# Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

Friday, July 19, 2024 10:00AM – 2:00 PM (CDT)

## MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present via GoToWebinar: David Graber, Gail Irwin, Allison Reisig, Rachel Steiner, Lisa Irwin; In-person: Michael Straatmann (Chair), Laura England-Biggs, Jennifer Norton, Shanna Crosby-Wilson, Laura England Biggs, Joanne Neemann, Michael Sauers, Amber Sweetland, Tammi Thiem; Commission Staff members present: Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel, Christa Porter, Holli Duggan, Sam Shaw, Bailee Juroshek.

**Welcome and Introductions**
Chair Michael Straatmann welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 20, 2024 minutes. Motion approved.

**Public Comment:**
There was no public comment.

**Reports**

Nebraska School Librarians Association
**Joy Harvey** was not present, but sent notes. Board members of NSLA include Joy as President-Elect, Emily Jacobs as Secretary, Chelsea Green as a board-member-at-large and Jenny Grazer as a board-member-at-large. Joy made a note that many Nebraska librarians attended the Future Ready Conference with keynote speaker Kristen Mattson, who is a leader in media literacy and digital citizenship instruction.

Nebraska Library Association
**Holli Duggan –** Ginger Jelinek's last day as the NLA Executive Director was at the end of May. Board members are working through those duties and priorities moving forward. Members of the board have stepped up to help cover everything that needs to be done. Conference this year will be October 9-11 in Kearney. Lane Gibson is working on getting out proposals, approvals, and schedules. There will be a social event on the October 9 at Big Apple Bowling. Next year, the annual conference will be in York. The next Golden Sower nominees are posted on the NLA website. Voting will open November 1. The strategic planning committee doesn't have more updates yet. That committee is being led by Brenda Ealey and Wyatt Packard. More information about future plans and proposed changes will be provided before conference. At conference, there may be some sessions or just more information from this committee. For next year's

elections, we are seeking nominations for President-Elect, Secretary, and MPLA representative, as well as several section chairs. The 2024 "Outstanding Public Librarian" award nominees are open until August 31t. There will also be several other awards opening soon for nominations.

Nebraska Library Commission

**Rod Wagner** – This is the summer that state agencies prepare budget requests for the 2025-2027 state biennium budget.

The Library Commission's governing body is the six-member commission appointed by the governor. Currently there are three vacancies. Two vacancies are due to members completing second terms and not eligible for re-appointment. Those members are Lois Todd-Meyer and Arunkumar Pondicherry. One additional vacancy happened because of a member leaving moving out of state for a job change. One member, Beth Kabes, current Commission Chair, is completing her first term and has reapplied for reappointment. Appointments are pending until Governor Pillen makes new appointments. By tradition and not by statute, there has been an arrangement where appointments are made so that there is one member from each of the four regional library system areas and two at-large members. Governor Ricketts deviated from that procedure with his last appointments and when he appointed a new member from the Three Rivers region leaving open a vacancy from the Central Plains region. It's not unusual for appointments to be delayed, even though Arun's and Lois's terms ended in mid-June. They continue to serve until they are replaced.

Regarding the Governor's executive order and the remote work arrangements, these were in place and started during the pandemic. Many state agencies exercised the ability to allow employees to work from locations other than their office, in Lincoln or elsewhere. The Library Commission had employees who took advantage of that opportunity. Several months ago, Governor Pillen issued an executive order that state workers return to the office. The governor's executive order was challenged by the State Employees Union. While that was going through legal considerations, employees were allowed to continue to exercise the remote work option. The court recently ruled that Governor Pillen had the authority to set workplace requirements; so now employees are back to the office. Some exceptions are allowed. Governor Pillen also issued an executive order stating that open state job positions would be eliminated if they were vacant for more than ninety days. The Library Commission had several positions that were vacant and was in a position to lose them. However, because recruitment for those positions was underway before the governor's executive order, the NLC was able to complete recruitment and fill those positions. The NLC has no current position vacancies. Staffing is an issue that always comes up as a challenge.

