

Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

Friday, November 17, 2023 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (CST)

MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present via GoToWebinar: Gail Irwin, Jennifer Norton, Allison Reisig, Mandy Peterson, Lisa Irwin, Joy Harvey; In-person: Michael Straatmann (Chair), David Graber, Michael Sauers, Michael Burris, Holli Duggan, Pat Gross, Tammi Thiem, Laura England-Biggs, Jessica Chamberlain, Cali Biaggi, Celine Swan. Commission Staff members present Rod Wagner, Jennifer Wrampe, 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. Motion approved.

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

Public Comment:

There was no public comments.

Reports

Nebraska Library Association

Holli Duggan presented NLA election results and awards handout. The NLA held its annual meeting yesterday. Holli said the association needs members for the advocacy and communication committees. Instead of a conference this year, the NLA promoted Nebraska Library Week starting with a governor's proclamation signing at the capitol. Each day has a librarians chat online - Monday was technology, Tuesday was professional development, Wednesday was a session with Jamie LaRue (sponsored by the four regional library systems), and yesterday the annual meeting and a special session with author Tosca Lee (honorary library week chair). The week will finish with a library proud event – a fundraiser to help support Library Advocacy Day. Holli said that membership is down this year, probably because an in-person conference wasn't held this year. The 2024 Library Advocacy Day will be held on March 20.

Nebraska School Librarians Association

Joy Harvey – The NSLA fall conference was cancelled due to not enough news and presenters lined up. Joy said that NSLA expects the same state legislative bills affecting school libraries to be proposed again this session. Some good news – no changes have been made to the Nebraska Department of Education's Rule 10 school library staffing requirements.

Nebraska Library Commission

Rod Wagner – Congress extended the federal budget through January 2024. The continuing budget extends funding into January and is based on last federal fiscal year’s appropriation levels. The state legislative session begins January 3 – the short session, 60 days. Senator Albrecht is committed to LB635 (educational databases) carried over from the 2023 session. Another of Senator Albrecht’s bills is LB441 (removing schools and libraries from exemptions from prosecution related to obscene materials and access by minors).

The Library Commission board met yesterday. The meeting had a record turnout given public attendees. It was a civil meeting, but with disagreements on what materials should be in libraries. On the agenda was a presentation from Devra Dragos about the NebraskAccess online databases. There wasn’t much discussion about databases. Public comment involved books in Nebraska libraries. Comments included the desire for the Commission to set standards for library collections that would exclude “inappropriate” content. Wagner said the Library Commission doesn’t have authority to place requirements on what libraries include in their collections. Those decisions are made locally according to school and public library policies.

Three Commission members will complete terms in June 2024. One is eligible to apply for reappointment. The other two are completing second terms and are not eligible for reappointment. By tradition, not by state statute, governors appoint Commission members from each of the regional system areas. Before regional re-organization several years ago there was an appointment from each of the six regions. With the change to four regions, appointments were to include one each from the four regions and two at-large appointments. That didn’t happen in Governor Ricketts last appointments, instead of a person from the central region, he appointed another person from the Omaha/Lincoln area. There is currently no Commission member from the Central Plains regional area.

Christa Porter – The Big Talk From Small Libraries call for speakers is open until December 15. The all-day conference will be held on February 23. Public library accreditation for 2023 closed October 1. Christa said that 34 libraries were reaccredited. Libraries are accredited for a five-year period. One library received accreditation for the first time. There are currently 184 accredited public libraries.

The Commission grants applications deadline is today. Grants include continuing education/training, internships, youth grants for excellence, and library improvement grants. Eight applications were received for CE training grants for \$14,701. The budget for CE grants is \$5,000. For Youth Grants for Excellence, 29 applications were received totaling \$29,507 with \$30,000 budgeted. For the Internship grants, 29 applications were received for a total of \$27,000 with \$20,000 budgeted. The Library Improvement Grants, there are 25 applications for \$66,106 with \$60,000 budgeted. The Commission does partial grants when possible and needed.

