

**Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries**  
Web Meeting  
Friday, March 19, 2021 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**MINUTES**

State Advisory Council members present via Go Tot Webinar: Jessica Chamberlain (Chair), Cali Biaggi, Michael Burris, Scott Childers, Dixie Codner, Laura England-Biggs, Dave Graber, Pat Gross, Joy Harvey, Gail Irwin, Lori Long, Laura Marlane, Lisa Olivigni, Tom Pfeifer, Charlene Rasmussen, Sky Seery, Michael Straatmann. Commission staff present: Rod Wagner, Christa Porter.

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

Approval of Minutes November 11, 2020 Meeting: A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 11, 2020 minutes. Motion approved.

**Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

**Reports**

Nebraska Library Association

**Laura England-Biggs**

Laura reported that there have been several NLA Thursday Morning Chats discussing several topics since this group met. Laura led a Managing Goals presentation, and the Diversity Committee led a very good session on diversity, inclusion, and racial healing.

The new NLA officers were handed off at a virtual meeting on December 10, 2020. There have been more than 125 applications for the free memberships offered by NLA.

Laura worked with lobbyists to oppose LB282, legislation that dealt with obscenity, libraries and schools. Laura also testified at the legislature's appropriations committee budget hearing in support of the Library Commission's biennium budget request.

Nebraska School Librarians Association

**Joy Harvey**

Joy reported that she has been busy with a member survey for suggestions, improvements, and opportunities NSLA provides. Future NSLA virtual professional opportunities are planned, including School Librarians Day to be held this fall.

The NSLA Distinguished Administrator Award was presented to Ryan Escamilla, Lincoln High School Associate Principal, for his support of library programming.

Nebraska Library Commission

**Rod Wagner**

Rod reported that the Library Innovation Studios project has installed makerspace equipment in over 30 libraries during the past four years. The project has been successful but was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project has resumed, and there is currently equipment in place at the public libraries in Randolph, McCook, and La Vista. The Bellevue public library will have makerspace equipment installed soon. These four will be the last project host libraries. The project was scheduled to end June 30, 2021. Due to the delay in scheduling the last group of libraries, the project will likely be extended for an additional six months. The Commission plans to end the project with a conference to involve the project's participant libraries and others interested in library makerspaces.

Current state legislation includes two bills specific to libraries. LB 282 regarding obscenity provisions related to schools and libraries, and LB75 regarding township libraries. A trend in recent years is discontinuation of township governance. When counties discontinue township governance, there is a need for a transition process for townships that provide library services with options for transfer to a village, city, or the county. An unfortunate option is discontinuation of library services. LB 75 provides a process for decisions related to continuation of library services. The Nebraska Association of County Officials initiated this legislation. There is currently no process to guide counties when a county moves to eliminating townships. One Nebraska library is currently affected.

Rod thanked Laura England-Biggs for testifying in support of the Library Commission's biennium budget request. The budget hearing was held on February 23 before the legislature's appropriations committee. The Commission requested increased state funding for subscription databases (NebraskAccess) and increased state funding for the OverDrive Libraries consortium (currently including 180 public libraries), plus Omaha, Lincoln, and Ralston libraries, which are not part of the consortium. An increase in state funding for the regional library systems was also requested.

Rod reported that it is possible that the Commission's budget request will be fully funded and in part due to the recent Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board projected state tax collections for the next two years – an increase of \$462 million. The State of Nebraska will also receive \$5 billion through the federal *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (ARPA). ARPA funding includes \$200 million appropriated to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Of that funding, \$178 million will be allocated among the fifty states and U.S. territories. Nebraska will receive approximately \$2.4 million. This amount will be added to Nebraska's annual LSTA Grants to State program allocation. The funding is available for expenditure through the end of September 2022.

Rod said the ARPA funds are to be used consistent with Nebraska's LSTA Five Year Plan. There is emphasis on digital inclusion, technology updates, workforce development, E-Resources, and programming. Rod asked the council members to offer suggestions for use of the ARPA funds.

The *Build America's Libraries Act* is federal legislation introduced to support public library construction projects. Each state would receive a minimum of \$10 million as a one-time allocation to be spent within a three-year period.

**Christa Porter**

Christa reported that some of the ARPA funding includes support for expanding the E-rate program. Funding is for emergency education connections and devices. Approximately \$7.1 billion has been allotted to E-rate. Christa said E-rate funding has historically been restricted to library buildings or

school campuses for internet connections. This funding extends to internet connections to homes and others in need of internet services. Legislation gives schools and libraries legal authority and financial means to address the homework gap. The legislation allows for hot spots, routers, connected devices, laptop computers, tablets, and similar user devices. Christa is the E-rate program Nebraska contact for public libraries.