The "Celebration of Nebraska Books" event has been rethought, and it's going to take on a more ambitious format this year. In recent years, the Nebraska Center for the Book has held a "Celebration of Nebraska Books" event, which is primarily an awards program. The awards are presented for fiction, nonfiction, poetry, children, and adults, and so forth. There are also a couple of other awards: the Jane Geske Award, which goes to an organization, and the Mildred

Bennett Award presented to an individual. The program ends with the announcement of next year's One Book One Nebraska selection.

**Christa Porter** – The second round of CE training grants has just closed. Recipients are attending the American Library Association (ALA) annual conference and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) annual conference. Applications for the CE training grants are available twice a year now (fall and spring). The Fern V. Heim Trustee Scholarship is currently open. These scholarships are for library board members to attend either the NLA or ARSL conferences. It is a $500 scholarship and applications are due on August 16. Fern Heim, a former Library Commission staff member, was involved in libraries for many years. Heim had a special interest in work with public library trustees. Encourage your board members to apply to attend either NLA in Kearney or ARSL in Massachusetts. Christa mentioned that the regional library systems also have scholarships available.

Public library accreditation is open July 1, as usual. Thirty-nine libraries are up for re-accreditation and forty-five unaccredited libraries are invited to apply. Christa noted that nobody has reached out yet to ask for an extension. Christa has started to receive applications and community response plans and is still reviewing them. The deadline to submit all that information is October 1. By the end of the year, everyone will know if they've been re-accredited or accredited for the first time.

The United for Libraries virtual conference is coming up July 30 to August 1. A reminder was sent out yesterday. The NLC purchased a statewide registration for all Nebraska library staff and board members to attend this virtual conference. United for Libraries is the organization for friends, foundations and trustees. All the sessions are eligible for CE credit for librarians and board members which goes towards their certifications. There will also be recordings of the sessions afterwards.

For E-rate, we are up to twelve or thirteen waves of E-rate applications being approved. We have seventy-three libraries, for a little over $301,000 in discounts. There were two fiber special construction applications – Hildreth and Exeter public libraries, both getting fiber installations and both getting new computers. Andrew Sherman, NLC IT Support Analyst, has been working with both libraries. There are also some new additions to E-rate. Yesterday, the FCC approved supporting Wi-Fi hotspots and remote internet connections outside of the library. This was part of the Emergency Connectivity Fund which was set up as a development fund in response to COVID. That funding was for libraries and schools to apply to get hotspots that they could then lend out to people to have internet at their homes or other locations. That wrapped up, but now the FCC has made this a permanent part of the regular program. Libraries and schools can apply for hotspots and they'll get a discount on that and the service, which puts the internet out into the community and into people's homes. Usually the first form of the E-rate process goes live July 1, because that's when the funding year starts, but USAC was waiting for this official nnouncement. Next, they will be announcing that the form is actually open for the 2025 funding year. Next week's NCompass Live is on E-rate and later in the fall, I'll have my regular full three-hour workshops.

The FCC is also doing a cybersecurity pilot program. Libraries and schools will be able to apply to be in this program. This is funding for cybersecurity equipment and services, such as advanced/next generation firewalls. $200 million dollars have been allocated to this three-year pilot program. Anyone who wants to be part of the pilot program should apply, but not everyone who applies will necessarily get it. There will also be webinars coming up from E-rate and more information sent out.

**Nebraska Public Library Trends - Sam Shaw** – The Library Commission participates in the annual national public libraries data collection program. The data collection program is administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Data is collected from public libraries annually. The cycle begins in mid-November. In mid-February, after public libraries have submitted their data, the data is checked. The data is usually published in the early spring, around April. Some questions that are asked in the survey are about revenue, expenditures, library collections, services, technology, and staffing. Typically, when Nebraska libraries data is published, the data is reviewed comparing recent data with prior years. In fiscal year 2020, many libraries were closed because of COVID. In 2021, many libraries still had lingering restrictions on use and access. Even in 2022, many libraries still had public health measures in place that affected library usage. That considered, a one to three year time period was problematic and difficult. The good news is that the data published this spring is from fiscal year 2023, which is the first year where there weren't mandates that affected the data elements. Data comparisons were compiled for comparison between 2019 and 2023.

