

NEBRASKA LIBRARY COMMISSION

Lincoln, Nebraska
September 9, 2011

MINUTES

The Nebraska Library Commission met on September 9, 2011, at the Library Commission office, 1200 N Street, Lincoln. The meeting notice was posted on the Commission website and the Nebraska.gov public meeting calendar.

Commission members present: John Dale, Charles Gordon, Patricia (Pat) Gross, Diane Boyd, Sherry Crow and Steve Batty (via telephone). Staff present: Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel, Dave Oertli, Scott Scholz, Mary Jo Ryan, Devra Dragos, JoAnn McManus. Public: Barbara Hegr, Nebraska City

Chair John Dale called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. This meeting is in compliance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

Approval of Agenda: A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion carried on roll call vote: Diane Boyd – aye; John Dale – aye; Charles Gordon – aye; Patricia Gross – aye; Sherry Crow – aye. Motion approved.

Approval of the Minutes: (July 8, 2011) A motion was made and seconded to approve the July 8, 2011, meeting minutes. Motion carried on roll call vote: John Dale – aye; Charles Gordon – aye; Patricia Gross – aye; Sherry Crow – aye and Diane Boyd – aye. Motion approved.

Public Forum

Barbara Hegr commented on Nebraska City activities and events including the library's annual book sale and exhibits. Hegr said that one of the exhibits is a Civil War exhibit from Teachers Discovery.

Chair's Report and Commissioners' Comments

Chair John Dale reported (with credit to Brenda Ealey) that the Auburn Memorial Library received a \$100,000 loan and a \$56,000 grant for an expansion project. Lola Seitz is the new director at the Pawnee City Public Library. Alicia Graybill, a former Lincoln City Libraries employee, is the new director at the Elmwood Public Library. The Syracuse Public Library received a million dollar gift and then added \$400,000 to that for a new building. Beatrice's library building is now 20 years old. Eagle is working on a library which has been trying to start. The Falls City Public Library unfortunately has had to cut some service hours. The Eastern and Southeast library systems' fall colloquium is November 9 at the Embassy Suites in La Vista and Jo Budler, Kansas State Librarian, is the speaker. John said that Lincoln's city budget includes a mix of budget cuts and some tax increases. Lincoln City Libraries didn't lose service hours, but has lost five middle level positions and some really good people. John said that the exciting news is that Lincoln City Libraries' circulation last year was 3.42 million. John said that when he retired about six years ago, the Lincoln libraries' circulation was just over 3 million, so this number keeps ratcheting up.

Charles Gordon reported that he had looked over the last year of his comments and observed that they were “sad.” Charles noted that Fremont’s immigration issues, the loss of the library’s HVAC system and its million dollars plus cost to replace, and the long, year and a half interim status of its library director. Charles said that the city has eliminated positions for several long term employees, including two library staff members. One of the city council members was successful in amending the city budget to save one of the library positions. Charles said that the situation is grim and morale is low.

Diane Boyd stated that her daughter serves on the Lincoln City Library Foundation. Diane asked Mary Jo Ryan (also a foundation member) to comment on the foundation’s activities. Mary Jo stated that the Foundation for the Lincoln City Libraries has had a wonderful year. The foundation received money to support the bookmobile and because the city was assigned the bookmobile, the foundation was able to get money to furnish the bookmobile and create an endowment for future replacement of materials. The Lincoln City Libraries is working with Black Hills Energy to operate the bookmobile using a compressed gas high energy fuel.

Sherry Crow remarked that she participated in the Nebraska Library Leadership Institute, serving as a mentor. Sherry said that the Kearney public library building project continues. Half the building is done and the other half is under construction.