Jessica Chamberlain asked Christa if she would be presenting a special educational session for public libraries. Christa answered, yes, she will be scheduling training for E-rate and likely for the new E-rate funding.

Christa reported that the Big Talk From Small Libraries online conference held on February 26 was very successful, with the highest number of registrations and attendees in the ten years the conference has been held. There are recordings available for all the sessions, and there are recordings for all the previous years' sessions.

### **The Changing Landscape for Library Services – Planning for the Post-Pandemic Future – Council Discussion Topic)**

Last November, council members discussed how libraries were adapting to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Rod Wagner asked council members what observations they have concerning libraries, schools, and colleges that have been successful and what have been the challenges they have noticed since the council last met in November. Rod also asked council members what they would like the ARPA funds to address. Jessica C. asked council members to discuss what they see next in their libraries as a next step, and what would they suggest for using the funds in a successful way. She also asked about use of curbside services in the future.

**Gail Irwin:** Gail said that a next step for the Ainsworth library is to be open more hours. The library has been open since the end of May. Many patrons think that the library is still closed even though it has been advertised as open. Some libraries are buying lockers for people who can't come into the library during open hours. Jessica Chamberlain said that lockers available at Norfolk Public Library have been a good addition to services at Norfolk Public Library.

**Michael Burris:** Michael said patrons think the Holdrege Area Public Library is closed even though it was never completely closed. Curbside service was immediately implemented when COVID-19 restrictions began. Michael said library DVD checkouts are down. He attributes the decline to streaming capabilities becoming more popular than using a Blu-ray player. The Holdrege library received a local grant for a business collection to provide resources for small businesses. Michael said the library will continue curbside service but believes the service will eventually fade away.

**Laura England-Biggs:** Laura said curbside services were popular at Keene Memorial Library at first but now are down to several families and a few older adults. The library has been open since July. Many patrons believe the library is still closed. Laura is working on strategies to reach patrons who don't use traditional media or social media.

**Jessica Chamberlain:** Jessica said she hears a common thread in how to reengage library users. Patrons have changed their habits of utilizing library services since libraries have been operating under pandemic restrictions and library closings. There is a need to determine ways to reengage patrons.

**Dixie Codner:** Students went from coming into the library to online classes last spring when the Learning Resources Center at Central Community College closed. Online chat has been used a lot with the increased number of online students.

**Cali Biaggi:** Cali said that before the pandemic Doane University was expanding online services and online classes. Perkins Library is a small library with limited options. Cali said the library has added virtual services.

**Lisa Olivigni:** Lincoln Public Schools has increased digital access significantly. K-12 students have a significant need for e-books, and the library has invested in e-books and other resources. Students have direct access to information without requiring a login. Lisa is eager for volunteers to return to the library. The bookmobile has continued making stops but book drops have been popular and convenient for patrons. Parents can request materials and specific book bundles.

**Jessica Chamberlain:** Jessica said that when the Norfolk library was closed, staff were busy at work. She found that while the library was closed, it was an ideal time to evaluate services and changes in the way services are offered. Jessica decided that she and her staff should analyze what patrons cared about when the library was closed, services not offered before the library's closing, and how to improve services.

**Tom Pfeifer:** Tom said that the Nebraska State Prison library is open to inmates, use is down, and a book drop was purchased. Online books have become especially useful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Pat Gross:** Pat said she noticed that several western Nebraska libraries offer remote access for storytimes. Lied Scottsbluff Library has a Lego Club that meets online. Many libraries have sent librarians to schools for presentations on "getting to know your library." Pat said that when you get children involved with the library, parents become interested in library services.

**Gail Irwin:** Gail thanked the Library Commission for the OverDrive services offered to Ainsworth Public Library.

#### **Council Round Table – Success and Challenges**

**Charlene Rasmussen:** Charlene said that Wayne Public Library is open by appointment but those that come to the library without an appointment are allowed in. The library is considering installing lockers. Outdoor activities are planned if necessary. The library's summer reading program is planned, and story hour at the park is continuing.

**Michael Burris:** Michael said that COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have changed patron habits. When the library re-opened, evening hours were eliminated. Now that evening hours have resumed, the evening traffic is down. One way the library is attempting to reach patrons is by considering their economic needs to boost their skills and their income.

