Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries
Friday, November 21, 2025 10:00 am-2:00 PM (CST)

MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present via GoToWebinar: Laura England-Biggs, Gail Irwin, Lisa Irwin, Jennifer Norton, Michael Straatmann, and Celine Swan

In-Person: Amber Sweetland (Chair), Cali Biaggi, Christine Fullerton, Joy Harvey, Shannon McDonald, Joanne Neemann, Rachel Steiner, Tammi Thiem

Commission staff members present: Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel, Holli Duggan, Christa Porter, Sam Shaw, and Library Commissioner: Tom Rolfes.

Welcome and Introductions:
Chair Amber Sweetland welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion approved.

**Approval of Minutes: No minutes, since the July meeting was in Grand Island and held jointly with the Central Plains Library System annual meeting.

Public Comment:
There were no public comments.

Reports:

Nebraska School Librarians Association

Joy Harvey reported an increase in social media presence, noting that it has been very helpful. Joy said that she has obtained email addresses for every school librarian in the state. When distributing the newsletter, she occasionally sends a complimentary copy to all librarians and encourages them to join. Membership has increased slightly.

She noted that the organization is exploring ways to provide professional learning opportunities for librarians, particularly in connection with the annual conference. The group plans to partner with Future Ready Nebraska for its June conference as a partner organization. The annual meeting may be held in conjunction with that event, and Future Ready Nebraska will cover the cost of the featured speaker. The conference will be offered free of charge and will be available both via Zoom and in person. The organization has previously participated in the conference and anticipates expanded promotion through NSL.

Regarding the Legislature and LB390, Joy reported that by the end of the next school year, all districts will be required to have policies in place addressing the new law. She noted that progress is moving in a positive direction.

Nebraska Library Association

Holli Duggan reported that the annual conference was held in October, and for the first time in York. There were 232 registrants, an increase over the previous year. Evaluations received from both exhibitors and attendees were largely positive. On Wednesday evening, approximately 50 individuals attended a screening of the documentary *The Library*. Regarding officer elections effective next January, Ethan Nelson, Western Library System Director, will serve as President-Elect, and Sarah Johnson will serve as Treasurer. The final board meeting of the year will be held in December, followed by a transition period with the new officers.

Library Advocacy Day is scheduled for March 16. The day will begin at the Hruska Law Center followed by visits to the Capitol. Plans for the afternoon sessions are still in development.

In 2026, the NLA will host a joint conference with MPLA in La Vista (October 14–16). Members interested in assisting with conference planning are encouraged to volunteer. The goal is to make the joint conference larger and more impactful than previous events.

Nebraska Library Commission

Rod Wagner – Funding has always been a critical issue. We were relieved that the federal shutdown ended after a record-setting 33 days. The continuing resolution allowed federal agencies to bring back furloughed staff, including those working on the federal library program and at IMLS. The Commission is still waiting to receive funds from drawdown requests and expect that to occur as a priority. The current federal funding is temporary. It extends through the end of January and is based on last year's appropriation level. The positive news is that funding levels included in both the House and Senate appropriations bills remain at the FY25 level. LSTA funding is part of the larger appropriations bills that have yet to be passed by Congress.

On the state side, the Legislature's 60-day short session begins January 7, 2026. Carryover bills from the 2025 session remain. Senators have the first ten legislative days to introduce new bills, and many are expected. The primary issue will be the state budget. Governor Pillen has announced his intent to seek significant reductions. The projected state budget gap is nearing $500 million over the biennium, reportedly due not to an economic downturn but to tax policy changes at both the federal and state levels.

We have not heard anything specific that would directly affect the Commission; however, a mid-biennium adjustment is expected. This could result in reductions for the current fiscal year and potentially more significant reductions in FY27. Governor Pillen will deliver his State of the State address shortly after the Legislature convenes, which will include his budget recommendations.

The Makerspace Conference was held November 4–5 at Nebraska Innovation Campus. Approximately 200 participants attended, including presenters, exhibitors, and sponsors. Multiple sessions were offered across the campus facilities. Presenters were asked to provide documentation (slides and PDFs), which are now available on the Library Commission website under the Makerspaces section. We are grateful to the sponsors who provided financial support and exhibits. The conference concluded with a small positive fund balance.

The Nebraska Celebration of Books was held this past Saturday. The Nebraska Center for the Book partnered with the University of Nebraska Press, which allowed for use of space at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln City Campus Union at no cost. The expanded space this year helped accommodate more exhibits and presentations.

