

Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

November 20, 2020 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present via GoTo Webinar: Sky Seery (Chair), Jessica Chamberlain (Vice-Chair), Scott Childers, Susan Franklin, David Graber, Pat Gross, Joy Harvey, Gail Irwin, Lori Long, Laura Marlane, Lisa Olivigni, Tom Pfeifer, Charlene Rasmussen, Allison Reisig, Michael Straatmann, and Matthew Williams. Commission staff present: Rod Wagner, Christa Porter.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Sky Seery 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 of July 17, 2020 Meeting: A motion was made and seconded to approve the July 17, 2020 minutes. Motion approved.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Reports

Nebraska Library Association

Michael Straatmann

Michael reported that over 100 people attended the virtual webinar *De-escalating Difficult COVID-19 Customer Behaviors*, presented by Andrew Sanderbeck. Third Thursday Chats have been held for librarians to discuss topics such as library reopening challenges and solutions. There have been regular Round Table Section meetings, monthly notable fiction books for readers' advisory, and makerspace discussions. Michael provided web links for information concerning the C&U/TSRT Fall Meeting, which was held on October 9, 2020 (<https://unl.libguides.com/CUFall2020>).

Straatmann continues to receive requests for community engagement talking points. Many of the requests have been put on the "COVID-19 Response" page. NLA members have been actively involved in the discussions.

The NLA website has been improved with a new process for membership renewal and event attendance. Shelby Janke has done a great job relaunching NLA's social media presence.

There have been many questions about how NLA spends membership dues. Michael provided links to NLA's budget breakdown (https://nebraskalibraries.org/Detailed_Budget_Breakout). Postcards with the budget breakdown were also sent to lapsed members.

Elections were held with new officers elected: President-Elect Emily Nimsakont, Secretary Allison Sillik, and ALA Councilor Brenda Ealey.

To celebrate NLA's 125th Anniversary, 125 free memberships will be given to new members and members who have been lapsed for more than five years. Forms to apply are on the NLA website.

The NLA annual meeting will be held virtually and is scheduled for Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 11:00 am.

Question (Jessica Chamberlain): “When you talk about streamlining the process for NLA membership, will that eliminate the need for a second step to join a section or round table?”

Answer (Michael Straatmann): “Yes, there is a shopping cart on the NLA website allowing you to make all your choices and to checkout at one time.”

Nebraska School Librarians Association

Joy Harvey

The 2020 Distinguished Administrator Award was awarded to Ryan Escamilla, Associate Principal, Lincoln High School. Anyone interested in the school library profession may apply on the NSLA website for scholarships before December 1, 2020. The Virtual School Librarian Day was successful with keynote speaker Casey Boyd. Joy said that there are many professional learning opportunities listed on the NSLA calendar.

Nebraska Library Commission

Rod Wagner

The federal budget has not been determined for the full fiscal year. A congressional continuing resolution was adopted to extend federal funding for agencies and programs through December 11. Congress needs to adopt a continuing resolution extension or approve appropriations for the remainder of the fiscal year (through September 30, 2021). Congress meets in December, referred to as the Lame Duck Session, to finish end of year business before the new Congress convenes in January. Current appropriations provide funding based on last fiscal year’s funding levels.

State library agencies collaborated several years ago to begin a campaign to increase funding for the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program. The goal is to raise the funding level to \$1 per capita. That amount would nearly double the amount of funds allocated to the fifty state library agencies currently.

The Library Commission submitted its funding request in September for the 2021-2023 state biennium budget. The state legislature convenes its ninety-day session on January 6 with adjournment in early June. There are some new senators in the legislature this coming year, but there will probably be little change in the appropriations committee membership. Budget hearings will begin in January and continue into March. The appropriations committee must submit its budget recommendations to the full legislature by the end of April.

Christa Porter

Christa reported that NLC’s website has resources about the COVID-19 pandemic. Those resources include tracking for Nebraska libraries openings, closings, and special accommodations.

The Library Innovations Studios project has resumed. Installations have been made in Superior, St. Paul, and Cambridge. Person-to-Person training has been significantly reduced to follow health safety guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Christa said that there is a lot more training available via video through remote classes or pre-recorded classes. NLC requested that the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) allow the Commission to not add any additional libraries. The one-year project extension proposed including 39 libraries. There are currently 35 approved for participation. Some of the project funds not used for the last few months, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, have been used to purchase Niche Academy for hosting online training resources.

The CARES Act (Corona Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) funds were approved for grants to 64 public libraries. The grant awards totaled \$175,000. Included is a grant to the Central Plains Library

System on behalf of the regional library systems to subscribe to “Readers Zone” for public libraries’ summer reading programs.