**Laura Marlane:** Laura said the Omaha Public Library's most significant success is the result of a change in policy to discontinue library fines. The library's biggest challenge is the library's budget, due to cuts.

**Lisa Olivigni:** Lisa said a developer presented a bid for a new downtown library. Lincoln Parks and Recreation partnered with Lincoln City Libraries – Williams Branch to build a library. The library is

currently connected to the Arnold Elementary School which limits the library to evening hours. The expected project completion date is in two years. Purchase of a new bookmobile is under consideration.

**Lori Long:** Lori said that her library's successes are remaining open all year, increased circulation numbers, and increased usage of online resources. Lori's challenge is how to provide more support for online and digital resources and continuing to fill in gaps resulting from the pandemic.

**Dana Morgan:** Rod Wagner reported for Dana. Dana sent comments that her success is that Leyton Public Schools is operating with students attending classes on-site. The school library is functioning with a book quarantine cart. Dana's challenge has been getting more high school students interested in reading.

**Gail Irwin:** Gail said that it has been challenging to keep staff safe with social distancing and using masks. Once the school required masks, patrons conformed to the library's requirements. Now the schools do not require masks, and the library cannot enforce mask usage. Gail said it is difficult acquiring COVID-19 vaccines for her staff.

**Joy Harvey:** Joy said that this has been a very difficult year. She is thankful that her staff have been innovative and creative. Joy suggested that council members watch "A Day in the Life of a Librarian During COVID-19." Joy said that her biggest challenge at Lincoln Public Schools is budget cuts that may affect librarians.

**Laura England-Biggs:** Laura said that she has applied for the director position at Fremont's Keene Memorial Library. The library will soon discontinue overdue fines. A challenge has been hiring and keeping part-time library aides. It has also been challenging to raise funds for the library expansion project during the Pandemic.

**Pat Gross:** Pat said that Lied Scottsbluff Public Library has been successful in their Kinder Carding. She explained that Kinder Carding involves librarians going into the kindergarten classrooms to invite the students into the library to get their own library card. The students come into the library with their parents, and parents can see what is offered at the library. Pat also said that Lied Scottsbluff Public Library has gone fine free.

**Dixie Codner:** Dixie said that her biggest challenge is another budget cut at Central Community College – Grand Island. Her biggest success is moving the library on the CCC campus. Other successes have been book discussion groups and a buttonhole machine purchase.

**Michael Straatmann:** Michael said that UNL Libraries went fine free in January. Michael also said that all five UNL libraries joined a consortium cataloging in discovery systems. The Dinsdale Family Learning Commons has just opened. CY Thompson Library on East Campus has been completely renovated.

**Sky Seery:** Sky said that her biggest success is that the security gates to the North Platte High School library were opened over the Christmas break. The security gate created barriers for students to use library services. A challenge is concern for the library budget.

**Cali Biaggi:** Cali said that more space opening up in the library has been her biggest success. The lower level and study rooms have been opened at Perkins Library. Cali reported that it is a challenging time at

Doane University due to the budget reorganization process. A number of academic programs were eliminated. There are plans to merge the library with the IT department.

**Tom Pfeifer:** Tom said the biggest success at NSP Library is the library is back in operation with COVID-19 precautions. A new ILS computer was installed recently. Budget cuts and the COVID-19 pandemic have been challenges at the prison. Tom is anticipating the results of a recent survey at the prison.

**Jessica Chamberlain:** Jessica responded to Gail Irwin's concerns for her staff receiving COVID-19 vaccines. Jessica contacted DHHS, and she was informed that when Phase 1-B is implemented, public librarians are eligible for the vaccine. When Gail called officials about the vaccine for her library staff, she was told that they were not eligible at that time. As of yesterday, 75% of Jessica's staff at Norfolk Public Library had at least one shot and about 30% had both shots.

Jessica said that the Norfolk library's biggest challenge has been starting up library services again as pandemic restrictions are modified. Some programs have been planned for small groups and outdoors activities.

**Scott Childers:** Scott said his biggest challenge is advising libraries in the Southeast region regarding library service policies and procedures during the pandemic. Restrictions vary from one community to another within the region.

#### Vice-Chair Election

Michael Straatmann volunteered to serve as Council Vice-Chair. There were no further nominations. Michael Straatmann was elected as Council Vice-Chair by voice vote.

#### Recommendations and Resolutions

There were no recommendations or resolutions brought before the Council.

#### Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting date will be July 16, 2021 (location TBA), November 19, 2021.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.