

## Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

March 3, 2023 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (CST)

### MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present: Michael Straatmann (Chair), Jessica Chamberlain, Lisa Olivigni, Scott Childers, Laura England-Biggs, Jennifer Norton, Holli Duggan, Sky Seery, Gail Irwin, Tammy Thiem, Michael Sauers, Rachel Steiner, Celine Swan, Michael Burris, Joy Harvey. Via GoTo Meeting: Stephanie O'Connor, David Graber, Mandy Peterson, Lisa Irwin, Allison Reisig. Commission staff members present: Rod Wagner, Mary Geibel. Christa Porter (via GoTo Meeting).

#### **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 November 18, 2022 minutes. Motion approved.

#### **Public Comment:**

There were no public comments.

#### **Reports**

##### Nebraska School Librarians Association

##### **Joy Harvey**

NSLA board elections are coming up April 1-29. NSLA sent a statement to the legislature's education committee in opposition to LB635. Advocacy materials are ready to send out for legislative bills of concern and will be shared if the bills make it out of committee. Joy mentioned that April is School Library Month.

##### Nebraska Library Association

##### **Holli Duggan**

The NLA will have representation and testimony to present at the LB635 hearing on March 5. Holli said that Library Advocacy Day activities went well. NLA committees are set for the year. NLA's strategic planning committee has had a couple meetings to address events and activities for NLA moving forward.

## Nebraska Library Commission

### **Rod Wagner**

Rod welcomed new council members. As earlier mentioned, the LB635 hearing will be held on March 6. The Library Commission submitted a statement online. Devra Dragos will attend the hearing representing the Library Commission. Rod said that he will be traveling to Washington DC that day for meetings with Nebraska's congressional delegation regarding federal legislation and appropriations. Laura England-Biggs and Matt Kovar are also Nebraska library representatives involved in these meetings. They will meet with Senator Deb Fischer, who serves on the Senate appropriations and commerce committees, and Congressman Don Bacon. Senator Fischer's work on the commerce committee includes telecommunications legislation and policies.

### **Christa Porter**

Library Commission grants for 2023 have been awarded. The Library Improvement and Internship grants announcements have been distributed. Youth and CE grants announcements are coming soon. Christa said that 25 libraries received Library Improvement grants for a total of \$60,000. For Internship grants, 20 libraries received awards totaling \$20,000. For Youth grants, 34 libraries received awards totaling \$31,466. Christa explained that the Youth grants amount resulted from a combination of the Library Commission's \$30,000 budget for grants and the addition of Kreutz Bennett funds administered by the Nebraska Community Foundation. The Kreutz Bennett grant program wrapped up last year. There were some remaining funds that had not been awarded. The NCF asked if the Library Commission would assist in distributing the remaining funds. The funds supplemented the Youth grants and were distributed to libraries that met the Kreutz Bennett fund requirements.

Christa said that the first round of CE/Training grants – eight applications were funded for \$5,000. The CE grants are being offered in two rounds in 2023. The first round was made for events through June and the second round will open later this month for events after July 1. Funds will be available to support librarians in attending the Association for Rural and Small Libraries conference, which will be held in Wichita, Kansas, this fall. The NLC has a budget of \$20,000 to offer \$500 grants (a flat \$500 per applicant). This is a special separate application in addition to the other grants.

Christa said the 2022 public library accreditation process has wrapped up. There are now 183 accredited libraries. There were 36 libraries up for re-accreditation last year. Of those, 27 were re-accredited, 7 libraries were given extensions to 2023, and 2 libraries were not re-accredited – they choose not to apply or did not respond to communications. Christa said that there were 2 libraries – Stapleton and Sterling – accredited for the first time.

The *Big Talk From Small Libraries* annual online conference was held last Friday. Christa said the conference was well attended with 482 pre-registrations from 41 states, and 12 registrations from 5 different Canadian provinces. There was also a login from Indonesia. One of the noontime lightning round presenters was from Indonesia. Christa said that in about a week, she

will post sessions for viewing. The next *Big Talk From Small Libraries* will be held Friday, February 23, 2024.

