

## **Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries**

Friday, July 21, 2023 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (CST)

### **MINUTES**

State Advisory Council members present via GoToWebinar: Michael Straatmann (Chair), Mike Burris, Laura England-Biggs, Jessica Chamberlain, David Graber, Tammy Thiem, Mandy Peterson, Callie Biaggi, Allison Reisig, Pat Gross, Rachel Steiner, Celine Swan, Holli Duggan, Gail Irwin, Jennifer Norton

Commission staff members present Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel, Christa Porter (via GoToWebinar).

#### **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. No additional agenda items were added. Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 2023 minutes. Motion approved.

#### **Public Comment:**

There were no public comments.

#### **Reports**

##### Nebraska School Librarians Association

##### **Joy Harvey**

New Board Members – President: Chris Haeffner, President: Kelly Kenny, President-Elect: Jeralynn Moser, Secretary: Colleen Nieland, Secretary, Treasurer: Beth Wilson, Executive Secretary: Anna Peterson.

Scholarship deadline was July 1. The following scholarships are offered from NSLA: Continuing Ed Scholarship (\$800); NSLA Workshop/Conference (\$150); NSLA presenter at national conference (\$200); Praxis scholarships; National conference first time attendee (\$1,000).

Future Ready Conference was June 12-13, 2023. The library speaker was Tom Bober. He is a school librarian, 2018 Library Journal Mover and Shaker, former Teacher in Residence at the Library of Congress, and author of Elementary Educator's Guide to Primary Sources; Strategies for Teaching. He writes the Picture Book and Primary Sources blog posts for AASL's KQ blog and hosts The Primary Source Podcast. Tom works with students and educators to promote the use of primary sources in student learning.

NSLA will be meeting July 20 to plan for the upcoming school year.

Nebraska Library Association

**Holli Duggan**

Spring meetings were in April and May. At the end of May, we had a summer reading crash course event online. I think it actually worked really well and we had a few student speakers from UNO and they did awesome. We will try to do this again, just earlier in the year. Amy Dissmeyer, from Hastings volunteered to be our auditing committee chair, so we have one this year, which is great. We are just trying to plan some things for this fall, otherwise things are going well.

Michael Straatmann asked about events in the absence of a fall conference. Plans for a November Nebraska Library Week are being discussed, including events across the state and help celebrate Nebraska libraries. Since we have Advocacy Day in March, we didn't want it as a repeat, we just want it to be more of a celebration of what Nebraska libraries do. We are trying to come up with some events and easy ways to get libraries involved that week. Also, have some social events too. We also talked about having a virtual mid-winter kind of conference. We don't have many plans yet, so if you have ideas, please send them her way. That would be more of continuing education focus than Nebraska library week would be. For the next Advocacy day in February or March, maybe trying to restructure that day a little. Last year, we had a lot of senators come in, which was great for the lunch, but we're trying to make it worth more for people to travel and attend on that day and maybe bring some education pieces into the afternoon.

Nebraska Library Commission

**Rod Wagner**

Rod thanked Joy for sending Nebraska School Librarians Association (NSLA) activities and Holli for a Nebraska Library Association (NLA) report. There was a lot of state legislative activity following the March council meeting. The Library Commission came out okay in terms of state appropriations for the current biennium that started on July 1. The governor's recommendations and the legislature's appropriations committee recommendations for the Library Commission's budget were similar. The Commission's state funding increased by about 4 ½% for the first year biennium and a bit over 3% for the second year, which is in the range of the overall state budget appropriation increases. State funding increased for State Aid to Public Libraries, Regional Library Systems, database subscriptions, and for Overdrive libraries (the 190+ Overdrive libraries consortium plus Lincoln, Omaha, and Ralston libraries). There were several legislative bills to note specifically: LB441, which concerns the removal of protections for teachers and librarians from prosecution relating to obscene materials being available to K12 students, and LB635, which concerns databases that are provided by the Library Commission, schools, and libraries for educational use that may provide access to obscene materials. Those bills did not move out of committee. LB635 is sitting in the Education Committee and LB441 is in the Judiciary Committee. These bills carry over to the 2024 session, which is the 60-day short session beginning in January. New bills will be introduced early in the 2024 session and may

include legislation involving libraries.

