone about a questionable item in a library placed near the children's area. Tiffany asked if there were policies that addressed issues such as this one. A response was that, for public libraries, policies are determined by the public library board.

**Alan Wang** – visited several libraries in the Omaha area.

**Tom Rolfes** – no report

**Terri Cunningham-Swanson** – no report

**Public Comment** – Public comment was given.

### Director's Report

*Personnel* – Rod Wagner reported Cindy Osborne, Western Library System Director, will retire on January 3, 2025. The WLS administrative assistant position is currently vacant. Cindy has agreed to work in the part-time position until the system director position is filled or until March 15, whichever is earlier.

Miranda Shreves started October 28 as the Talking Book and Braille Service Outreach and Volunteer Services Coordinator.

*Nebraska Library Association Annual Conference* – Wagner reported the conference was held October 9-11 in Kearney. The conference had over 220 participants. The Library Commission had an exhibit and several NLC staff were program presenters. The Calvin T. Ryan library on the University of Nebraska Kearney campus had undergone extensive renovation and a grand re-opening was held the evening of October 10. The 2025 conference will be held in York. In 2026, NLA and the Mountain Plains Library Association will hold a joint conference in Papillion.

*Nebraska Center for the Book* – Wagner reported that the Nebraska Celebration of Books event took place on October 12 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln City Campus Union, featuring sessions in both the morning and afternoon. This event marked the return of a previous format, combining elements of presentations, exhibits, and awards. Traditionally, the Nebraska Book Festival was held in the summer, with the Celebration of Nebraska Books in the fall, but this year, the two events were merged. Wagner said that the event had good attendance. One of the sponsors was the University of Nebraska Press, whose support made it possible for free use of the Nebraska Union space, as well as additional space for exhibits and sessions. Morning activities included author presentations, including a panel of four authors who had written books selected for the One Book One Nebraska program, celebrating its 20th anniversary. The afternoon featured the awards ceremony, with the Mildred Bennet Award presented to Nebraska State Poet Matt Mason and the Jane Geske Award given to Lincoln Literacy. The Nebraska Book Awards were also presented, followed by the announcement of the 2025 One Book One Nebraska selection, *The Long March Home* by Marcus Brotherton and Tosca Lee.

Nebraska eReads (OverDrive Libraries) – Devra Dragos, Director of Technology and Access Services, provided an update on the Nebraska OverDrive Libraries Consortium. Established in 2008, the consortium currently includes 194 libraries across the state. Of these, 89 serve populations of fewer than 1,000, and 161 serve fewer than 5,000. These smaller libraries would not be able to offer such a large collection on their own. The collection includes over 35,000 eBooks and approximately 25,000 digital audiobooks. Due to the sharing of this collection among all 194 libraries, patrons are limited to six checkouts and three holds at a time, serving nearly 700,000 people statewide. The Lincoln, Omaha, and Ralston libraries are not consortium members but also provide ebook and digital audiobook loans. These libraries also receive a portion of eReads funding. Funding is allocated based on service area populations.

Unfortunately, current funding is insufficient to meet demand. In the 2023-24 fiscal year, just over \$322,000 was spent on expanding the collection, and since 2008, over \$3 million has been spent, sourced from both library contributions and state funding. OverDrive, the platform facilitating the purchase and borrowing of digital content, partners with publishers that set the pricing and lending terms.

In addition to the shared consortium collection, individual libraries can purchase content for their patrons through OverDrive's Advantage program. Currently, 49 libraries have set up Advantage accounts to offer exclusive content to their users.

*Nebraska State Poet Nomination* – Wagner reported that Matt Mason, the current Nebraska State Poet, will complete his 5-year term at the end of December. The Nebraska Library Commission, Nebraska Arts Council, and Humanities Nebraska have collaborated on the nomination process for selecting the next State Poet, which has been ongoing for several months. After narrowing the candidates to four nominees, the agencies will meet with each nominee for presentations. Following these meetings, the agencies will make their recommendation to the governor, who will then make the appointment. The new State Poet will begin their term in January.

*Public Library Accreditation* – Christa Porter reviewed the process by which public libraries receive accreditation. To achieve accreditation, libraries submit information about their operations and provide a community response plan. Public library accreditation is managed at the state level and is not part of a national program.

To be eligible for accreditation, both the library director and library board must be certified by NLC. Certification involves completing various educational activities such as workshops, programs, and classes. The certifications for directors and boards are valid for three years. A certified director is required for an accredited library.

Accreditation is given for five-year periods, with the process opening in July for libraries seeking re-accreditation as well as those not currently accredited. This year, 39 libraries were up for re-accreditation, while 45 unaccredited libraries were invited to apply. Currently, there are 183 accredited public libraries in Nebraska.

Accreditation is categorized into three levels: bronze, silver, and gold. Libraries must be accredited to qualify for grants offered by NLC. Additionally, libraries at the silver and gold levels receive additional state aid funding.

*Big Talk From Small Libraries* – Christa Porter shared details about *Big Talk From Small Libraries*, an annual online conference hosted by the Nebraska Library Commission. The event, entering its 14th year in 2025, attracts participants from across the country and some from foreign countries. All sessions are recorded and later divided into individual presentations, allowing attendees to revisit specific topics of interest. The next conference is scheduled for February 28, 2025.

## **Financial Report**

*September Financial Report* – Wagner said the first quarter of the state fiscal year ended September 30. Major budget categories are in line with state budgeted amounts. The federal fiscal year ended September 30. The full federal allotment was expended by September 30. LSTA appropriations have a two-year period for expenditure.

*LSTA FY 2025 Funding Update* – Wagner said that federal funds are currently allocated under a congressional continuing resolution set to expire December 20. Congress will address appropriations after reconvening following the elections. These federal funds are part of the Museum and Library Services Act, which is due for reauthorization in 2025. Efforts are underway in Congress to draft legislation for the reauthorization.

**New Business**

*Nebraska Makerspace Conference* – Wagner reported a Nebraska Makerspace Conference will be held November 4-5, 2025, at Nebraska Innovation Campus.

*Next Meeting Dates* –January 10, March (TBD)

**Adjournment**

Diane Downer adjourned the meeting.

Jennifer Wrampe