At the conclusion of the event, the One Book One Nebraska selection for the coming year was announced: *The Antidote* by Karen Russell. The book was a finalist for the National Book Award, an honor in itself. Karen Russell expressed appreciation about the selection and hopes to participate both virtually and in person.

Tom Rolfes – On behalf of the other five commissioners, Rolfes expressed appreciation for the members' work, noting that their voices are important to the state and to the Commission. He emphasized the importance of being responsive, particularly regarding upcoming agenda items, successes, challenges, and any resolutions or recommendations brought forward.
Rolfes acknowledged that, as previously noted, the state is entering an uncertain period regarding federal and state funding. He stated that one of the Commission's primary roles is to set the budget and oversee the agency's operations.

In his professional capacity, Rolfes serves as a federal program officer with the U.S. Department of Commerce, helping oversee Nebraska's broadband grants totaling $405 million. He reported that the Nebraska Broadband Office is in the later stages of approval with the federal agency for its "final proposal," which outlines where funds will be invested and the anticipated outcomes for the state. He referenced a recent article in the *Flatwater Free Press* that provides additional detail.

Currently, Nebraska anticipates spending approximately 11% of its federal allocation to serve just over 14,000 locations, as indicated by the Federal Communications Commission map. Rolfes said that those with experience in rural areas may question the accuracy of such maps, as actual service levels can vary significantly outside urban areas where competition and broadband speeds are typically stronger.

The grants are intended to expand broadband access so that every resident and business has service of at least 100/20 Mbps. Once the final proposal is approved, the state will execute sub-grantee agreements with the ten providers that have submitted proposals, after which construction will begin.

Rolfes said that Nebraska may have the lowest percentage of fiber deployment in the country under this investment plan. He expressed concern about that distinction, stating that much of the funding is expected to support fixed wireless and low-Earth-orbit satellite services, such as

Starlink and Amazon's Project Kuiper. He stated that time will tell whether these technologies meet performance expectations.

Rolfes highlighted potential implications for libraries. As broadband access expands, patrons may experience significantly higher service levels than in the past. He encouraged council members to consider whether this shift may change the role of libraries, including increased emphasis on technology instruction and integration. Approximately 14,000 households may be receiving broadband service for the first time. While this presents new opportunities, it also introduces cybersecurity risks. He noted that individuals who previously had limited connectivity may not have faced significant cyber threats, but higher-speed connections can increase vulnerability to scams, hacking, and other online risks.

Rolfes said that libraries may play an important role in supporting patrons with cybersecurity awareness, digital literacy, e-government services, e-commerce, telehealth access, and related needs.

Rolfes also said that U.S. Treasury-funded capital projects are nearing completion. Over the past four years, Nebraska has invested approximately $20 million annually in broadband expansion, including both grant-supported and provider-funded construction projects. However, the largest portion of broadband funding has not yet begun flowing. Service implementation is expected to begin in early to mid-2026, with project completion deadlines extending through 2029.

Christa Porter – Porter provided updates on several Library Commission programs and initiatives.

2026 Grant Applications – The deadline for 2026 grant applications was last Friday; however, extensions were granted to some libraries until this Friday due to extenuating circumstances, resulting in seven additional submissions. Current submissions include: 36 internship grants, 42 library improvement grants, and 37 youth grants. Once all applications are received, review teams composed of Library Commission staff and assistant directors will evaluate them. The goal is to announce funding decisions by the end of December.

Porter said that the total requested funding typically exceeds available budgets. Full funding of all applications was only possible during the COVID-19 pandemic under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and CARES Act. Currently, all grants are funded with state funds. Library Improvement Grants previously relied on federal funding, but funding has transitioned to state sources to ensure predictability and simplify reporting.

E-Rate Program – Porter serves as the State E-Rate Coordinator for public libraries in Nebraska. The program provides federal discounts to help libraries and schools offset internet service costs and related equipment, including switches, routers, and access points. She noted that the Department of Education assists schools with applications. A recorded three-hour workshop will be available next week, with timestamps for easy navigation.

Porter reviewed recent changes to the E-Rate program. Due to the federal government shutdown, the USAC canceled planned trainings in October but has rescheduled them for November and

December. On September 30, 2024, the FCC voted to end E-Rate support for Wi-Fi hotspots, including those on school buses. This change reversed prior policies approved by the previous commission, including Emergency Connectivity Program funding initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Nebraska, five libraries and six school districts had applied for hotspot support; all applications will be denied. Some libraries are seeking alternative funding, including partnerships with private providers such as MetroNet.