Patricia Gross reported that the Panhandle Library System region covers 14 counties and there is a lot going on. Pat mentioned that Curtis Brundy is the new Nebraska Western Community College library director. He comes from the Creighton University library in Omaha. Bridgeport Public Library received their computers and equipment as part of the Commission’s BTOP project. Pat said “according to Tammy Covalt, the patrons are loving it”. The most exciting thing that’s happening is the October author tour with New York Times best seller author/illustrator Diane deGroat. The tour will be held October 18-20. Pat said that the tour is a big undertaking. The region has no Barnes & Noble for children to go to meet famous authors. Pat said that planning has been underway for the past two years and she has been involved during that time, keeping her commitment to the project following retirement. Pat said that the kick-off party was held and presentations will be given in six schools. The author travels extensively for three days and she will meet and present to over 2,000 children. Pat reported that the system conducts the author tour every two to three years. Grade levels are chosen and this year’s tour targets 2nd and 3rd graders. Diane deGroat toured and presented nine years ago. At that time she spoke to 4th- 6th graders. Wednesday’s kick-off was hosted by Laurie Bauer and Pat. The kick-off included over 40 media specialists and teachers from the region. Funding for the tour has come from donations, a grant from Wal-Mart, and money set aside in the Panhandle system budget for children’s programming. Pat said other fund raising activities have included a luncheon and sales of deGroat’s illustrations. Pat commented on activity at the Scottsbluff Public Library. The library building addition and renovation has resulted in increased activities. The library has added service hours, including Sunday hours. Pat said the library is “just buzzing.”

Steve Batty reported that the McCook public library has received all its new computers, new furniture, a new color laser printer, and a projector (BTOP project). The McCook library foundation purchased the building to the north and is giving it to the city in case of future need

for library expansion or parking. The library elevator project will include remodeling the downstairs. Eventually children's materials will be moved to the downstairs. With the City of McCook's across-the-board 2% budget reduction last year, several projects are on hold, including upstairs carpeting.

Director's Report

Rod Wagner said that Dave Oertli, Devra Dragos, JoAnn McManus and Mary Jo Ryan will contribute reports.

Talking Book and Braille Services/Digital Talking Books Update – Dave Oertli introduced Scott Scholz, the TBBS Circulation and Audio Production Coordinator. Scott is active with his peer groups within the talking book network and is a recognized leader in talking book technology, an expert with digital duplication. Scott has also been active in supporting BARD (an acronym for a Library of Congress service named Braille Audio Reading Download). The BARD site is the source for downloading books and magazines directly from the internet. Oertli said that use of BARD is growing among talking book customers and will become even more important as our talking book borrowers increase their use of computers.

Scott Scholz reported on BARD. Scott covered the steps involved in use of the BARD system including applications, sign up, and searching BARD. Scott said that there are now about 22,000 titles available from BARD. Scott described BARD features such as searching for the most popular books, drop down menus, and their functions (searching by author, title, subjects or alphabetical).

Dave Oertli commented that this is the 80th Anniversary of the Talking Book Program nationwide. National advertising has suffered as a result of budget cuts. Dave said that the federal program budget issue is going to leave the magazine question unsettled. The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is committed to talking books on cartridge because cassettes are no longer in use to any significant extent. However, magazines have continued distribution in cassette format because at the national level because there is insufficient funding for transition to cartridges. Dave said that in Nebraska, we have made the change-over. Commission/TBBS produced magazines are on cartridges. Oertli said that our studio produced magazines have made the transition. This transition needs to take place at the national level too. Dave commented that we are looking at BARD as being one of the backbones for the magazine programs, but borrowers must be "tech savvy" to use BARD. We're looking for an answer that is affordable and doable in terms of technology.

Dave Oertli reported that digital books and players are now ready and available for schools and care facilities. Before, digital books and players were available only to individuals. The NLC/TBBS can now provide books and players for school classrooms and retirement centers, senior centers and so on. Most of these places are coming on board. Oertli said we've had good luck with promotion. He referred to an article coming out in the League of Human Dignity's newsletter, *On the Level*. Paralyzed Veterans of America, out of Omaha, will feature an ad in its own newsletter. Three ads will be coming out during 2012 in *Nebraska Life* magazine. Oertli noted an article in *Nebraska Farmer*, an article coming out in *Living Well* magazine, an article in the *Nebraska Occupational Therapist* newsletter and a longer article

coming out in the next issue. Dave said the TBBS will have a display at the Diabetes Fair in Holdrege. He said that with the exception of *Nebraska Life*, these magazines don't have broad circulation, but they are targeting people with disabilities.

Nebraska Overdrive Libraries Audio-books and eBooks Program – Devra Dragos stated that she had exciting news about the Overdrive book consortium. Participating libraries are well spread across Nebraska. Devra said that the Overdrive consortium will have an additional 30 libraries as of October 1, bringing the total to 96 with 2 additional libraries pending. These libraries represent more than a third of Nebraska's public libraries and serve about 95% of the total state population. Devra reported that the consortium has an ever widening coverage in the state. The most popular format, or the highest demand format, is eBooks. Titles are continually purchased and "fly right off the virtual book shelf." Devra said that at mid-year the consortium held an online meeting of participating library representatives. A decision was made to move funds from audio-book purchases to eBook purchases so that the eBook collection could catch up.