The Nebraska Center for the Book Celebration of Nebraska Books event will be held in Lincoln on October 14. This event includes the presentation of Nebraska Book Awards for fiction, non-fiction, children-young adult, book design, and poetry. Wagner said that it is a fun event to spend a Saturday afternoon to hear the award-winning authors. Many award winners are able to be present to receive their award and offer comments. There are two other awards presented – Jane Geske award (to an organization) and Mildred Bennet award (to an individual). The event also includes announcement of the 2024 One Book One Nebraska selection.

Andrew Sherman recently sent information about a new service that will be offered to public libraries for internet filtering and cybersecurity.

### **Christa Porter**

The Regional Library Systems have events, workshops and activities things going on. The Central Plains Library System is hosting their first biennial conference in the fall. CPLS is planning a full day conference in between the years when the Nebraska Library Association isn't holding an in-person conference. The Association of Rural and Small Libraries annual conference is September 23 in Wichita, KS. The NLC provided 32 continuing education grants to support ARSL conference attendance. Grant amounts are \$500 toward conference expenses. I believe we ended up with 31 library staff and one board member.

Public library accreditation opened on July 1. There are 40 libraries up for reaccreditation and 44 unaccredited libraries invited to apply. Two libraries were given extensions for another year. Columbus Public Library and Lincoln City Libraries were up for reaccreditation this year, but both have new directors, so they both moved to 2024. Crawford Public Library's director recently resigned at the end of June, so an extension to 2024 was given to this library. The first approved reaccreditation is Kearney Public Library, a gold level through 2028. Accreditation is now for a five-year period. This change was made last year. With the pandemic, it bumped libraries into waiting that long anyway.

As of yesterday, the most recent wave of E-rate funding commitment letters went out. It's the 13<sup>th</sup> wave and there are 64 out of 67 library applications that have been funded with \$262,211 in discounts for public libraries for internet service and related equipment. Three public libraries have been approved for fiber special construction E-rate discounts, using state matching funds from the Nebraska Public Service Commission. This is a program E-rate has to match state funds. The three libraries receiving approval for fiber special construction funding support are Gibbon, North Loup and Wausa.

The Public Service Commission funds came about as a result of the recommendations from the State Broadband Task Force that was put together in 2019-2020. A million dollar fund was budgeted for the program and available for schools and public libraries. Most Nebraska schools are connected through Network Nebraska. This program is specifically for new fiber, not upgrading for something faster. This is the third year of the program. Fiber isn't as expensive as predicted. There are fewer libraries and schools requesting program funds than predicted. The

Public Service Commission has issued an order to change the program and expand it, to extend beyond 2024, and potentially help pay to cover more of the fiber construction cost or completely cover it all, so the full cost would be paid without cost to the library. Some of the smallest libraries have no fiber. Even with a substantial discount amount, the cost is still too much. Some libraries that have gone through the process of investigating fiber installation have found that monthly recurring internet service costs are too expensive given their budgets. Porter said that the PSC will meet in August to consider changes to the special fiber construction fund. Porter predicted that changes will be approved. Funds are available and sufficient to make a significant difference in supporting libraries with high-speed internet connections.

The Library Commission is working with Nebraska's new state broadband office. Patrick Redmond is the interim director. New initiatives and funding will make a significant difference in improving library broadband services. Porter said that with Andrew Sherman's work to provide a filtering option for libraries, that this will help a lot to support libraries that lack fiber connections.

Wagner expressed appreciation and thanks to the Nebraska Library Association and the Nebraska School Librarian Association for leadership and involvement and their good work during the state legislative session continuing forward to the next session. Thanks to our colleagues in those associations.

### **Council Discussion Topics**

#### **Current and Emerging Library Service Trends**

**Dave Graber** – The Wayne State College library staff is looking for solutions for this generation of students who seem uncomfortable walking up to a service desk, but may be more comfortable doing a research discussion or interview in a more private setting (which often means a librarian's office). There is a software tool that historically has been used more by tutoring centers, called WC Online. WSC's tutoring center is partnering with the library to purchase this software, which isn't expensive. Graber said there are a fair number of libraries already using it. Installation is expected next week and in time for the start of next semester classes. The library is moving away from having a librarian or staff member sit at a desk waiting for questions. The tutoring center is experiencing the same things. The tutors sit and wait for questions that don't come. This generation is willing to do more things electronically. Whether scheduling software is used to set up a Zoom session, a phone call, a chat session, or a face-to-face session, it gives the students a way to use their phones to meet their research needs or just to get answers to basic questions.