Public Library Accreditation – The accreditation process concluded on October 1. Of the 40 libraries up for re-accreditation, 23 have been re-accredited. Fairfield Public Library has regained accreditation. Extensions were granted to libraries facing extenuating circumstances, including leadership changes, natural disasters, or building projects. Upon completion, 182 public libraries in the state will be accredited.

Big Talk From Small Libraries – This annual event is scheduled for February 27, 2026. The call for proposals is open through December 12. The program targets small libraries with populations of 10,000 or fewer and encourages diverse presenters from public, academic, and K-12 libraries nationwide. Porter encouraged submission of proposals and promotion of the event.

Sam Shaw – Nebraska Public Library Trends (2014–2024) – Shaw presented a ten-year overview of public library data from 2014 to 2024. He said that last year's discussion focused on comparing 2019 (pre-COVID) data with fiscal year 2023. This year's broader ten-year analysis provides a more comprehensive view of trends. Shaw reminded that the Library Commission collects data annually from public libraries statewide. The 2025 data collection cycle has been delayed due to the discontinuation of the Baker & Taylor product previously used as the reporting vendor. The Commission is developing a homegrown replacement system. Vern Buis has created a prototype, which Shaw reviewed and indicated appears promising.

Handouts were distributed and Shaw reviewed the materials followed by discussion.
Shaw also asked about survey data collection related to school libraries. He has begun exploring whether other states collect similar survey data for school libraries. South Dakota and Minnesota have responded and shared information, including survey documents from South Dakota. Shaw asked whether such data collection would be helpful in Nebraska. Joy Harvey commented that it would be helpful and said that school districts regularly rely on data and share reports with superintendents. Shaw asked whether she or others would be willing to assist in developing a Nebraska model.

<u>Library Service Trends – Local Perspective</u>

Rod Wagner said that the broader discussion is intended to identify priorities and plans for the coming year at the local library and community levels, including special events and initiatives. He mentioned the upcoming America250 commemoration and encouraged libraries to consider related programming. He also said that the Library Commission will celebrate its 125th anniversary in the coming year.

Christine Fullerton (UNO) said that the Criss Library will celebrate its 50th anniversary in the coming year, with events planned for the spring and summer.

Jennifer Norton said that the Lexington Public Library has received a Big Read grant and will host programs in celebration of the US 250th anniversary.
Rachel Steiner said that Omaha Public Library will hold the grand opening for its new central library in April. Book shipments are expected to begin arriving next month. The library will be hiring 40 new permanent part-time staff members, which presents a significant current challenge. Rachel said that Omaha has received strong support from local government. Because the library is funded by both the county and the city, both entities have stepped up to help ensure a successful opening. Over the past three years, the library has received annual budget increases, allowing the OPL to allocate approximately 40% of funding toward building a new collection. She explained that the main library collection will be moved into the SRS (automated storage and retrieval system), referred to as the "big robot." Much of the existing collection is older, as new materials have been distributed to branch locations over the past three years. As a result, nearly all materials on the main floor, other than those in the third-floor history collection, will be newly curated.

Rod Wagner asked Tammi Thiem to comment, mentioning her perspective working with a variety of libraries. Tammi observed that there is a great deal of programming taking place statewide. She expressed surprise at the reported 3–4% decline in physical visits, stating that in the libraries she visits, staff are consistently busy and patrons are actively using services. She said that she was surprised to hear that overall visits are down. Additional discussion followed. Rachel Steiner added that the library tracks statistics on physical materials placed on hold but not checked out versus items checked out directly from the shelves. She reported that more checkouts still come from direct shelf browsing than from hold shelves. Patrons continue to visit the library to browse, discover materials, and check out items they may not have specifically searched for in advance.

Shannon McDonald said that the Central Community College branches in the Central Plains region have experienced increased visits from community members who were previously unaware that they could get library cards there. Further discussion emphasized the many reasons people continue to visit libraries in person.

Christa Porter reported receiving a message from Celine Swan that the Grand Island Public Library is partnering on a "250 Hall County Humanities" promotion with the Stuhr Museum and the Grand Island Sports Society.