**Library Commission 2025-2027 Biennium Budget Request** – July 1, 2025 begins the new biennium funding period for state agencies. The state's initiatives for considering tax policies may change this year. The governor may call the legislature back in session in order to enact legislation that would reduce property taxes, which would affect local governments, school districts and a number of other entities. Those revenues would need to be replaced in some way, perhaps with significant state tax funding going to school districts, for example. However, cities, villages, counties, and other special districts rely on property tax dollars or supplemental sales tax revenue. It should be a concern for all involved at state and local levels.

Governor Pillen has also expressed intent to reduce the state budget over the next two years. State agencies will need to consider expectations and how to best present budget requests. The Library Commission's appropriations are in two programs. First, the library operations program, which includes personnel, office space, computing, publications, travel, equipment, and other operating expenses. The other part is the state aid program, which includes state aid to public libraries, regional library systems, subscription databases, lender compensation, library development grants, eReads (supplemental funding for the OverDrive Libraries Group and Lincoln, Omaha, and Ralston libraries).

Wagner asked for comments on budget priorities, specifically regarding how libraries may benefit or be impacted, and what the council would like the Library Commission to prioritize in its funding request. He noted that the Library Commission plans to propose a significant increase in funding for Nebraska eReads, reflecting the steady increase in usage. Additionally, there will be requests for increased state funding for public libraries and regional library systems. Funding

for database subscriptions is expected to rise due to anticipated vendor fee increases in the upcoming biennium. Wagner also said that interlibrary loan lender compensation has remained relatively flat for several years, with the current reimbursement falling well short of the actual costs libraries incur for interlibrary loan transactions. He suggested that this could be an area for potential increase. Wagner said that there are other services the Library Commission is not currently providing that could be incorporated into the budget request.

**Celine Swan** said there are concerns about property tax changes, keeping budget increases at 2%. Discussion concerning interlibrary lending noted cost increases and especially related to postage. There were comments about borrowing guidelines and ILL charges. There was discussion on databases, hotspots, and NebraskaAccess. Laura England-Biggs said that libraries should be in the business of good information. Some of the NebraskAccess databases are used more in schools. EBSCO and Ancestry are used much more. MasterFile and Psychology and Behavioral Health Sciences, provided through EBSCO, were heavily used. Colleges appreciate access to those and other databases. Wagner said that larger school districts are in a better position to pay licensing fees, but the statewide license equalizes and saves money for libraries and makes these resources available to those not able to afford subscriptions.

## Council Round Table: Successes and Challenges

**Michael Sauers** – Do Space is preparing to launch a "Memory Lab" at the beginning of August, which will include equipment for digitizing analog media (though not services). The equipment includes a turntable, cassette deck, and hard drive connectors, allowing users to convert their analog content to digital formats. They may also present this new offering at the upcoming NLA conference. Staff turnover appears to have stabilized. In addition, Michael is organizing a day-long online sustainability summit for November, focused on strategies organizations can adopt to promote sustainability. One of the initiatives featured is the Nebraska Forestry Service's Green Schools Program. Do Space has also maintained a tech kit program since 2015, allowing patrons to check out various tech tools. Originally focused on recreational gadgets, the program has expanded to include practical tools, such as a digital step finder and a laser level.

Finally, Do Space is working on a merger with the Omaha Public Library. Task forces have begun meeting to discuss the integration of two different Integrated Library Systems (ILS), staff training, and joint website marketing strategies.

**Celine Swan** – The Grand Island Public Library is set to receive a new reference desk from Cornhusker State Industries, designed to enhance safety and improve staff working areas. In addition, the library launched a community-wide reading challenge to log one million minutes, running from the end of May through July. They’re only 40,000 minutes away from reaching their goal.

