

## Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

Friday, March 18, 2022 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (CST)

### MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present: Jessica Chamberlain (Chair), Lisa Olivigni, Rachel Steiner, Dixie Codner, Michael Burris, Laura England-Biggs, Stephanie O'Connor, Lori Long. Via GoToWebinar: Allison Reisig, Cali Biaggi, Dave Graber, Gail Irwin, Joy Harvey, Lisa Irwin, Pat Gross, Sky Seery and Scott Childers. Commission Staff members present Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel, Christa Porter and Holli Duggan (via GoToWebinar).

#### Welcome and Introductions

Chair Jessica Chamberlain 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 November 18, 2021 minutes. Motion approved.

#### Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

#### Reports

##### Nebraska School Librarians Association

##### **Joy Harvey**

The NSLA has board elections coming up. The association is creating advocacy resources, especially regarding book challenges. A response was written in reply to newspaper articles and in regard to books read aloud at the Nebraska Board of Education meeting. The Nebraska Educational Technology Association meeting will be held for in-person attendance. NSLA always has a speaker, so there is always a library strand among sessions. This year's speaker is Amanda Jones. The NSLA sponsored speaker always turns out to be a really great learning opportunity for librarians. In conjunction with the Southeast Library System, NSLA offered School Librarians in the Digital Age Conference virtually in January. There were sessions that were attended for 30 minutes every day of the month.

##### Nebraska Library Association

##### **Holli Duggan**

The first board meeting of the year was on February 1. The NLA continues to have online Thursday chat sessions. Emily Nimsakont, NLA president, held a "What Can the NLA Do for You?" session in January. Staff from the Papillion Public Library gave a tour of their space in February. The March session was a community chat titled "What Are We Keeping: Silver

Linings from the Pandemic.” The NLA Advocacy Committee has been working with the NLA lobbyist to stay up-to-date and informed about the bills in the Nebraska legislature. Emily testified in opposition to LB1213 at the judiciary committee’s hearing, and Laura England-Biggs, NLA past-president, testified in support of LB1256 at its hearing. Annual conference planning is underway.

### Nebraska Library Commission

#### **Rod Wagner**

There were two carryover bills from the last session. LB75 relates to township libraries. A number of Nebraska counties (25) have township organization. Some counties have discontinued township organization. As more counties consider re-organization a process is needed for those with township libraries to determine actions regarding closing or continuing library services – placement under a village or city, or continued as a county funded entity. LB75 establishes a process for addressing library service decisions and actions. The bill has not had opposition. It is now on select file, advancing on a 45-0 vote. The bill should be among bills enacted by the end of the current session.

LB1213 relates to online resources available to K-12 students – educational resources that the Library Commission and schools license. The Library Commission’s licensing provides for statewide access. The databases provided through EBSCO are the primary target. EBSCO and other vendors that provide similar services have been targets in recent years with criticism that these resources can lead to students accessing “materials harmful to minors.” That claim is disputed. Senator Albright introduced the bill and it is her priority bill. LB1213 was amended following the legislature’s judiciary committee bill hearing and moved to general file. The amendment is a product of the judiciary committee staff. The committee staff did a good job addressing concerns that have been presented to it, including those of Library Commission staff and others. However, the amended bill didn’t address all concerns. Further recommendations for changes were presented in response to the amended bill. Senator Hilgers, Speaker of the Legislature, has told senators that there isn’t sufficient time remaining in the session for all priority bills to be considered. As such, LB1213 might not come up for debate and vote. The legislature has a number of significant issues remaining. The state budget is one as it includes over a billion dollars in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to allocate. The judiciary committee’s legal counsel has said that the committee is still working on changes to the bill and there would be an opportunity to provide further input. A question was asked if the bill affected public libraries as well as school libraries. That question was presented to the committee but there’s not been a response as yet. The bill does not mention public libraries. The Library Commission and schools providing access to online educational resources are the focus.