### **Council Discussion Topic**

#### Legislation and Library Content Challenges

**Jessica Chamberlain** commented that Scott Childers, Allison Reisig and Laura England-Biggs assisted in writing the State Advisory Council on Libraries Statement Regarding Content Challenges. Jessica said the committee wanted to make a statement on behalf of the advisory council that was strong, but not confrontational. A draft statement was sent to council members for response and for vote. Jessica thanked council members for their feedback.

**Laura England-Biggs** – commented that she is involved with three content challenges. Laura expects that one is settled. *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg was challenged. Laura’s response was to retain. The library board approved Laura’s decision 3-to-1, with one board member absent. The city council may or may not choose to review the library board’s decision. The city council has authority to support or not support library board decisions per municipal ordinance. Thus far, the book challenge has not been placed on the city council’s agenda. If a request is made to include the item on the council agenda, the council president has vowed that he will move to take it off the agenda. He doesn’t believe in censorship and doesn’t believe the council should get involved in library business. Laura said that she has two requests for removal of *This Book Is Gay* by Juno Dawson and one for *Melissa* by Alex Gino (previously published as *George*). Laura said she recently sent her response to the first challenge, which is to keep the book in the collection. While the book is not for every reader, Laura said she believes it is appropriate for some teens and young adults that are questioning their identity. Laura’s reply also stated library policy that parents have the right to control what their children see, but don’t have the right to control what other parents children see.

Recent city council meetings have had public comment from a group of parents that have objected to some books in the library collection and have asked that the books be removed. There were also community members who spoke in support of including the books in the collection. A recent development is a city council action to adopt a new policy that provides that “any parent or guardian with a child, 11 years of age or under, may upon written request, have a specific book moved from the children’s section to the adult section.” The policy was adopted without discussion on a 7-1 vote. Laura said there was no opportunity for staff input. It is Laura’s understanding that implementation of the policy falls to the library director since council gave no direction. A relocation request form is being developed. The city council has two more meetings in which they can reconsider the policy.

Michael Straatmann asked if other council members have had content challenges since the council last met, or other comments.

- Policies – residency (lives within library service area).
- Challenge form to include whether request is personal or submitted for a group.
- Some libraries include a policy provision that if a book challenge is denied, the book cannot be re-challenged again for a specified period of time (a year or more).

- Inclusion of response times for a challenge – response from library director, appeal to library board if director denies the challenge request.
- Important to follow and enforce established policies and procedures (challenge shouldn't go directly to the town board or city council).
- Example mentioned of a library director who took initiative and spoke to their city council members about procedures for a challenge should a challenge be made. Also – discuss with city manager/administrator, attorney to be clear on policies and process. Same for school librarians – discuss with school officials in order to have a common understanding of policies and process.
- Importance of good communication and understanding – what libraries do and why, what the issues are, what the process is for consideration of a challenge.
- Discussion of the length of time for a library director to respond to a challenge – consideration for response to multiple items in contrast to a single item, and time available for consideration – the day-to-day operation of the library. A suggestion was to limit the number of items to be considered within a 30-day period.

### **Legislation**

Rod Wagner asked Mandy Peterson for comments about the legislature's LB71, which concerns parental involvement in school curricula. Mandy said that the legislation would require school districts to adopt policies for parents to access everything from curriculum, test information, lesson plans, library check-outs – any information about a student when they are in the school building and what they will encounter during that time. Mandy said that this information is already available to parents. There are privacy considerations to assure that student information is restricted and only available to parents or guardians. LB374 is comparable but goes beyond provisions in LB71. It requires schools to provide alternative curricula on a requested basis. If parents do not want their child to read the book assigned in class, the teacher may be able to provide an alternative book that serves the same or similar purpose. How far can you go before a student is no longer earning the credits required to graduate and not receive the education the State of Nebraska intended? LB374 is the more far-reaching bill and LB71 is what schools are already doing.