Celine mentioned that Shaun Klee has dedicated significant time to developing historical, humanities, and classical programs at the library, which have become a beloved niche in the community. Grand Island residents especially enjoy these programs. To further engage adults,

the library has introduced several book clubs, including the "Bygone Book Club," "Crimetime," and "Cooking the Books." Celine is excited for another year of successful adult programming.

The children's programs at the library are thriving, with a recent event drawing 500 participants. They're also working on rebuilding their teen program, which has faced challenges, particularly with transportation issues, as many teens live in areas with busy streets and limited access to the library. The library's science kits, including a telescope, have been popular with young visitors. Kids are also enjoying "old-time" activities, like using sewing machines in the makerspace, which continues to be a busy area. The library is also upgrading its security with a new camera system funded by capital money.

Celine mentioned that there have been some issues on the south side of the building, with individuals using drugs or alcohol in the area. To address this, the library has installed bright lights at night and the police now conduct regular drive-throughs. Over the past two years, the library board has been working on updating policies related to safety. Challenges include addressing safety concerns, particularly around drug use, as well as staffing. They're working to improve staff schedules and return to the previous staffing rotations, as working every day can be exhausting for staff, especially with the library being open daily. Celine also noted that last week marked the first staff turnover since before COVID.

**Joanne Neeman** – One of the challenges Beatrice Public Library faces is with its summer reading program. For the past couple of years, the local school has run an all-day summer school, Monday through Thursday, through June, which has impacted the library's summer reading numbers. As a result, they opted not to continue the program into July, as it didn't yield significant participation. The library also recently lost its children's librarian. The position will be advertised soon. Despite these challenges, the library had a big success with a Harry Potter-themed escape room in May, which drew an excellent turnout. They hosted a kids' version in the afternoon and then opened it up to adults, with a few participants even dressing up as their favorite Harry Potter characters. The event was so popular that they're already planning to host another escape room in the future. Looking ahead, Joanne is hopeful that the upcoming bike rodeo will be another successful event. She's actively seeking local businesses in Beatrice to potentially partner with for this initiative.

**Shanna Crosby-Wilson** – At Boys Town, there was funding set aside specifically for curriculum development. By the end of the year, it was discovered that these funds hadn't been used, allowing Shanna to place a large order for the library. A large number of kids are enthusiastic about reading manga, which is difficult to keep in stock due to their rapid consumption. To meet this demand, Shanna ordered a significant quantity of manga, leading to improvements in students' reading skills—a big success! For the upcoming school year, the school is hiring twenty new teachers and staff members. They use the Boys Town model for much of their training, as it offers a unique educational environment. However, there are concerns about how the new school year will unfold, presenting a challenge for the staff.

**Amber Sweetland** – Our elementary program had the highest sign-up numbers in its history this year. The teen program is nearly back to its pre-pandemic levels as well. One of the highlights is

the annual scavenger hunt for teens, a tradition that Amber started when she was the Youth Services Librarian. However, the current librarian was considering phasing it out. After some discussions about how to adapt the event, Amber suggested incorporating geocaching. The Tech Services team got excited about the idea, and together, they created a geocache scavenger hunt in the town's largest park. With a lot of people in town rediscovering their love for *Pokémon Go*, they decided to give the scavenger hunt a *Pokémon Go* twist. The team did an amazing job! They painted plastic Christmas tree ornaments to resemble Pokéballs and used laser-cut wood to create miniature Pokémon creatures. The Tech Services Librarian took the figures home, and she and her husband painted each one to match the original characters.

Another highlight was a visit from a librarian who works at a college. She was traveling along the Lincoln Highway and had the chance to tour several libraries, including Kimball. After her visit, she wrote a glowing review of Kimball on her blog. Amber pointed out that it's especially interesting when professionals from our field visit your library because they notice things that most visitors might miss. In this case, the librarian highlighted the signage created on the library's laser cutter—a project made possible despite our lack of budget. She also pointed out other aspects of the library that staff are really proud of, but which often go unnoticed by the general public. Instead of her usual column that week, Amber sent the link to the blog post to the local newspaper, and they published it. Amber has since received a lot of positive feedback about the piece.