There is a difference in check out time. Audio-books have a one week checkout. They can't be returned early, one of the reasons the consortium decided to go with the one week checkout period. For eBooks, there is a three week checkout period. These books can be returned early. Devra said that there are borrowers who are checking out books daily. One borrower got an error message because she actually was checking out over the limit of what Overdrive will allow for a one week time period.

The Overdrive service is expanding to include the Kindle. Amazon is working with Overdrive to come up with an app for the Kindle and it should be available later this fall. The Barnes & Noble Nook has worked with Overdrive for over a year. Sony eReaders, the Borders Covalt and other eReader devices work with Overdrive. This year libraries will contribute about \$80,000 for book purchases. That amount is split between audio-books and eBooks. Purchases are also divided between adult fiction, adult nonfiction and juvenile titles. Mary Jo Mack, West Point public library, and Karen Drevo, Norfolk public library, make purchases on behalf of the consortium, with input from participating libraries. Devra said that Susan Knisely, Commission Online Services Librarian, handles a lot of the tech support for the Overdrive libraries.

Devra said that a training session is being planned for librarians to cover several eReader devices: Kindle, iPad, Sony eReader, Barnes and Noble Nook and an iPod Touch. Participants will have hands-on time to see how each device works and learn how they can troubleshoot, where they can find answers to common problems people run into when they are setting up the service.

Broadband Technology Opportunity Program - JoAnn McManus reported that the BTOP grant project is going well. The early stages have taken more time than expected because it took time to determine equipment requirements and to work through purchasing policies and procedures, work out numerous issues with vendors, and many more details. At this point full equipment orders have been delivered to 71 libraries, nearly half of the participating libraries. JoAnn said that \$1.1million worth of equipment has been ordered, primarily from HP.

State Advisory Council on Libraries Meeting (July 15) – Rod Wagner said that the July Council meeting was held using the state video-conference network. This saved money by shortening travel distances for people to participate. The council continued discussions based on the “new normal” theme of the past year. The council was also referred to the “game changers” issues developed by OCLC. The separation of participants is a deficiency in using the video network, but there was good participation and the council covered a lot of ground. Council members commented on their own libraries and communities in relation to the new normal and game changer framework. Wagner said that a council committee will help develop an exercise for the November meeting to address the pending five-year LSTA state program evaluation and the process for developing the five-year LSTA state plan.

Wagner said that the council developed and issued a survey a year ago to collect information about library funding and experiences with local budgets. The council is sponsoring a second survey, recently issued, to collect, compile and report budget information for this past year, a follow-up to last year’s survey. The data for the two years will be compared.

Technology Planning Summer Camp (August 22-23) – Rod Wagner stated that a “Technology Summer Camp” was held August 22 and 23 at several Nebraska locations. The camp was planned and held as a result of funding provided by the Gates Foundation and in relation to the BTOP grant. A specific purpose of the tech planning camp was to provide information and support to aid libraries in applying for e-rate telecommunications services discounts through the federal Universal Service Fund. Wagner said that there are many libraries that do not apply for e-rate funding. Applying for e-rate discounts can be cumbersome but the discounts can represent a significant cost savings. Wagner said that the camp covered other technology topics – technology planning, sustainability, advocacy, filtering, and more. A Commission staff representative was at each of the four sites including Scottsbluff, Norfolk, North Platte and Lincoln.

Cultivating Rural Librarians 21st Century Skills Program – Mary Jo Ryan reported on the IMLS three-year project grant for scholarships, internships and stipends. Ryan said that the grant project is less than a year old but there have already been good results. Mary Jo said that three scholarships have been awarded in the area of the professional certificate; four scholarships have been awarded to students working on their LIS arts and science degree. There are five working on their bachelors degree, fourteen working on their MLIS, six that are working on their M.Ed and two that are working on their graduate level media endorsement, which is also a M.Ed. Those scholarships account for almost \$100,000 allocated thus far. Mary Jo said that the project is on track awarding 34 scholarships out of 37 applications. Of the three that were not awarded, they were not awarded because the information was not complete. These applicants can re-apply by sending in the complete information. In addition to these scholarships, scholarship awardees are eligible to receive stipends for other educational related expenses needed to move forward professionally.