Joy Harvey said LB374 also requires that parents can request a book be labeled “explicit.” This would require books to be labeled in that manner in the district's online catalog. Mandy agreed and added this would require school libraries to have a method to insert a label in their online catalog and that doesn't currently exist. Mandy said that the legislation presents a special problem for combined school – public libraries. Tammi Thiem said that many smaller schools do not have online catalogs. Mandy said the NSLA researched the cost impact of LB374 and calculated that implementation would be near \$10 million. This would include costs for every school to have an online catalog and requirements for locating documentation in one place.

In discussion regarding LB635, the bill is a reintroduction of legislation introduced in the 2022 session regarding databases and educational resources available to K-12 students. A difference is that LB635 does not include the penalties that were in the previous bill, but still has some of the same consequences.

## Council Round Table – Successes and Challenges

**Joy Harvey** – Joy said Lincoln Public Schools reached its one-millionth checkout on Sora two days ago. Joy said the LPS website includes information about LPS elementary library lessons. Library staff worked hard to create library objectives for LPS school librarians. A series of lessons were developed for the elementary level, and to use to advocate for full-time school librarians. LPS Library Media Services can be followed on social media.

**Michael Burris** – Michael said the Holdrege Area Public Library is a Carnegie library. One end was added on in the early '50s and the other end was added on in the mid-60s. With an older building facility, problems emerge. Staff has recently addressed carbon monoxide exposure and replacement of lights. A number of delayed maintenance needs are getting fixed. These on-going maintenance challenges add to needs for a new building.

**Celine Swan** – A Grand Island Public Library goal is to increase adult programming. During COVID-19, the library started a partnership with the Hall County Historical Society. The partnership has resulted in an historical book club with a focus on local history. Celine said the book club has been a big hit. The library's Plant Breeding and Seed (PBS) program is also popular. Library staff promote the program through outreach efforts in the community. A challenge is the location of a police sub-station by the library. A name change to Community Service Help is under consideration. Celine emphasized that the library is for everyone and a goal is to make everyone feel welcome.

**Gail Irwin** – Gail said that the Ainsworth library's successes include an active book club and patron use of library services being at a good level. Weather has been a challenge with from 50 to 60 inches of snow in January and February. The library has had to close at times due to weather conditions and due to difficulty for the city to clear streets.

**Rachel Steiner** – Rachel said that the Omaha Public Library is receiving funding support from the Omaha Public Library Foundation – a success. Foundation funds support renovation of children's areas at three branch locations and addition of book lockers. Funding is always a challenge.

**Michael Sauers** – Michael said that Do Space will move to the Omaha Public Library's Abrahams Library this summer. Deconstruction will begin at Do Space's current location in preparation for the new Omaha central library. Do Space will continue to offer computer services, 3D lab, and a podcasting room. Do Space will continue to offer innovative programs and services while expanding its impact in the Omaha community. Michael said there will be a new Do Space director beginning March 13. Tech Pack is a new Do Space program. Do Space received a \$750,000 grant to support digital equity in Omaha. Funds were used to purchase 950 Chromebooks, free internet access for one year, computer basics training, and WiFi hotspots. The program is for Omaha residents who do not have internet access and resources for access. Participants must meet program criteria to be eligible for these resources and services. Michael said Do Space is working with UNL to conduct surveys for a digital equity project report.

**Tammi Thiem** – Tammi said having a job is a success. Barely a day goes by that at least a text or phone call is received asking a question. Many requests are about city or government relationships. It is a gray area – every town is different.

**Holli Duggan** – An NLA challenge is the LB635 hearing coming up on Monday. Another challenge is the lack of a SCYP chair at this time. Holli reminded that the NLA will not hold a conference this year. Holli said that she hopes NLA will offer some activities later this year to make up for the lack of a conference. As for successes, Holli said that Library Advocacy Day went very well as did the Golden Sower virtual award presentation for the 2022 winners. All three authors were able to participate.

**Laura England-Biggs** – Fremont’s Keene Memorial Library construction project is going well. Laura said that library staffing is a challenge with several open positions. Laura referred to her earlier remarks concerning book challenges.