One of the ongoing challenges is the age of the building—especially with the lights starting to fail, but there's no funding available for LED replacements. Unfortunately, the budget deficit this year is even worse than it was last year. On a brighter note, Amber's staff has remained dedicated. The downside is that the longer they stay, the more expensive they become, contributing to the growing deficit. Despite these financial challenges, Amber emphasizes how exceptional her staff is, and she believes she has the best team in the world.

Amber was asked what items the library has available for checkout. They offer a variety of things, including a rototiller, sewing machine, tortilla press, dehydrator, games, a microscope, a Blu-ray player, a pop-up tent, a fishing pole, an ice cream maker (Yonanas), a laser level—which is very popular—five computers, and even a canning kit. Rod Wagner asked about the sales tax ballot issue that was discussed at the last meeting, asking if they plan to try again. Amber reported that, for now, there's no talk of revisiting it. She noted that the library only receives 19% of the half-cent tax they lost, and she didn't even realize that portion was theirs until they lost it. Last year, the library faced a deficit, but despite that, the city didn't reduce their budget. The deficit came from the difference between the actual income and the library's $65,000 budget. This year, the deficit is projected to be $71,000. Amber has already trimmed hours as much as possible to help offset the shortfall.

Despite the financial challenges, Amber expressed gratitude for the city council's support. They are aware of her efforts to secure as many grants as possible. Rod mentioned that Amber does a great job with fundraising, which helps supplement the library's resources. Amber is involved with a new nonprofit. Her friend had the idea to create a sensory farm on her property, and

Amber saw it as an opportunity to get involved. She's helping with fundraising efforts, with the goal of not only supporting the farm but also benefiting the library. As part of this collaboration, Amber invited the nonprofit to join the final storytime of the school year. They brought in miniature goats. At first, several of the kids were terrified of the goats, but by the end of the session, they were playing with them.

**Tammi Thiem** – In regard to the NLA, with Ginger Jelinek's departure as Executive Director of NLA, a significant challenge has been redistributing her responsibilities. However, this has also turned into an unexpected success. When everyone is tasked with figuring out what needs to be done, it can foster unity as people step up to take on new roles, contributing to a shared sense of ownership. With a new strategic plan focused on simplification and unification, there are changes on the horizon. For the Three Rivers System, one ongoing challenge is relationship building. It's often the case that someone has a conflict – whether with the city council, a board member, or a staff member. Maintaining these relationships is difficult, but it's essential to ensure libraries function smoothly, receive the necessary funding, and continue to thrive. One success has been Tammi's role in being a resource for others. People reach out to her because they know she's there and willing to help. Additionally, Tammi taught an "Introduction to Libraries" class at UNO in June. She finds it rewarding to see the perspectives of people just starting to consider a career in library services, and it's a reminder of what newcomers don't yet know, which, in turn, helps her in her own work. Even the challenges can be seen as backward successes, as they often lead to growth and new opportunities.

**Jennifer Norton** – In Lexington, the focus is on strengthening community relationships with local partners, including businesses, schools, and other organizations. One of their standout events was the bike rodeo. To promote the event, they made sure to spread the word through Facebook, flyers, the library's website, and the local radio station, drawing significant community support. Two local car dealerships generously donated five bikes for giveaways. The event was made possible with the help of several community partners, including the hospital, Dawson Public Power, the police department, Three Rivers Health Department, and a local woman who runs a food truck and catering service. Since the event's first year, when things were a bit chaotic, the organizers have learned lessons, allowing the event to grow and evolve. As a result, it has become a huge success.

Like Beatrice, Lexington offers summer school throughout June, Monday through Thursday, all day. The library collaborates with the school district, working around their schedule to provide additional programming. The library partners with the middle school to offer extra learning opportunities. In the first two weeks of June, the children's and youth services librarians visited the middle school to teach special classes. Then, in the final two weeks of the month, Jennifer taught lessons centered on the summer reading theme. On Mondays, the library hosted programs for younger elementary students, with registration required and limited space available. The library also organized a Friday morning program for elementary students, which was supported by community partners. One highlight was a landscaping and gardening business that led gardening adventures on two Fridays in June.