**Cali Biaggi** – Cali commented that Doane University's tutoring center is starting to use WC Online, but haven't spoken to them about partnering because the library uses LibGuides, a SpringShare product.

**Allison Reisig** – Western Nebraska Community College uses LibCal - a one-stop interface for students to schedule with staff members. It's reasonably priced for a college WNCC's size, Allie said that they find that students are far more willing to chat, using LibAnswers through

SpringShare, than they are to walk up and ask a question or use the texting service. Those resources are available and they do get used.

**Dave Graber** commented that Allison hit on one of the key reasons that WSC is partnering. There is a desire to have one interface for every office. Dave said that they didn't care whether it was a LibGuide product or WC Online, students already have many interfaces to interact with and if you can provide help, whether it's a financial aid question or a tutoring question, a library question through a common interface, it makes it a lot easier for the students. Even as tech savvy as they are, they can only handle so many different ones.

**Jessica Chamberlain** commented that coming from a public library, they have been trying to re-evaluate how they do digital literacy and computer classes. It used to be that computer classes would be full and there would be a wait list and now nobody is coming. Staff is responding to what people ask for and looking at what is our tech tutoring and what kind of questions are they asking and building classes around that. The library is not getting the attendance that they previously did. One of the broadband meetings that was held at the Norfolk library came up with the idea that we are not just case learners anymore, we're not building skills because we might need them, we are just-in-time learners. We are trying to respond better to just-in-time learners. We have a tech-tutoring program where you can schedule an appointment, but even that gets little usage. People come in and want a one-on-one class and attention to do the thing they need to do. One thing we're trying to get an audience for in our computer classes is reaching out to the non-profit organizations in the area to let them know that the library can provide a class for their clients that are in vocational rehab or are in a substance abuse treatment facility or live in a residential program and working on job skills. The library can also provide a class to help them update a resume. Library staff have been working with Women's Empowering Lifeline for a whole month-long series of classes. When completed, participants asked about doing it again, so we used them as our beta group and rolled that out to some other organizations.

**Michael Straatmann** brought up reducing financial burden of users - fines and fees. He asked if anyone else is still doing fines or reducing fees or things.

**Rachel Steiner** mentioned that Omaha Public Library has done away with fines since 2021. The change has been beneficial. Rachel added that a decision was made this year to not charge people for minor damage as well.

**David Graber** mentioned Wayne State College library discontinued fines a decade ago and never considered going back. Dave said that occasionally there are charges for damaged books, but it's on a case-by-case basis and it's not a formal policy.

**Michael Burris** commented that the Holdrege library joined the fine-free club a little over a year ago and the number of overdues has increased. There has been an increase in the library's postage costs to send overdue letters. How often do you contact patrons about this?

**David Graber** commented that their notices are electronic.

**Rachel Steiner** mentioned that they implemented auto-renew before changing to fine-free. That has been a good change. Patrons can have books for nine weeks, then an email is sent with all notices. If needed a paper final notice is sent.

**Laura England-Biggs** said that the Fremont library has three auto-renews. An item or items can be held for up to twelve weeks. The library sends from 20-90 emails a day, with auto-renewals and reminders. On a busy day, there may be as many as ten paper final notices.

**Michael Burris** said that he has two to three times the volume of mail going out and the cost is not sustainable. Michael thanked others for sharing their practices.

**Gail Irwin** said that patrons respond to texts or emails better and the library's system sends out reminders automatically.

### Council Round Table – Successes and Challenges

**Rachel Steiner** – the library's success, a significant one, is opening of the new downtown branch replacing the former W. Dale Clark Library. The Omaha Public Library's biggest challenge in the last two months is book challenges, complaints about displays and booklists. The library has a program called the Reading Challenge, a year long activity that encourages people to read different genres of books or specific topics of books throughout the year. In the month of June, people were encouraged to read a book about LBGTQ. A few parents thought that this was a requirement for the Summer Reading Program, so they were upset that we were making children read about this genre, which was a misunderstanding.