Youth Grants for Excellence, Internship Grants, and Continuing Education Grants are currently in process for applications and funding. Some Basic Skills classes were postponed and rescheduled. “Big Talk From Small Libraries” is scheduled for February 26, 2021. Calls for proposals opened up last month.

Library Services in 2021 – Council Discussion

Rod Wagner reported that there may be additional library services funding in a future federal economic stimulus package. He asked council members for their thoughts about the needs of Nebraska libraries to serve the public considering current challenges and those continuing into the future.

Allison Reisig - One of the biggest challenges is balancing the need for students to be on-site. Many do not have access to adequate broadband services. At home, students need a quiet place to study. Many students come into the library for reliable places to study, to use the printer, and to scan. It is a challenge to keep the students and library staff safe.

Scott Childers – The public library is the only place that many students have access to the internet outside of the school building. There are some communities where libraries do not have internet access. Local internet service providers are charging outrageous fees for accessibility since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Scott also said that he is seeing confusion at the libraries he works with. They are confused as to who can tell public librarians what they can or cannot do concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and health safety considerations. This has involved arguments between city administrators and library boards. It involves who sets the hours, who dictates mask usage in the library, and what level of services are offered. Scott suggested helping get clarification through the League of Nebraska Municipalities. It is clear for first-class cities with advisory boards who is the decision maker. He is concerned about the smaller libraries trying to do the right thing and the added stress of being told by their city leaders.

Joy Harvey - Joy said Lincoln Public Schools students are doing well. At the beginning, librarians went to the students instead of the students coming to the library. Little libraries were set up in the hallways for each grade level. The students were able to browse and check out library books. Every little library set up a quarantine system for library books. A video was made following a school librarian for an entire day. Recently, librarians moved back into the library, and there was a lot of work moving resources back into the library space. The biggest concern is the school librarians, especially the elementary librarians, who are completely overwhelmed. They cannot have volunteers in the schools. Everyone, including administration, helps with shelving. Hotspots have been purchased for families to check out with no time limitations.

Christa Porter – Many public libraries submitted requests for hotspots from the CARES Act grant funds. There were also some libraries that received funding for Wi-Fi extenders.

Gail Irwin – College students are requesting use of the computers in the library outside of normal hours. They will have remote learning, and on-site classes will not resume until the first of the year. Library staff have been busy helping students who are participating in online classes.

Jessica Chamberlain – An additional twenty hotspots were added to the hotspots the library already had. The funds came from the Johnny Carson Foundation for one year and the Norfolk Area Community Foundation Fund for three years. Wi-Fi is also accessible in the library parking lot.

Michael Straatmann –The fall semester ends next week. UNL is presenting a series of virtual sessions through most of December and the first three weeks of January 2021. Onsite classes will start January 25, 2021. Michael also said that UNL has the need for reliable internet access for students.

David Graber –Wayne State College is closing from Thanksgiving to January. Some online classes are offered. Like other colleges, WSC does not want students to be going back and forth during the holidays. It has been a challenge to move forward with a variety of plans due to the uncertainty of funding or technology caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff is focused on needs caused by the pandemic.

Priorities if a new stimulus appropriation includes library funds

Rod Wagner asked council members what priorities they would recommend if additional federal funds are provided in a future federal economic stimulus appropriation.

Jessica Chamberlain said the CARES Act grant offered helpful options. Some of the services the grant provided were safety and disinfectant supplies, safety protocols, mobile hotspots, laptops, online software, managing online programming, and reservation software. Some of the programming the grant provided were increased Overdrive content, Hoopla accounts, setting up Zoom meetings, and Reader Zone (Summer Reading Program software).

Council Round Table – Success and Challenges

Allison Reisig – Allison said a success and challenge was a staff member retirement. Allison operated the library at WNCC by herself for several months. The library was closed for a time, and a new librarian was hired.

Charlene Rasmussen – Charlene said Wayne Public Library is open by appointment only. The library provides many resources such as ebooks.

David Graber – David reported a success in the semester being completed face-to-face at Wayne State Conn Library. There have been many COVID-19 cases for staff and students. Dave also said that it has been difficult to move forward with anything that is not COVID-19 related. Many projects have come to a standstill because of funding uncertainty, and technology staff have been focused on needs caused by COVID-19.

Gail Irwin – Gail said one challenge is preparing in-person activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some patrons are resisting the use of facemasks and safety measures. It has been a challenge to keep staff and patrons safe in the library. A library staff member has been hired. The city conducted a community needs survey and the library ranked high.