Lexington also partners with the Lexington Community Foundation to offer larger programs, thanks to the Library Initiative grant, which helps fund these events. This year, they hosted a performance by the Crane River Theater Group from Kearney, who presented a "Page-to-Stage" production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Other highlights included a magic show by Adam White and an author visit from Lisa Fipps, author of *Starfish*, a Golden Sower nominee. The library continued its collaboration with the local school, which helped cover part of the fees, while a Library Commission grant funded the remainder. Though these types of programs can be expensive, they're well worth the investment, as they draw large audiences. The library is preparing for its third annual street dance festival, an idea Jennifer introduced from her time in Neligh, inspired by a past summer reading theme, "Create at Your Library." The event will feature free live music, games, and activities for the community. Jennifer said that that building relationships with those who are willing to lend a hand, and offering support in return, has been key to making these events possible. Lexington, with a population of just over 10,000, is a diverse community. The library is committed to ensuring that every segment of the population feels welcomed and included. The focus on outreach and inclusion has fostered community support and valuable partnerships.

One of Jennifer's long-time goals was to launch a "One Book, One Community" program, and this year, with Lexington celebrating its sesquicentennial, she was able to make it happen. She chose *Running Dreams* by Carlos R. Serván. Serván, who emigrated from Peru in 1989 after a grenade explosion at the detective academy left him blind and without his right hand, shares his journey in the book. Today, he serves as the Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. As part of the sesquicentennial celebrations, Serván was invited to speak in Lexington, providing an opportunity for the community to hear from the author. In addition to promoting *Running Dreams* in English, the library also made multiple copies available in Spanish through its Spanish book club. They've embraced the book as part of their "One Community Read" initiative, and in the future, books will be selected by a committee, ensuring diverse voices and perspectives are represented.

Our challenges are mostly staffing. There was a bit of turnover in part-time positions. Lexington needs bilingual speakers to do its best. The biggest challenge is keeping quality people who want to be present and value what their job is, whether it's full-time or part-time. Another success is that the youth services librarian and Jennifer will be presenting at the Youth Services Retreat in August.

**Laura England-Biggs** – Laura recently hired a bilingual staff member who is well-known and trusted within the community, having previously worked as a translator in the schools. Many parents are familiar with her, and she's a long-time library patron of 15 years, as well as a homeschool mom. Now that her kids are older, she was looking for a part-time job, making her a perfect fit for the role.

Laura also shared that the library is fortunate to have strong support from the mayor, city council, city administrator, and finance director. These community leaders understand the library's importance and recognize that her role shouldn't be focused on fundraising. In fact, the finance director and city administrator helped secure $420,798 from the general fund reserves to close the gap in fundraising for the library's expansion project, a request that was passed

unanimously with only a few questions. Additionally, two major grants totaling $1.25 million are expected to arrive soon, providing significant support for the project.

Laura also said a significant challenge: her Office Manager unexpectedly walked out on the day of the May board meeting. Finding and hiring a replacement for that position has been challenging.

**Michael Straatmann** – At UNL, there have been several key successes. One of the main initiatives has been continuing renovations. They are also developing an innovative "tech garden" space, where they are experimenting with hardware, software, and data systems. With so much data being generated on campus, they are focused on exploring ways to manage, utilize, and store it effectively. Another major accomplishment was the launch of a new code of conduct for the libraries, something that hadn't been in place for years. UNL has been an advocate for finding alternative resources to better serve patrons, emphasizing that not every issue requires a police response. As part of this effort, the UNL Police Department has begun collaborating with CenterPoint Personal Crisis Response, a team that addresses situations where law enforcement is not needed – such as providing counseling for individuals in distress. This initiative is part of their broader goal to lead these efforts and bring the entire campus community along.

UNL has been working with the Omaha Public Library on improving their documents section, offering assistance in this area.