Library Updates and Announcements
Michael Straatmann reported that the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries are celebrating several significant anniversaries concurrently:

- 80 years since the opening of Love Library
- 50 years of Love Library North
- 20 years of the Center for Digital Research and Humanities
- 10 years of the Adele Hall Learning Commons
- 5 years of the Dinsdale Family Learning Commons

Joy Harvey said that school libraries across the state, in partnership with the Nebraska School Librarians Association (NSLA), are launching a social media initiative called "Follow-Me Friday." Librarians will provide brief video tours of their school libraries and then tag another librarian to continue the series. The initiative will begin with a library in Bennington and will be featured on NSLA's social media platforms.

Jennifer Norton reported that the Lexington Public Library has begun offering teen programming, including a recent sushi-rolling class.

Laura England Biggs said that in Fremont there have been recent political transitions. The mayor is now serving as State Treasurer, and the city council president has assumed the role of mayor. There has been discussion in the community regarding whether a special election should be held; however, state statute and local ordinance provide that the city council president assumes mayoral duties until the next election. Laura said that both individuals are strong supporters of the library. She also reported that, beginning Monday, the library expects to be fully staffed for the first time in four years.

Tammi Thiem said that Carnegie libraries will be receiving $10,000 payments in January. Christa Porter said that communication about this initiative has not been entirely clear. While attending the Nebraska Library Association (NLA) conference, libraries began receiving emails announcing that $10,000 would be given to all Carnegie libraries. During the Library Commission session at the conference, the legitimacy of the email was discussed and confirmed. Christa later posted information on the Commission's blog encouraging libraries to conduct due diligence and respond if they received the email. Libraries are required to submit a W-9 form to process the funding.

According to the information provided, approximately 1,600 libraries were originally established with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The organization reportedly attempted to contact all of them to confirm whether they are still in existence in any capacity. The initiative, tied to the 250th anniversary of American independence, provides a $10,000 unrestricted gift to each qualifying Carnegie-established library. There are no requirements, restrictions, or reporting obligations associated with the funds. Approximately 1,200 libraries were identified as still operating. Initial emails were sent in October with a November 14 deadline to submit a W-9. A follow-up email was sent recently to libraries that had not yet responded, indicating they may still submit the required documentation to receive funding. Christa said that some libraries may not have been contacted and encouraged any library originally established with Carnegie funding that did not receive an email to contact the Carnegie Corporation directly. She offered to forward copies of the emails she received and said that information is also available on the Carnegie Corporation's website. Contact information shared included AEM@carnegie.org. The most recent email was from James Marsden (JM@carnegie.org), and a prior communication was from Dame Louise Richardson, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Christa said she will send an email to all Carnegie-established libraries in Nebraska. She noted that 68 libraries in Nebraska were originally established with Carnegie funding.

Christa said that she reviewed historical materials on the Carnegie Corporation of New York website. She said that the site includes a scanned copy of the original 1917 letter sent to the Mayor of Lincoln regarding the establishment of a library in the community. The site also includes subsequent correspondence documenting the back-and-forth communication over the years. Christa commented that the archived materials are very interesting. The website indicates that Carnegie grants totaling $77,080 funded the construction of 68 libraries in Nebraska, along with additional historical details. Christa emphasized that the current $10,000 funding initiative is legitimate and not a scam, and she encouraged members to share the information widely. There was further discussion on this topic.

Council Round Table – Successes and Challenges

Amber Sweetland reported that the library recently held its annual Friends group fundraiser, a dinner and lunch theater event with two performances. While the lunch performance is typically less well attended, it serves as a dress rehearsal for the volunteer cast. This year's event went very well, and attendees commented that it was the best performance they had experienced.

Regarding challenges, Amber said that the library is no longer serving as the community coordinator for the community college resulting in a $12,000 annual budget reduction. Amber also described financial concerns. During the recent budget process, the police department had a surplus while the library faced an approximate $70,000 deficit. The mayor proposed reallocating some police department funds to the library so that neither department would carry a deficit.

A more substantial concern involves Clean Harbors, an environmental waste processing company and the community's largest employer. The Governor established a grant program to support companies relocating to or expanding within the state. Clean Harbors received funding through this program; however, Amber reported that the grant funding is being offset by redirecting local sales tax revenue. Because the community is among the closest entities collecting sales tax revenue, funds are being taken from the city rather than coming directly from the state. As a result, beginning next fiscal year, the library anticipates losing 35% of its sales tax revenue, which represents the majority of its operating budget. Amber noted that the library is already operating at a deficit.