Wagner said that Commission staff – Devra Dragos, Susan Knisely, and Allana Novotny – prepared two documents in response to LB1213. One presented recommended changes and the second presented a bill re-write based on the proposed changes. Wagner said there is work underway to address concerns brought up by this legislation. There have been discussions with

EBSCO representatives about different configurations for accessing electronic resources for elementary, middle school, and high school. Currently, they are combined for all grade levels,

LB1256 is the Omaha Public Library board bill. The bill would replace library board appointments with library board elections. A bill hearing was held on February 14. There has been no action on the bill and there probably won't be this session. The bill doesn't have a priority designation. Rachel Steiner said she hasn't heard anything about the bill since the hearing. There was testimony at the hearing both in support and in opposition to the bill. Wagner said that Nebraska cities above 5,000 population have the option of governing or advisory library boards. Lincoln and Omaha have different statutory requirements apart from less populated cities. With the exception of Lincoln and Omaha, cities have the option of elected boards. There are none. Ralston once elected library board members but discontinued the arrangement.

LSTA Funding – Last week Congress appropriated funds for federal agencies and programs through the end of the federal fiscal year. The outcome is that the LSTA Grants to States program is funded at last fiscal year's appropriation level. Nebraska's allocation increased about \$50,000 due to reallocation of funds from other states that received reduced allocations resulting from not meeting state maintenance of effort requirements.

LSTA State Five-Year Program Evaluation – Council members participated in a discussion last November with consultant Sally Reed concerning the LSTA five-year program evaluation report. Wagner referred to the draft report document that Sally Reed provided and the section summarizing the advisory council's discussion. The evaluation report is important for state library agencies LSTA five-year plans. The five-year evaluation report is due March 30. Plans are due June 30.

One Book One Nebraska 2022 – Jonis Agee's book, *The Bones of Paradise*, is the 2022 One Book One Nebraska selection. Jonis is eager to make presentations. Jonis is on the Humanities Nebraska Speakers Bureau, helpful for libraries that wish to invite a presentation. Council members mentioned scheduling Jonis and book clubs that will be reading the book.

### **Christa Porter**

Of the \$2.42 million that the NLC was allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), \$1.4 million of our funding was allocated to provide a direct payment to all legally established libraries, tribal libraries, and institutional libraries in Nebraska – Formula Grants. 235 applications were submitted and approved, for \$1,304,788, which is 85% of the libraries we that were eligible. In spite of the efforts of myself, Sam Shaw, and the Regional Library System Directors, not every library who was eligible to receive these funds requested them. The funding has been disbursed to all libraries who applied.

ARPA funding is also being used for the regular NLC Youth Grants for Excellence and Library Improvement Grants. We approved 79 Library Improvement Grant applications for a total of \$299,972 and 78 Youth Grant applications for a total of \$115,466.

Because not all of the libraries that were eligible applied for their Formula Grants, there is approximately \$120,000 left to spend. The remainder of the funding will be used for:

- Kreutz Bennett Donor-Advised Fund – run through the Nebraska Community Foundation for public libraries in communities of 3,000 population or less. This is the last year of this grant, as the funds will be used up on the last batch of applications. They received more requests than they have funding left, so \$50,000 of the NLC ARPA funds will be used to cover the grants Kreutz Bennett cannot, that are not construction related (a restriction of the ARPA IMLS funding). As a result, all applications will be funded.
- \$65,000 additional funding will be allocated to Youth and Library Improvement Grants that we were unable to fully fund, due to receiving more grant applications than we had funding for.
- \$5,000 – additional book club purchases – for additional copies and to replace older copies.

NLC Grants – The NLC received 35 Internship Grant applications and approved all of them for \$34,040. The CE and Training Grants closed on March 1 and we are funding all 19 applications for \$32,186. Many of these will be for attending conferences – MPLA, ARSL, ALA, MPLA. Some are for cataloging, Library sign language, and Spanish courses. One library will subscribe to the Niche Academy.

NCompass Live and Basic Skills classes are going strong with increased attendance for both. NCompass Live shows are every Wednesday morning. Basic Skills classes are virtual courses for library staff who have not gone to receive their master’s degree, or gone to college or university for library courses or just don’t have that opportunity.