The E-rate special fiber construction program began in 2020. The federal E-rate program includes a provision for matching funds for fiber special construction. The purpose is to bring new fiber to libraries and schools that do not have fiber connections. The Nebraska Public Service Commission initiated a four-year program with a \$1 million budget beginning in 2020. Only a small amount of those funds has been used. The program began just before the COVID-

19 pandemic. The pandemic disruption was a significant factor in making progress with library fiber construction funding. Some libraries received funding assistance from other sources. Christa said that earlier this year the Public Service Commission issued a progression order to potentially extend the program, make it bigger, and cover additional costs. The Public Service Commission approved program changes at their October meeting. The program will now extend indefinitely until funds are depleted or when all eligible libraries have received assistance. With these changes, funding is available to cover 100% of the cost for library fiber installation. Christa mentioned the workshops held to provide information about funding support and assistance available for applications. Christa said that we are reaching out to libraries with about 100 target libraries that do not have fiber connections. A dozen libraries have been supported this far. A continuing barrier is the recurring monthly service charges and a library's ability to cover those expenses. Christa said that the basic E-rate program continues. Christa will conduct four workshops in the coming weeks to provide information about requirements and the application process.

Council Discussion Topics

2024 Preview for Libraries and Library Services

Celine Swan – The Grand Island public library has had a significant increase in their adult services with humanities programs and adult book clubs. Celine said they have increased participation from older adults in the community. There are more in-library book checkouts and more online borrowing. Celine said she has noticed an increase in use of the library's makerspace with use for holiday and other gift items.

Rod Wagner asked about the Nebraska Arts Council and wondered if Grand Island had any involvement with Council programs. Celine said they did a while back and before COVID. The Grand Island library has had involvement with the Willa Cather Foundation. Wagner said the Library Commission was contacted by the Nebraska Arts Council about a partnership in a National Endowment for the Humanities application for a creative arts program targeted to older adults. The application was successful and opened up 25 slots for Nebraska libraries. Following the announcement, the available slots were quickly filled. Christa Porter participated in the training with the library participants.

***Cali Biaggi** – For Doane University, as a small liberal arts private college and like many others in higher education, enrollment is low. Cali said she is excited for Doane's new president. A new strategic plan was recently finalized. There are new programs and initiatives underway at Doane University. Cali said the library has limited staff with only two librarians and one additional staff member.

Michael Sauers – Do Space successfully moved into the Abrahams branch of the Omaha Public Library. The branch staff has been welcoming and great to work with. Michael noted the adjustment with much less space and significantly fewer staff. New equipment and software have been added, along with a Podcast studio. Michael said that Do Space programs which were in their former building are now out in the community, in other library branches, and in other locations. Do Space has experienced a significant amount of staff turnover. Program staff members are new. Do Space's former location at 72nd and Dodge is now a giant hole in the

ground with tall cranes around. With the move, Do Space is focusing on sustainability issues. Michael has been working on a new project with Lincoln and Omaha makerspaces, Nebraska Innovation Studio, and the prototype lab at Metro Community College to get filament-recycling going with 3D printing. There are places that can turn recycled filament into new filament.

Jessica Chamberlain – Jessica said 2024 is going to be a heavy programming year for the Norfolk public library. Chautauqua is coming to Norfolk and the library will be involved in that program. The library will also have a spoke of an innovation campus coming to Norfolk. The Northeast Community College and UNL partnership will be present in downtown Norfolk and they want to partner with the library. The library will have a lot of humanities and technology programming.

Laura England-Biggs – Laura’s projection for 2024 is to re-open Fremont’s Keene Memorial Library. Laura said the library will close tomorrow followed by packing up for the move back into temporary space. Laura said the library was able to increase one staff member to full-time and library aides from 20 hours to 30 hours. The changes were accomplished with the sacrifice of two 20-hour positions. The new position is all about adult programming and outreach with expectation for more community engagement and more presence in the community. Library renovation and expansion adds 12,500 square feet with additional programming and public meeting space.

Tammi Thiem – Tammi said she sees a lot of library support within the Three Rivers Library System. Omaha has a new downtown branch and work is progressing on the new central library, Columbus has a new library. Fremont has its renovation and expansion. The Orchard library has moved to the school. The small town of Clearwater is looking to take over a large area to expand. Valley and Gretna are planning building projects. Tammi said these are exciting developments. Tammi also noted the number of new directors in the region’s libraries.

Pat Gross – Pat said she hopes that 2024 will experience less negative community involvement. Pat is hopeful for a better year ahead. Getting policies in order are important to working through challenges. Pat encouraged all to “hang in there.”