Rachel Steiner reported that Omaha Public Library has announced the grand opening of its new central library on April 19, 2026, during National Library Week. Rachel also said that the library's Foundation is celebrating its 40th anniversary, and the Friends group is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Rachel noted that Omaha is fortunate to have strong support from both groups, and celebrations have been held to recognize their longstanding contributions.

Rachel reported that most of the library's materials budget had been allocated to Baker & Taylor, which created significant disruption when circumstances changed. The library migrated to a new integrated library system (ILS) last week, which required substantial staff time to reallocate funds and shift purchasing to Ingram in order to expend the current year's materials budget. She noted that the library may not be able to resume online book purchasing for another week or two, making this transition a major undertaking.

Omaha Public Library operates 13 locations, with three additional metro-area locations that piggyback on its system, as well as a college library that must also be integrated. In addition, the library's public catalog is currently being rerouted. The overlay vendor has indicated it may take up to three weeks to migrate data from the new ILS into its system.

Joy Harvey reported that for Lincoln Public Schools, a major initiative this year has been training school librarians to support teachers in ADA compliance and accessibility practices. She expressed pride in the librarians' work and noted that conversations around accessibility have been very positive for the district.

Joy said that staff attended the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) conference, where Lincoln Public Schools presented three sessions on curriculum, parent partnerships, and ADA. During one session, attendees were asked how many were familiar with ADA requirements; only a small number indicated they were, underscoring the importance of the training. Joy also highlighted a yearbook archival project. Alumni of Lincoln Public Schools may access digitized yearbooks through school library websites.

In terms of challenges, Joy said the continued need to support and advocate for school librarian positions. She also shared that the Nebraska School Librarians Association (NSLA) is partnering on the Future Ready Conference in June. Applications are currently being accepted through February 15 for the School Library of the Year Award, Administrator of the Year Award, and the Meritorious Service Award. She noted that last year's Meritorious Service Award recipient was Dr. Chris Haeffner, Director of Library Services for Lincoln Public Schools.

Joy added that discussions are underway regarding Rule 24 and certification requirements for school librarians. Currently, individuals with an MLS degree must also hold a teaching certificate to work in a school library. The review is considering whether prior professional library experience could count toward certain coursework requirements while maintaining appropriate standards.

Cali Biaggi reported that she began her position in February at Bryan College of Health Sciences and is continuing to learn about the library's operations. A recent success was the transition from EZProxy to OpenAthens for authentication of online resources. The change has simplified access for students and healthcare providers by implementing a single sign-on system, reducing confusion about credentials. The library is also adopting LibSites, a product related to LibGuides, which will support website development with improved customization, design features, and version control. Cali noted a broader challenge affecting the college: the U.S. Department of Education is reclassifying certain professional degrees. Programs such as the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) may no longer qualify as professional degrees for federal loan eligibility. She indicated uncertainty about the full impact of this change but said that Bryan College offers an MSN program.

Joanne Neemann thanked the Nebraska Library Association (NLA) for a breakout session that inspired her to start a silent reading group. The library recently held its first session, with nine attendees. Participants shared appreciation for having uninterrupted time to read. The event was held in the lower level of the library in Beatrice, which provides a quiet, comfortable space with

couches and chairs. Joanne also reported that the Acting Up youth theater group (serving children through high school) is performing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The youth services librarian collaborated with the group on related programming.

The library's Foundation has begun investing funds raised for an outdoor learning area. The children's courtyard has been renovated with a new concrete patio and will include percussion instruments and a small outdoor classroom space for story time and other activities.
Joanne noted an ongoing challenge related to staff wages. There was additional discussion regarding minimum wage impacts. Joanne also said that a growing portion of the budget is allocated to e-books and technology.

Christine Fullerton reported that in July, the dean left to accept a position in Missouri, creating leadership challenges. While local university leadership supports moving forward with hiring a new dean, broader discussions within the University of Nebraska System regarding efficiencies and budget concerns have delayed action. At this time, there is no active search underway.
The library held a fall fundraising campaign with matching donors and raised approximately $15,000, including a $10,000 match.

The UNO library is preparing for ADA Title II compliance requirements anticipated in April. Faculty members are also exploring artificial intelligence applications within library services. Several open positions are currently being filled.

Shannon McDonald reported that Central Community College successfully migrated its ILS, resulting in improved services for its diverse population, which includes students ranging from high school age to senior citizens. The library also added Libby for audiobooks, which has been very popular. Sharon noted an increased presence in classrooms over the past year and a half, including substituting for instructors and providing research instruction. Efforts continue to encourage students to use library databases rather than relying solely on Google. She is also working to strengthen instruction around artificial intelligence literacy and information literacy. Circulation of physical materials remains low.