Mary Jo said that the project has, thus far, awarded 22 laptop computer stipends, 8 professional association dues stipends, and 32 conference attendance stipends. Students are looking ahead towards stipends to attend a national or regional conference. They will also receive support to pay library association dues. By including payment for association dues conference registration fees are reduced. Mary Jo said that the project team is working on

enhanced learning opportunities; opportunities that will help students build 21st Century librarianship skills. The project will include a two day seminar to be held next summer. The seminar will be designed for scholarship students, but will be open to anyone in the state. The seminar will be an opportunity for students to network and get informal mentoring with other librarians that have similar interests.

Mary Jo said that project activities include webinars. As an example, she said that Michael Sauers has been presenting webinars once a month on technology topics. Face-to-face training is also being planned. Michael Sauers and Susan Knisely will provide training involving use of eReaders (mentioned earlier by Devra Dragos). This training will include students and others to aid in supporting downloadable book services. Librarians are getting a lot of questions about how to troubleshoot eReaders and the eReader training will be timely in helping them better support these services.

The Library Commission's financial support for the Nebraska Library Leadership Conference came from state funds. Those funds are applied toward the state match for the LSTA grant. Mary Jo said that four or five of the scholarship students were Library Leadership Institute participants. Other project activities include a Facebook page – Nebraska Librarians Learning Together. The page has, thus far, 131 fans. Students are posting and participating in interesting discussions. Mary Jo said one of the scholarship students went to the OverDrive Digipalooza Conference in Cleveland and posted information from the conference. Mary Jo said that it has been interesting to see how students are using Facebook to communicate with each other and with other librarians.

November 1st is the deadline for the next batch of scholarships. Internships are another project component and one that has been going on for the past several years. Internships were started with the first IMLS Laura Bush program grant. Private funds provided limited internships following the end of the first grant. More internships are now possible due to the new IMLS 21st Century Librarian grant. Eighteen internships were awarded for \$22,750. Mary Jo offered an example of the type of assistance library interns are providing. She mentioned one intern who taught library customers how to download audio-books. She said that the interns engage with library customers and help them use these newer technologies. Some interns choose to pursue library careers, while others gain an appreciation for libraries and become supporters and advocates.

Nebraska Center for the Book/Annual Meeting and Celebration of Books (October 22) – The Nebraska Center for the Book sponsors the national Letters about Literature contest for Nebraska participation. It has become more difficult for teachers to work this program into the curriculum, but it is a rewarding experience for students to write a letter to an author and tell them why the book they read made a difference in their lives. The writing exercise results in creative thinking, writing experience, and makes students aware that reading has power.

Financial Report

July – August Financial Report – Rod Wagner stated that the Commission is operating within the reduced budget level for the current fiscal year. Wagner said that some expenses come up early

in the year that do not continue for the remainder of the year. Thus, some budget categories indicate a higher percentage of budget expended. One expense, for example, is conference registrations. The NLA/NEMA conference registrations are paid during the first quarter and are a major expense for this category, but will be paid only once during the year. There are some association dues and some subscriptions that are also paid early in the fiscal year. Wagner said that Sue Biltoft is including separate pages in the report for the Broadband project and for the 21st Century Librarian grant project.

LSTA Maintenance of Effort Waiver Request Status & LSTA Funding Outlook – Rod Wagner reported that the Commission was notified in July by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in that the Commission's state expenditures for the last report period (2010 fiscal year) were below the LSTA maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement. Wagner said that an MOE waiver request was submitted prior to the August 1 due date. Wagner said that it was his understanding that the IMLS will make decisions on waiver requests before the end of September. Information from the IMLS indicates that waivers are allowable, but rarely granted. Wagner also said that there are a number of state library agencies that have submitted waiver requests. Like Nebraska, many have experienced large budget cuts due to the economic downturn of the past several years. Wagner said that the potential federal funding loss is about \$100,000 and would come out of Nebraska's FY2012 LSTA state program allocation. If there is a funding loss the Library Improvement Grants program would be the likely place to absorb the loss since it is discretionary and would not affect staff. However, this would be unfortunate because these grants provide libraries with funds for special needs and projects and have a significant and positive effect on library services.

Unfinished Business

Rod Wagner said that the LSTA five-year state program evaluation and five-year plan are unfinished business items but there is no current activity to report other than that these projects will be on the state advisory council on libraries agenda for the council's November meeting.