UNL has faced several challenges, particularly with staffing. Recently, they saw the retirement of four or five experienced librarians with many years of service among them across areas such as music, medicine, science, and education. Losing such expertise all at once is a significant challenge for any institution. Like many libraries, UNL is also grappling with budget issues. State funding has remained flat, and over the years, they've had to rely more on alternative funding sources, which has led to a structural deficit. Despite the flat budget, they've had to cut approximately $100,000 annually. Salaries are already below competitive levels compared to other positions on campus, making it difficult to attract and retain talent. Currently, they are managing with open positions, but this creates a catch-22: while they can ensure that current staff are paid a living wage, the work still goes undone, resulting in a cycle of increased workload and limited resources.

Additionally, operational costs are a persistent challenge, and although they are experimenting with solutions – such as using lockers to reduce reliance on service points or adjusting service hours to better align with building hours – cutting costs in this area remains difficult. Another change has been the closure of the engineering library location, following the construction of a new engineering building. The library's partner in engineering student services has moved into the new facility, and staff is now working on determining the next steps for that space.

**Dave Graber** – At Wayne State, the library suffers from inflation to a degree in regard to the budget, but they've been financially healthy and reasonably well supported as a library, and the college is doing well with enrollment. There is less money from the state, but they haven't had to take a budget cut for a long time. In colleges everywhere, generative AI is causing some rethinking of what is being done as an educational institution and conversely what that means for

the library. Public libraries have to depend on their population and their board to generate support. At a college library, they need to depend on faculty. If generative AI causes faculty members to stop assigning out-of-classroom writing, like research papers, as they no longer trust it as an evaluative measure because they can't easily detect what's real and what's not. That has implications for the library, in terms of what their role is on campus as a research and resource provider.

Acrobat Reader and other tools have the ability to automatically summarize documents. That potentially changes the library's value in terms of a repository or a collection point, and it changes the way people learn. It's not necessarily bad, but it's different. It's a rapidly changing dynamic. They're struggling with it as a staff in terms of how to move forward because things can't be done the same as they've always been done. Dave said that the changes over the next three to five years will probably be more dramatic than what we've seen in the previous twenty. It's a challenge. It's not a failure or a success. Librarians have to keep contacts open with faculty and try and propose alternatives for their assignments that still utilize library resources. If they don't, that's when the budget will go away or be reduced.

Wayne State College has two vacant leadership positions on campus, both in academics. These positions are the Vice President and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Four deans are new in their positions as well. There's been a lot of turnover on the academic side due to retirements and people leaving. A lot is going to change over the next three to five years.

**Gail Irwin** – In Ainsworth, the library has faced some challenges due to street closures that have been in place since March. The roadwork, which includes a six-foot drop along the street for sewer and water line replacements and curb updates, has limited access to the library. Visitors have had to use the back entrance, and parking has been restricted, leading to a noticeable drop in traffic. Another challenge is that the library is up for re-accreditation, and gathering enough survey responses has been difficult. Gail is determined to continue pushing for participation so they can gather feedback to set goals and strategies for the library.

On the positive side, the library has weathered the street closures for the past four months. The road reopened last week, and they've already made repairs to the sprinkler system by the curb and reseeded the grass. The next steps include painting the parking lines out front, after which the library's section of the main street will be fully accessible again. Gail has noticed a significant increase in visitors since the road reopened, with traffic doubling compared to last week. It's been exciting to see familiar faces return to the library after such a long absence.

The library still managed to hold its summer reading program. It was a fun program to work with and the kids did enjoy it, although the numbers were down, which we had expected because of the construction. The library is on to the Smokey Bear Reading Challenge, which is also going to be fun. Another success is the purchase of four new computers – two for staff use at the circulation desk and two for public access. The next challenge is getting them set up and running while balancing accreditation tasks and the library's day-to-day operations. With Gail being the only full-time staff member, time is limited, but she is confident that the community will appreciate the new computers.