**Jennifer Norton** – The Lexington Public Library partnered with Hispanic Leadership Institute (Chicago) to bring a Grass Roots Leadership program to Lexington. Jennifer said that the Lexington community is 64% Hispanic or Latino. The ten-week leadership program was held at the library. The program included three weeks each for city, county, and school entities. A financial literacy class was presented during the tenth week. Participants that completed at least nine of the classes received a fee waiver for the national conference in Chicago. Lexington sent 16 community members to the conference (9 high school seniors and the rest adults). Jennifer said this group of leaders is now forming their own organization that will take ownership and plan the next Grass Roots Leadership program. Jennifer said the library has partnered with ESU #10, enrooted in relationships with the Communities for Kids organization to bring work centers to the library intended to offer free courses to childcare providers and educators. Jennifer said the library’s challenge is staffing. A few positions are open following recent staff departures.

**Jessica Chamberlain** – The Norfolk Public Library has its five-year anniversary coming up following completion of the library’s expansion and renovation project. The anniversary celebration will include a picture book artist and illustrator, and a special author fair. Materials circulation jumped during the COVID-19 pandemic, was then stable for a while, and now is up double digits. The library’s challenge is the tiredness of the staff and morale with the winter full of challenging patrons and the fear about things happening – not in our community – but in others. Jessica said the library foundation provided funds for staff training this year. As a result, Erica Rose will conduct an inspirational training day to give everyone a boost.

**Michael Straatmann** – UNL Libraries is reallocating space in Love Library involving about 115 people. With the library’s available space, moving everyone within the building is not hard. Michael said the music library will close April 1 (three weeks before finals). Materials from the library will be moved to an off-site location in order to prepare them for a high-density facility. Michael said that there is a police substation in the library area on campus.

**Mandy Peterson** – Mandy works in a school combined with a public library. Three teachers who have not previously collaborated with the school or public library have recently asked for collaboration opportunities. Mandy said that they are now working with these teachers to expand

opportunities for students. Additional efforts include expanding summer activities for students. Mandy said that with all the legislation that's going on she is considering this as a success because it has been great to be involved with so many from different organizations that have banded together for collective effort. A challenge is knowing about legislative actions going on around the country involving libraries.

**Allison Reisig** – Noted challenges for community colleges in regard to state legislation – LB783 and LB689. The bills involve methods for financing Nebraska's community colleges. Removal of the community colleges' authority to levy property taxes needs to be replaced with other funding sources. Allie said that one of the opportunities for Western Nebraska Community College is the presidential search that is underway. Allie said that the college's enrollment is stagnant and even declining somewhat. In contrast, library use continues to increase and demonstrates that the library is a vital part of the college.

**Stephanie O'Connor** – The Alliance library has had a significant increase in patron visits. The library is increasing outreach services. Stephanie said the adult services librarian goes to the nursing home once a week. A group at the nursing home is currently reading and enjoying *Where the Crawdads Sing*. And there are more outreach visits this week to schools for Read Across America. Craft classes have been implemented. The library will host the Western Library System summer reading program workshop. Stephanie said challenges include some patrons being under the influence of drugs and some significant vandalism incidents requiring police presence. Stephanie said that many patrons are frustrated with wait times for items on Libby – a concern since patrons are encouraged to use the service. The library has worked to address lengthy wait times by purchasing more OverDrive Advantage titles.

**Lisa Irwin** – The Youth Rehab & Treatment Center zSpace systems have arrived. Lisa will have the first opportunity to work with teachers and students to try out the new computers. Current challenges include the American Correctional Association audit that is done every three years. The audit involves gathering indicators that verify compliance with ACA criteria. In addition, accreditation is being addressed and meeting those requirements including selection and purchase of 150 titles to meet the Department of Education's Rule 10 requirements. Lisa said that selecting titles for teenage boys is a challenge. Lisa invited recommendations. Lisa said that she would like to make ebooks available. Chromebooks are available but can't be taken out of the school.

## **New Business**

### Recommendations and Resolutions

The council expressed appreciation to the Nebraska Library Association (NLA) for the association's efforts in conducting a great Library Advocacy Day.

Next meeting: July 21, 2023

Adjournment was at 3:35 pm