**Dave Graber** – WSC's success was the WC Online that was discussed earlier. A challenge is thinking a lot about AI and ChatGPT, the new Bing which is even better, and has the ability to provide answers for, but from a college librarian's perspective and from somebody who teaches a college history class and who still really, really believes in the value of reading monographs. It gives students a shortcut and ChatGPT is perfectly capable of summarizing the contents of a monograph and this worries me as a trend.

**Allison Reisig** – This could be a success or a challenge – WNCC's new president started Monday. New leadership presents questions about changes that may be coming. Another success or challenge is renovation of classroom spaces and the student commons. With the renovation, a good portion of the main building will be blocked off, so there will be some interesting paths to get to classrooms as well as restrooms. A success is, increasing weekend service hours.

**Mandy Peterson** – Coming from a small school library, my success is for the first time since I started three years ago. I've been able to sit down with the library assistant and my administration and we have made a plan for each month for programming for the school library to serve kids from preschool all the way through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We've done a lot of focusing on our elementary students, since their school library is also their public library with the same space and collection, just a slightly different staff. One of our challenges is increased publishing costs. The school district doesn't want to use Amazon for book purchasing. The school has used Amazon because we're very small and it's less expensive. We now purchase through vendors like

Mackin, which is more expensive and wait times are significantly longer for delivery. Mandy said she is gathering more information for the school board about purchasing and inform them that the school must meet Department of Education rules that require purchase of 450 new titles per year. The library's \$4,000 budget is not enough to meet that requirement.

**Jessica Chamberlain** – said that both of the library's catalogers resigned. In good news, the library had a patron leave a bequest in her will that will make a great impact on what the library foundation is able to allocate to the library annually.

**Cali Biaggi** – said that a success and a challenge is that the new Doane University president presented a challenge to build a library of the future. Doane is soon to begin a major fundraising campaign. The president is talking with donors about the library and wanting innovation that will excite donors to support the library. While a challenge, this is also a success because the president wants to support the library. The challenge is not having much direction. Calli said that is the basis for asking about VR, AR, and AI. Additionally, the library is down to two librarians and one staff support position.

**Celine Swan** – The Grand Island public library's success is seeing our library to grow again with more people coming in. Celine said that she had talked about the police substation during the last council meeting. She has worked with an ad hoc community group. This resulted in a name change and the substation is now the Grand Island Community Connection Center. It has opened up many good conversations about mental health, and underserved and homeless populations. Being busier and having partnerships and more people come in raises a challenge for our staff that are busy and morale can be a bit low at times. Celine said the library is also experiencing a challenge with its older technology. Grants helped the library purchase some new technology, but there are things needed with the city IT to be cyber safe – updating cameras and phone system. It's not just for the library, but also for the other departments.

**Gail Irwin** – no book challenges, so that's good. The library's summer reading program is going well. We did a chalk festival outside, and an obstacle course with chalk. The library had a music program this year. Another activity involved children making items for the nursing home, assisted living center, and the senior center with great and appreciative response. Gail said the library did its first ever Touch-A-Truck event, which went over really well. The library budget has been prepared for the budget hearing in August. As for challenges, the library had hail damage which required roof and rain gutters replacement. Even more is the difficulty of getting service for repair needs.

**Pat Gross** – thanked all of the SACL members willing to change according to all patrons and students, and for all the hard work out in the library world. Pat said she is glad not to have to deal with artificial intelligence.

Pat said she does a lot of volunteer work, usually for the summer reading program, so wants to brag a bit about libraries out here in the Nebraska Panhandle. The librarians in the region work hard to encourage students to have summer activities and they have a lot of programming. June 6<sup>th</sup> was the registration for the Lied Scottsbluff Public Library. Pat credited Deb Carlson, Scottsbluff library's children's librarian, for her efforts. The library has 1,850 students registered and 239 teens. Pat credited Elaine Bleisch, the teen librarian for her work with that age group.

Pat said that Gering has also provided a wonderful program for summer reading and there might be some overlap with students. The teen advisory council in Scottsbluff is planning a book trip to go on a book buying spree to Fort Collins, CO. Scottsbluff has a new library director – Richard Landreth. He hit the ground running in the beginning of summer reading. The community is really receptive of him. He came from Kimmer, WY. He was the director at the Lincoln County Library System. The Western Library System is getting ready for its annual meeting on August 11. Pat said that is looking forward to going and representing the state advisory council. The challenge in the area is related to building. The Gering Public Library is trying hard to acquire a new building. They can't expand because of physical space restraints adjacent to the building. Community members are working on fundraising.