There was discussion of ReaderZone, and Christa Porter said that the Library Commission provides access for public, school, and academic libraries statewide.

Tammi Thiem, Three Rivers Library System, reported that workshops and meetings continue to be well attended. She mentioned recurring challenges related to municipal misunderstandings about library governance and responsibilities but finds it rewarding to support libraries in navigating these issues.

Michael Straatmann's report was read by Mary Geibel. At the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries, "Pages to Paths" celebrations have included events tied to athletics, arts, and academic engagement, highlighting the library's campus role. Appreciation was expressed to Sam Shaw for assistance with a GIS map project related to Nebraska libraries and interlibrary loan.
UNL Libraries have re-engaged with NLA and served as a major conference sponsor this year, with hopes to continue next year. The academic program review has been completed, and interviews have been conducted for several positions, including an associate dean.

The biennial federal government documents survey deadline has been extended to December 12 due to the shutdown. Budget challenges remain, particularly efforts to reduce deficit spending. Libraries have absorbed some cuts through unfilled positions.

Gail Irwin reported staffing challenges, as she is the only full-time employee with two part-time staff, one of whom has limited availability. The board has approved hiring assistance, and a new staff member will begin training next week.
The library participated in the Central Plains Library System Fall Library Crawl (September–November), drawing visitors from across the region. Additional successful events included:

- *Threads of Time* quilt show featuring more than 60 quilts, historical displays, and related collection materials.
- Book basket auction with 29 donated baskets, raising $1,689 to fund a drinking fountain with bottle-filling station.
- Spanish-language band performance to encourage greater engagement from the Spanish-speaking community.
- Upcoming Christmas Home Tour on December 6 as part of the city's "12 Days of Christmas" celebration.
- A large display tied to the Ken Burns documentary *The American Revolution*, supporting early engagement with the 250th anniversary theme.

Jennifer Norton's report (read by Mary Geibel) noted that Give Big Lexington raised nearly $7,000 with the Friends group. The NEA Big Read project included smartphone photography classes and has been successful. A challenge remains increasing staff engagement with the library's mission. A full-day staff development program is planned.

Lisa Irwin, YRTC, reported steady operations serving 86 boys who visit weekly. Graphic novels are highly popular, and nonfiction is being weeded to create additional space. Cinema events and discussion sessions are also offered. Clever is being implemented as a single sign-on system. Challenges include finding an effective monitoring and filtering system for devices, which has delayed a Chromebook order. Lisa is also reviewing LB390 requirements regarding parental access to reading information.

Celine Swan reported increased partnerships with community organizations using library spaces. The library received the Carnegie grant and is seeing increased program attendance and door counts, though summer reading participation needs improvement. A community survey is underway as part of strategic planning, available in English and Spanish. Access security upgrades are being installed, and five part-time staff will begin December 1, adding two FTEs. A holiday open house on December 1 will celebrate restoration of the Bertoia sculpture, with music provided by the Hastings Symphony string quartet. The library is engaged in Hall County Humanities programming for the 250th anniversary.

Challenges include improving youth reading engagement and addressing food insecurity concerns among patrons through community partnerships and resource referrals.

Holli Duggan reported that the NLA conference was highly successful, with major sponsors including UNL Libraries. Keynote speakers included Alan Eskens, Bill Kelly, and Senator

Danielle Conrad. The silent auction raised over $1,000. Ongoing challenges include membership growth and communication. Planning is underway for Library Advocacy Day and the NLA/MPLA joint conference in October.

Mandy Peterson's report (read by Rod Wagner) noted increased engagement among grades 7–12, including book clubs, crafts, special events, and weekly communications. Challenges include engaging sixth graders and high-need special education students.

Amber Sweetland added that the library partnered with a sixth-grade class and an adult book club to read *The Green Glass Sea*. Over 30 participants attended, including a community member in her 90s. The program included themed food and activities and has been successful for two consecutive years. The Manor Book Club at a local nursing home also continues to thrive.

Christa Porter reminded members that the Library Commission offers vendor discounts, including agreements with Ingram, Gumdrop Books, and Amazon Business Prime, providing cost savings on books and supplies.

New Business

Recommendations and Resolutions**:** None.

Special Recognition

- Gail Irwin was recognized for completing two terms (six years) on the Council. Appreciation was expressed for her service.
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Next Meetings: March 16, July 17, November 20

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.