Holli Duggan commented that the last few classes we had, we’ve had 80 people registered. The plan is to make them more accessible throughout the year, instead of just once a year. Porter added that there would be more of the self-passed classes, so people can take them when it is more convenient for them, not just when we are offering them.

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual Big Talk From Small Libraries was held on February 25 and was a huge success – with presenters and attendees from all across the country. There were 636 pre-registrations and 371 logins throughout the day – the usual attendance. All of our presenters are from libraries with population served or FTE of 10,000 or less. We are co-sponsored by the Association for Rural and Small Libraries - there is no monetary co-sponsoring, just helping to promote the conference. The 8 hour recording will be edited into the individual sessions and uploaded to YouTube for the conference archives. The next conference will be on February 24, 2023.

## **Council Discussion Topics**

### Nebraska Libraries and the Impact of Book and Content Challenges

Council member experiences and comments:

- Library board member challenge of a children’s book. Book challenged based on view that the book “was grooming children.” Helpful advice from the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom in responding to the challenge. Placement of children’s books within the library collection is a needed consideration. Parents need to be familiar with books before sharing

the book with children. Conversation with the individual who challenged the book was helpful.

- People challenging books may be connected with parent organizations that are receiving information from national organizations. These organizations are specifying particular books for challenges.
- Challenges can lead to conversations to explain how and why books are selected.
- A great asset is a board member, board members, who are well informed and supportive of intellectual freedom.
- Policies and procedures are a must for responding to book challenges. Board involvement is important to having shared responsibility for decisions on challenges.
- Another policy and procedure example was challenges that begin and end with the library director. The director’s decision can be appealed to the board.
- Policy revamped to go beyond books to also include displays, bulletin boards, posters, and programs.
- Policy also covers challenges for items excluded.
- Most challenges are addressed through conversation. Challenges rarely go beyond this initial discussion.
- A more recent challenge is misplaced items.
- We encourage staff to embrace gender. Staff are welcome to wear pins if they choose with pronoun choices.
- A school superintendent asked about the school library’s book collection and whether certain books were in the collection (those being challenged in other locations). There were some. This also prompted a review of collection management policies for revision consideration. Concerns about school board elections and new members’ views on library materials.
- There has been a definite increase in the number of questions coming in from parents, but few formal book challenges.
- A lot of parents come to school board meetings and complain about books for one reason or another, but they never actually go through the process of filling out a form for consideration.
- The most recent change is that parents can request that their children not check out a particular title.
- It’s fascinating to talk about what is excluded. I also think that as we listen to the voices of these parents, they do get riled up with these organizations, but if we get down to it, they really do care about their kids and maybe there is something that they think is excluded that we should have included in our library. All things to keep in mind.
- At the college level, most comments are about displays and most are from the faculty.
- Over many decades at the library there was only one time a person complained about a book and who filled out the paperwork. Recently a former librarian came to the library with a list of books and asked if they were in the collection. The books were related to gender subjects. The library had one of the books. There was discussion and no action followed.
- The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom weekly newsletter was mentioned as a source for news and information with links to articles and other items. The list has grown significantly over the past year.