**Jennifer Norton** – commented on the success of the library's summer reading program. Jennifer said that she and another staff member each did summer reading programs at the middle school for four weeks, Monday through Thursday teaching middle school students. The summer reading program will wrap up on August 4 with a community street dance and potluck with a DJ and outdoor games. Lexington was one of two libraries that received an ALA Community Engagement grant. Lexington's grant was in conjunction with Lexington's and surrounding areas Communities for Kids organization. Included is a work center where childcare providers can come to and work and receive supplies for free or at a reduced cost. With that, the library also bought a heat press and story time kits that will be delivered to daycare providers in the area. Looking forward to the school year, the library will start a teen book club and also resume the middle school book club, as well as all the other book clubs and story times and after school programs that is part of the library's repertoire.

**Tammi Thiem** – I hear, "hey Tammi, I've got a question," Tammi said it's a success because people realize they can reach out, which is good and it happens a lot. Tammi will be teaching an Introduction to Library class at UNO this fall and felt honored to be asked. Tammi said the class will help her in her regional director position knowing what librarian's need to know. Some challenges – it seems when some librarians move, quit, or die in these small towns it is hard to replace them because they are usually part-time jobs with low wages.

**Michael Burris** – Michael said that he previously talked about getting an auditor to certify the library's finances. An auditor was finally found. Michael said that a local internet service provider is installing fiber connections throughout the community. This will allow the library to use library funds to replace all its interior infrastructure. Library programming attendance is up and with standing room only in the majority of the library for a recent event. Michael said that a success is that attendance has gone up by at least 50% in adult programming. The library will continue to build on these successes providing programming popular with the community. The library's biggest challenge is replacing older computers, computers that have experienced significant failure rates. The library board has agreed to purchase of new technology of better quality and with a longer useful life.

**Laura England-Biggs** – the Fremont library's most significant success is its renovated and expanded library that is now about 70-75% complete. Laura said the masonry is gorgeous. The masons found the same quarry that did the limestone for the original building. It's been open since 1897, it's still in existence, and they still had the same batch available. The match is



incredible and the inside is coming along nicely. We hope to move in November if all the shelving gets in on time, then reopen in January. Challenges include people with concerns about the library's materials and the LGBTQ content. The library created a restricted card for children that would have them check out from the children's collection only, or a teen card for juvenile and YA only, no adult materials. It's an opt-in card; it's not applied to all children. Parents have to come in and say, I want my kid restricted, which I keep telling them, they have the right to talk to their child and explain to them they don't like what their checking out, but that's not good enough. I don't act as a parent, that's just not my role. A challenge is staffing with a staff member soon to be away for family leave. Fortunately, the library has good staff to step in for coverage during a staff member absence.

**Michael Straatmann** - A new challenge comes with a new chancellor, Rodney Bennett. Michael said it will be interesting to see what new leadership brings to UNL. Liz Lorgang, one of the library's associate deans, will serve as interim dean of libraries following Claire Stewart's departure to Illinois. Michael said a significant challenge for UNL is a budget shortfall. Rising costs and flat enrollment have contributed to a \$50 million shortfall across the University of Nebraska system. Therefore, for UNL libraries, that means a return of vertical cuts; hopefully, libraries will avoid many of those. For libraries specifically, that means a hiring freeze. If the library is not actively conducting an interview, we are asked to hold off on any new hires. Nothing that is mission critical is being currently advertised or filled. Michael said UNL libraries are not losing any positions, just not filling them for now. With open positions, reduction in library service hours will be considered. There will be some of the small branches that will be return and retrieval only. The good news with staffing is that some of the savings made it possible for salary adjustments based on service years to address compression. Salary adjustments focused on office service staff and not faculty or management within the university. Michael said that, thankfully, the interim dean has made it clear that we are long past the do more with less mindset; we have been doing that for a very long time. Any further cuts mean we will simply cease services or location.

## **New Business**

### Recommendations and Resolutions

Next meeting: November 17, 2023

Adjournment was at 11:45 AM