**Rachel Steiner** – OPL is in a strong financial position, with much of that success attributed to the impact of DoSpace (thank you, Michael Sauers!). Since the merger of DoSpace and Omaha Public Library, the city has made a clear commitment to ensuring the success of the new building. This year, OPL received its usual budget increase along with funding for an additional position. By June, OPL has filled eight new full-time positions and are requesting another eight positions for next year. While the budget won't be finalized by the city council until August or September, the outlook is positive.

OPL currently operates at thirteen locations, and that number will remain the same once the new Central Library opens. Additionally, the city has acquired land for a future fourteenth location. As the community grows, so too does the library system. These are major milestones for OPL. On top of that, the library's usage continues to increase: overall foot traffic, meeting room bookings, and program attendance are up by about 25% year over year.

The challenge at the moment is constant staff turnover. People need a livable wage, but OPL can only pay them so much. Library positions, even part-time, are based on union contracts, which are negotiated usually every three years, so it's not always keeping up with wages. With staff turnover comes staff training. Training requires a lot of extra time when someone is not doing their primary job, which is helping people. Another challenge is everything that needs to be done ahead of moving to Central, like the collection that Michael Straatmann talked about. OPL has a large government documents collection that needs to be downsized over the next year, so it doesn't have to be cataloged in order to be put into the automated retrieval system. That is a big project and the library has numerous large projects, but Rachel noted that it can be overcome.

**Lisa Irwin** – YRTC's summers are always a challenging. They run school year-round, yet the teacher contracts aren't year-round, as summer contracts are optional. They typically have eighteen teachers and most classes are direct instruction. This summer, YRTC is down to five full-time teachers and two part-time teachers. They'll have to go from direct instruction to mostly online instruction. It's always a struggle to juggle being a teacher and librarian. The teachers that Lisa works with have been great. Lisa can still have regular library time for the kids. This summer, they spent June doing coding. Lisa said that she had 90% participation for completed code.org activities. In July, they've been doing song production. She purchased Soundtrap software, which is similar to BandLab or GarageBand. The kids have been producing songs from instrumentals to vocals, and they will record those. Then they'll have a contest at the end to see who can produce the best rap song. They do focus on a theme, so it's very productive. This year, the theme is transformation and making change to become the young men they'd be proud of. They had to think and push themselves to step outside of their comfort zones and they're really enjoying it. It's been a positive experience. One challenge for the future is the lack of a librarian at YRTC Hastings, which is the girls' facility. The vacancy came about due to retirement. Lisa wonders what that means for her. Teachers there have asked if she's going to travel to Hastings. The girls are interested in doing some of the STEAM projects and other activities. Lisa also noted concerns about not having a librarian there to manage the collection and which books are being taken off the shelves.

**Allison Reisig** – For WNCC -Scottsbluff, the biggest success at the moment is Saturday hours. They did a survey and the students expressed interest in Saturday hours. The attendance was terrible during the first year. However, they kept trying and did some more advertising which led

to a 70% increase from Spring 2023 to Fall 2023. They had an additional 20% increase from Fall 2023 to Spring 2024, which is awesome. Additionally, there is a recording studio next to the library, which a faculty/staff member had been using for training use as opposed to student use. The faculty member retired, so they were able to get ownership of that space back. There's been an incredible increase of students utilizing that space, which has been fantastic.

Some challenges are institution-wide. The property tax funding and the funding model has affected all of the community colleges as well. Instead of getting it directly from property taxes, they're getting state aid from a different source. They aren't entirely certain what that's going to look like in the future or how well that will work which is a struggle since they don't know what the budgets are going to look like over the next couple of years.

There has been significant turnover in leadership as well. Currently, there is an Interim Dean whose contract will expire at the end of the month, resulting in the appointment of a new Dean. Additionally, the college has divided the Vice President position, which previously oversaw both student and academic departments, into two separate positions. This decision will lead to the hiring of a new Vice President as well. Consequently, Allison will be responsible for training the entire supervisory structure in the future.

**New Business**

Recommendations and Resolutions – There were none.

Next meetings (2024) – November 15

Meeting adjourned at 1:13 pm.