- Other organizations noted – Freedom to Read Foundation, Texas Library Association, National Coalition Against Censorship, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council for Social Studies, etc.
- Recent programs regarding intellectual freedom were mentioned – Nebraska School Librarians Association, Nebraska Library Association, Southeast Library System . The Library Commission – among others – has a web page with intellectual freedom resources and links.
- “The Battle for the Soul of the Library” article was brought up with comments about libraries and neutrality. Similar issues come up regarding news organizations and journalists. Trust is questioned.
- In conversations with patrons, let them know the basis for judging book challenges and book inclusions – “this is why we buy things and this why we get rid of things.” Once they understand how decisions are made – these are the criteria – they will either talk about the criteria or they will go away. They don’t talk about a specific book anymore. We make sure what we do is consistent, so they know that’s how they can trust us.
- How to define neutrality? Neutrality means different things to different people. It’s like your staff saying we are not neutral, what do they mean by that? We’re not neutral because of the things we provide for people or the programming we provide or who we are as individual professionals, or what makes us not neutral? Meaning, “If I’m going to create and display every month, it’s going to be about things that I value not on what the community necessarily wants but what I think the community needs.”
- There is a place for education and learning and showing all sides and all the things, so we can get to either validate our viewpoint or learning change and adjust our viewpoints.
- If patrons feel that public libraries are pushing a certain agenda then they are going to stop coming.
- If the book shows up on the best seller list, we buy it, no matter if we love it or hate it or don’t care. In that way, we try to not pick and choose, especially with political books, unless it’s a best seller, we don’t get it. We do honor requests for other materials.
- We support what people want to read about.
- It’s not always what we’re doing, it’s how they are perceived, because people don’t use our library. They get lists from national groups and that’s the first time they come into our library.
- You might read something, and you have an internal filter yourself and if something is not comfortable for you or doesn’t seem right to you and you feel it in your heart and or stomach you feel it in your brain and if there is something here that says, my grandma wouldn’t want me to read this book and you feel uncomfortable with it, then you just bring it back. You don’t have to show it to your friends it just means it’s not right for you at this moment, but it doesn’t mean it’s not right for somebody else. It may be not right for you in a year, in a month or tomorrow, but it isn’t your place to say, something doesn’t belong here, it just doesn’t fit me right now.
- Consideration for invisible communities, invisible patrons. There are people in communities that we don’t know are there and that could benefit from seeing particular titles that the

majority of the community that we know about may or may not approve of. Collection development is responding to what the community wants, but there is going to be some people that we are not aware of and we want something for them or something for the major community who may be interested in that topic, or want to learn more because they heard about it.

- We always have to think about windows and mirrors. We want that mirror to our community, but we also want our window open to our community. The idea of providing windows, they don't have to be in our community to have materials about that person or faith or lifestyle or country or life experience.
- We're doing a survey and one of the questions asks what's your gender and the people designing the survey, put male, female or other. One staff member said they need to take that question out, that's not relevant. The question was left in, but changed to ask – male, female, or non-binary. It's not going to say other. We need to have that included because there is a non-binary community. If they are brave enough to mark it. There is an increasing LGBTQIA comfort coming out for some people, maybe not the whole community.

### **Issues and Ideas for the Next LSTA State Program Five-Year Plan**

- Wagner thanked council members for meeting with Sally Reed and participating in the discussion with Sally regarding the LSTA state program five-year evaluation. Council member comments are useful for work on the next LSTA state program five-year plan. Wagner said that the Library Commission's plan includes federal and state funded programs and services. Many activities are funded with a combination of state and federal funds. Council members were asked if there are things to consider as part of the next five-year plan – things not currently being done that could be included. Training was noted as a broad based need for workers in all types of libraries.
- Wagner said that he and Christa Porter were not present for the discussion with Sally Reed. Rod asked if those participating in the session with Sally Reed found it worthwhile. A response was that it was beneficial and it was an easy conversation. Reed asked great questions.

### **Council Round Table: Successes and Challenges**

- **Cali Biaggi** said that a success will turn into a challenge in the fall. Two of three librarians have been asked to teach sections of CCC's first year experience course. This is great but will "add a lot to our plate that we haven't had before."
- **Scott Childers** said that a success is the Southeast Library System's annual Extravaganza. Scott said that a challenge is that library boards lack knowledge about accreditation, and mainly because the library director did all the accreditation work. Re-education is needed with a new library director and board. Scott said that SELS is contributing \$50 to each library that schedules Jonis Agee for a presentation through Humanities Nebraska Speaker Bureau. Humanities Nebraska will bill SELS directly. This will eliminate any cost to the library.