Jessica Chamberlain – Jessica said that it has been hard to make progress on library goals. Much energy and time are spent dealing with COVID-19 issues. Jessica is looking ahead to more restrictions at the library due to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the Norfolk area. She is grateful for her staff's work with the public during this time of COVID-19 cases and restrictions.

Joy Harvey – Joy reported that a video was created of a Lincoln Public Schools librarian using her mobile mini library. The video highlights the librarian's experiences for an entire school day.

Lisa Olivigni – Lisa reported that two children’s services have been added to the library. Book bundles are available for children consisting of collections of picture books for different developmental levels. Home schools have taken advantage of these. The library delivers materials to the door for patrons. Safety has been the biggest challenge, as the library is limited to one hour with fifty people at one time. Lisa believes library staff and patrons are exhausted and tired of dealing with COVID-19 issues.

Laura Marlane – Laura reported that Omaha Public Library is operating at 25% capacity. Curbside service and scheduled appointments would be utilized if needed. The Durham Museum is collaborating with the Omaha Public Library’s Partner Pass Program. Laura’s biggest challenge is that her staff is exhausted. The library’s part-time staff was not brought back to work until early September. Drafting policies for how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge. The Omaha library board and city leaders have been helpful during the pandemic.

Lori Long – Lori reported that a success is that Gothenburg schools have been in session since the middle of August. There have been no cancellations of school activities or events. Other than one large gathering in Gothenburg, resulting in quarantines, the COVID-19 pandemic has been kept under control. Circulation numbers are only slightly below normal. A challenge is only having one para available for one hour a day to help in the library. A weeding project is planned during Christmas break.

Matthew Williams – Matthew reported that the City of Kearney begins a mask mandate starting Monday. The mandate will be enforced, but reasons for patrons not wearing masks will be accepted. Many library staff members have been quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure. Matthew said the library’s virtual programs have been successful. The Grab-and-Go Crafts recordings have been especially popular.

Michael Straatmann – Michael reported that UNL has a mask mandate, and no one is allowed to enter buildings without a UNL card and mask. Warnings are issued and campus police assist in escorting individuals who do not comply. The joint integrated library system (ILS) for University of Nebraska System libraries will be live on January 4. The ILS has the capability to share resources within the university system. The Dinsdale Family Learning Commons (formerly C.Y. Thompson Library) renovation will be completed this spring. The East Campus UNL Library has been completely renovated.

Pat Gross – Pat reported that Gering Public Library recently received an anonymous donation of \$30,000. Elaine Bleisch is the Teen Librarian at Lied Scottsbluff Public Library. Pat congratulated Allison Reisig. Allison is the new WLS board president. Pat also said that Cindy Osborne, WLS director, has been doing a great job.

Scott Childers – Scott reported that Laureen Riedesel, Beatrice Public Library director, has retired. Laurie Van Ackeren is director of Yutan Public Library and Kylie Dorner is director of Mead Public Library. Barbara Schwisow, director of Stuckman-Baatz Memorial Library, passed away. Patsy Meyer has been hired as director.

The library at Table Rock was closed for six years. Volunteers recently started up the library. There is a lot of work to do to get the library back into use.

Sky Seery - Sky reported that a success is that North Platte schools have been in session since August. Sky’s biggest challenge is making sure that the school is serving all the students equally.

Susan Franklin – Susan reported that it has been a challenge to reinvent herself as an English professor with new classes that have not been taught before. Teaching has been challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic. A success is transitioning to her role as Professor of English at Hastings College.

Tom Pfeifer – Tom reported that he has had no staff turnover this past year at the Nebraska State Penitentiary. His team is doing a great job with all the COVID-19 challenges. One challenge is operating with limited help. It is a daily struggle to enforce mask usage. Tom finds the NLC’s guidelines on COVID-19 helpful. He reports that NPS Follett ILS is installed, except for some hardware.

New Business

Recommendations and Resolutions

Rod Wagner thanked State Advisory Council on Libraries members for sharing information about what is happening in libraries and communities. Wagner recognized members who are completing second terms on the council. Those include Susan Franklin, Joann Jackson, Julie Pinnell, and Matthew Williams. All will receive Admiralships in the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska and a Certificate of Appreciation for their contributions as council members.

Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting date will be March 2021 (TBA). Previously, the March SACL Meeting was held the same day as Nebraska Library Advocacy Day. Plans are uncertain due to COVID-19 health safety policies.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 pm.