New Business

Deficiency Appropriation Request – Rod Wagner stated that the Commission has rarely been in a position to submit a deficiency appropriation request. Instructions for submitting deficiency requests have not yet been issued by the state budget office but are expected this month with requests due before the end of October. Wagner said that a deficiency request could be submitted to restore state aid funds to last fiscal year's funding level. The basis would be the need to raise the level of state support to avoid the potential loss of LSTA funding due to the federal maintenance of effort requirement. Deficiency appropriations are intended for situations where an agency is facing an unexpected and unavoidable expenditure. That's not entirely the case here, but the potential funding loss this year, and perhaps next year, is such that a deficiency appropriation would lessen the impact of the LSTA funding loss.

John Dale asked if there would be a basis for the request if the IMLS approves the MOE waiver. Wagner said that the Commission's case for a deficiency appropriation wouldn't be as strong. He added that the prospects for a deficiency appropriation would also be influenced by Nebraska's

state tax revenue trends in the coming months. If tax receipts are above projections there will be more revenue available for deficiency and other funding requests. The state finished the last fiscal year with about \$45 million more in tax receipts than projected. Had revenue projections been higher the legislature might not have reduced state agency budgets to the extent that they did. The state revenue situation has improved, at least for now. If the Commission submits a deficiency request it would be in position for consideration of restoring some of the budget cuts made this past legislative session.

John Dale stated that it is important that the LSTA maintenance of effort issue continue to be part of our budget rationale. Wagner said that \$100,000, the potential LSTA funding loss, is a significant budget reduction. A question was asked about other state funding requirements for LSTA. Wagner said that there is also a state matching requirement and Nebraska is above the match requirement level. A question was asked about how the MOE is calculated. Wagner said that the most recent state expenditures (past fiscal year) are compared to those for the prior three years. The average is used to determine the MOE funding level. If the most recent year's state expenditures are below the three year average then the state has failed to meet the MOE requirement. Failure to meet the MOE leads to a proportional reduction in the state's LSTA allocation for the following fiscal year (in this case – FY 2012). Wagner said that the Commission could submit a deficiency appropriation request that would restore \$90,425 in state funding. This is the amount of the state funds reduction from last year's appropriation. The other possibility would be to also request funding for the digital talking book service and the cartridges, mailers and related expenses for those supplies. We have requested funds for those items before, without success. We've had to tap LSTA project funding and TBBS trust funds for these supply items. Those sources are not appropriate on an on-going basis. LSTA funding has also declined and may decline further this year and in future years. Rod said that the \$90,425 would be for the state-aid program and he didn't currently have a funding amount for the TBBS expenses. The amount could be as high as \$40,000.

John Dale stated that a motion is needed to submit a deficiency appropriation request to include \$90,425 for each of the two fiscal years and an additional \$40,000 for the talking book department. A motion was made and seconded to approve the deficiency appropriation request for those purposes. Motion carried on roll call vote: Charles Gordon – aye; Patricia Gross – aye; Sherry Crow – aye; Diane Boyd – aye; John Dale – aye. Motion approved.

Rod Wagner mentioned that the new federal fiscal year begins October 1 and, as expected, there is no action yet on appropriations for the fiscal year. As has been the practice for a number of years, Congress will enact short-term funding until funding for the full year is determined.

Out-of-State Travel Request – Rod Wagner said that there are a couple of meetings coming up in October that he requests approval to attend. These include a Chief Officers and State Library Agencies meeting beginning on October 23 in Santa Fe, NM, and followed by a Western Council of State Libraries meeting at the same location. Travel expenses will be covered by COSLA and the Western Council of State Libraries. A motion was made and seconded to approve the Out-of-State Travel Request. Motion carried on roll call vote: Patricia Gross – aye; Sherry Crow – aye; Diane Boyd – aye; John Dale – aye; Charles Gordon – aye. Motion approved.

November Meeting Date – Rod Wagner asked for consideration of a date change for the Commission’s November meeting. The Gates Foundation has invited state librarians to a meeting in Seattle, WA, on November 8 and 9. The meeting will take place the days prior to the scheduled Commission meeting on November 10. It was agreed by consensus that the Commission meeting be re-scheduled to take place a week earlier on Friday, November 4.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by John Dale at 11:42 a.m.

Mary Geibel, Secretary