- **Allie Reisig** said that one of the great things that’s happening now is our new dean. The new dean doesn’t have a lot of library experience and is trusting us to do our job and is giving us space to do that. The other librarian on staff is doing a lot of outreach work with students, faculty, and staff with some fun and engaging programming as opposed to just all information literacy instruction. The library will participate in summer reading to do some outreach with staff and faculty – showing them what we do and having a scavenger hunt so they can go through the library website and learn more about our resources. Challenges are time and money – there never is enough of either. The library continues to face staffing issues, working with limited evening hours due to lack of funding for staff.
- **Sky Seery** said a North Platte public library success is the summer reading program. The library’s new children’s librarian is Ann Price. Ann is making changes in the children’s room and the library is experiencing a lot of new engagement. STEM programming is getting a positive response from the community. Ann has also gone out into the community to seek donations with a receptive response. Summer program will also involve young adult and adult programming. Sky said that challenges include staffing and, as discussed earlier, an uptick in reconsideration forms.
- **Pat Gross** began with a positive. Pat said that many of the Panhandle region children’s librarians and directors got together for summer reading program workshops. They are making plans and preparing for their summer programs. Another positive is that Jonis Agee, One Book One Nebraska author, will visit Scottsbluff and Gering libraries. The libraries are co-sponsoring Jonis for a visit on August 25. Book club participants are looking forward to seeing her and many are planning to read her book. Challenges are two vacant library director positions – Lied Scottsbluff Public Library and Gering Public Library. Diane Downer (Gering PL) is retiring. The Scottsbluff position is currently vacant. The libraries are five miles apart. In regard to the LSTA state program evaluation, Pat said she likes everything that we have and uses them as a patron. As for the five-year plan, the new ideas, Pat said she will try to think of some new things to add.
- **Lisa Irwin** said that in regard to YRTC Kearney & West Kearney High School – we have a nice library, even though it needs a facelift. Lisa said that a success is that Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER) funds are coming, which means a lot of new technology. Among the four DHHS facilities, they will get interactive display panels. Lisa will get one large display panel that will lay down flat so kids can do such things as coding, interactive applications, a zSpace virtual reality, 3D interactive software, etc. There are efforts toward a Career and Technical Education program, which is currently lacking. The intent is to build a CTE program with zSpace for application toward programming for welding and more. Other new technology will include an OWL conferencing camera for meetings, not just for students, there are many adult meetings that happen at the facility in the evenings and during school breaks.
- A challenge is the need for a building facelift. The library needs new carpeting. Another challenge is a need to decide what periodicals to get for the library. Lots of money is spent on



periodicals and the kids are not picking them up. Lisa said the will problem solve periodical choices to decide on periodicals that kids will pick up.

- **Gail Irwin** said that a success was Read Across America Day. The library held a Dr. Seuss hour with great and enthusiastic attendance for all ages. Another success came about as a result of a former library board member who raised over \$650 from a Facebook post for Giving Tuesday. The library's challenge is purchasing items with the ARPA grant funds. Items that were listed in the grant application have been discontinued or are back-ordered. Costs have also increased. Gail said that they are very happy with what they have received so far.
- **Stephanie O'Connor** said that an on-going challenge is the library's HVAC system repair project. The cost will be about \$1 million. A challenge is planning for and financing of a project for use of the unfinished 4,000 square feet in the library's basement for children's services. Additional staff will be needed for this area. The Western Library System's summer reading program workshop was held at the Alliance library with a great turnout. Stephanie said that she was fortunate to receive financial assistance toward completing her Master's in Library Science from the University of Missouri. Stephanie will complete degree requirements in May.
- **Lori Long** said she is completing her 12<sup>th</sup> year as the junior/senior high school librarian and teaching a nine-week rotation for 7<sup>th</sup> grade. A success and challenge is revamping the curriculum. Another success is having kids who like shelving books and having their help with that activity. Lori said that she is working on finishing out the budget year, and working with another staff member who is working on her endorsement. Lori is involving her in some of the budget conversations and processes to give her some experience in that area.
- **Jessica Chamberlain** said a recent challenge is a First Amendment audit. Jessica had read about First Amendment audits in *Library Journal*. The individual came around with a camera, filmed staff and walked into staff areas trying to create provocation enough for us to call the police. Unfortunately, Jessica said, she completely misread the situation. The person was completely non-verbal with library staff. He won't speak or respond or look at us or anything. We have a large population of folks who use our library who have developmental disabilities, so I thought this person was non-verbal or had autism perhaps or some other need. I was worried and concerned with his welfare and did end up calling the police to find out if he was missing or someone was looking for him. In the end, I gave him exactly what he wanted – a chance to encounter the police and have more opportunities to film and post on his YouTube channel. Things were fine and staff was nothing but sweet and kind to him, it was just interesting. Jessica said that most first amendment auditors will respect boundaries and only go into areas that aren't labeled. A few weeks ago, after learning about this, I had actually relabeled all our staff areas which were very clear, but he still pushed that boundary by coming in. We all felt that we had our privacy invaded and we were all worried we were going to show up on YouTube. You never know if someone will cut the video and make you

look and not show what really happened. He's known to the police officers who encountered him and he's been arrested numerous times before. He is from Omaha. He does this sort of thing all around the country.

- Jessica said that a success is the library surpassing its \$1 million endowment mark. The library foundation is shifting gears from earning money to spending money. The library is doing public art projects with financial support from the foundation. Jessica said that it's been fun to have the foundation active and involved in some new projects.
- **Lisa Olivigni** said a challenge is replacing LCL's bookmobile and purchasing a vehicle that is clean energy and efficient. Much research and weighing of needs and options have gone into planning for a new vehicle. Lisa said that a success is a new branch library at the Williams location. The library will be attached to the recreation center and will have more hours open to the public. The new facility will be more flexible and provide more opportunities to reach more of the community.
- **Rachel Steiner** said that for Omaha Public Library success and challenge echo each other. The city is recognizing OPL's need for facilities. Facility studies have been done twice in the past twelve years. Continuing issues with HVAC systems have been a problem. A success is that facility needs are being recognized and addressed. There are now numerous meetings with architects and facility planners. The main library downtown is closing and will be replaced with a downtown branch. The branch will be about 40,000 sq. ft. compared to the current main library with 120,000 sq. ft. The administration, genealogy, and local history departments will be relocated to the mid-town area. Rachel said that as they anticipate and wait for a new central library to be built, they will be doing all these kinds of designs and moves simultaneously.
- **Dixie Codner** said that a success was receiving Covid funds. Funds were used to buy flex-screens. The screens are light weight and moveable, making it easy to create individual study spaces for students. Another success is increasing numbers of students returning to the library. Dixie said that Jonis Agee will be coming to the library to speak to their book club.
- **Michael Burris** said that the Holdrege library's continuing challenge is work toward a new library building. The library's 6500 sq. ft. facility is full. Michael said that the library board has taken a step back and is now raising funds with a goal of \$8 to \$10 million with the intent of defining a project that can be carried out with that range of funding. Conversations have revealed that even those who objected to earlier plans recognize the need for a new building. The objection concerned location and the size of the proposed building. Another challenge is staffing with some internal staff changes made following retirement of a long-time staff member. The library's new circulation manager is "one of those irritatingly energetic people who has taken over adult programming which is a fantastic fit." Some new programming involving small events that are not necessarily book related is bringing people into the library. Michael said that they want people in the library and they want them to enjoy themselves. This has proven to be very good and "we're very excited."

- **Laura England-Biggs** said that fundraising for the library expansion project is one of the Fremont library’s successes with \$7.2 million raised out of \$9.4 needed. Successes include programming in Fremont’s elementary schools. Laura said that Jonis Agee will be at the library on May 24 for a presentation. A challenge and success involved someone stealing music CDs. Why? The person couldn’t get a library card since they are at a homeless shelter. There have been problems with getting items returned from the shelter. People leave the shelter and don’t return items. The theft led to security changes and actions that resolved this particular problem. Other challenges are staffing needs and spending ARPA funds. While fundraising is going well the budget requires some compromises. An additional challenge is planning, scheduling, and arrangements for the temporary move to the city auditorium to allow for the expansion project to begin.

## **New Business**

### Recommendations and Resolutions

There were no recommendations or resolutions brought before the Council.

Jessica Chamberlin asked the board if anyone would like to make recommendations regarding LB1213 via email.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

### Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting date will be Friday, July 15 (location TBD).