Holli Duggan – Holli said 2024 will be the Nebraska Library Association’s best year! In December, the NLA will have its last board meeting of the year. Advocacy Day plans are in the works for March 20, 2024. The year will include the return to an in-person conference in Kearney. Holli said the 2026 conference will be a joint event with the Mountain Plains Library Association. Holli said that Vicki Wood has been doing a lot of citizen advocacy training and working to get more support from the community, especially with legislative hearings and issues. There will be more strategic planning activity, efforts to get new members, and making membership meaningful.

Michael Straatmann – For the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries, 2024 will involve recruitment of a new dean. Michael said that when that position changes, there is often a radical shift in how we approach things. Michael said that UNL has brought in very good candidates over the last month or so.

Michael Burris – The Holdrege Area Public Library was tapped to help put together an application for a creative arts program under the assumption the library would then become a venue for many of the activities. Michael said that a stellar application was developed and the Nebraska Arts Council said they wanted to use it as a template for other applications. Michael said that the community's current focus is creative arts efforts for a music fest in 2024. Michael said the library pulled back from its involvement needing to focus more on what the library is supposed to be doing. The library will still be adventuring into programming such as poetry slams and other literary arts compatible activities.

Rod Wagner – There are some legislative challenges that are currently unknown. There will be work toward a reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act. The current authorization expires at the end of September 2025. There may be consideration for the next state biennium budget for funding library facility projects. A state construction fund is also under consideration as part of the federal library program.

Dave Graber – Dave said that 2024 will be much like the fall of 2023 which is ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, and Google monitoring. All the other new developments have been utilized quite a bit by Wayne State College students and faculty. Faculty and librarians are working to figure out and reinvent what we do. Dave mentioned forums held on the WSC campus the past week.

Rachel Steiner – Rachel said she is hopeful for 2024. The Omaha Public Library needs to start building programming back up. COVID was a blow to the library's programming activities. Rachel said that OPL's programming during 2023 so far has been well attended. OPL recently had author Tosca Lee at the library and it was great to see the engagement, the faces of patrons. More good things for OPL sunsetting government documents – a big endeavor. OPL is looking into new technology in order to streamline branch library services. OPL will install its first book check-in/sorter at the Elkhorn branch making the mobile library more visible in the community. Rachel mentioned OPL's genealogy and history center. The collection is large and won't fit in the new central library. There has been discussion about how to transition current branches into a browsing genealogy and history center library.

Gail Irwin – The Ainsworth public library plans to highlight early education for children under age five. Gail said the library will continue participation with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The library has participated in the program the past few years. Ainsworth is getting a new day care. The library is looking into some projects and programming with the new facility. The library is up for re-accreditation in 2024. The library will seek community input on needs and will work on five-year goals. The pandemic and road construction were disruptive the past few years. Currently there is construction in front of the library. Gail said the concern is keeping accessibility to the library safe and easy for patrons.

Jennifer Norton – Jennifer said she is excited to expand the Lexington public library's adult services. Jennifer participated in a Creative Aging Arts program training. She has contacted a teaching artist on the Nebraska Arts Council roster. Program planning is underway for spring or early summer. For the first time, the Nebraska Arts Council has opened up the Poetry Out Loud program to public libraries. Jennifer said she has a couple of students coming to the library to

practice their recitations. Lexington will celebrate its sesquicentennial year in 2024. Jennifer expects library involvement in the community celebration. The library will partner with United by Culture to prepare a grant application for the NEA Big Read Program to present a One Book One Lexington program in 2024. The library is working in conjunction with a pilot program through Nebraska Public Media, PBS Kids, and NPR. Those organizations are offering family engagement programming. The engagement programming relates to the Lexington library's monthly family fun night. If the pilot program goes well funding will continue.

Allison Reisig – Problems with Western Nebraska Community College's website are requiring a redesign. With that, the library's website will also need changes. Allison said her plan for next spring is to do some focus groups with students, and conduct some user experience testing to make sure the library is making it as easy as possible for students to use the website. The library received a grant from the college's foundation to purchase a scanner. The scanner will be used to digitize the archives. The library has an abundance of student newspapers, yearbooks, and other publications to digitize for online access.

Mandy Peterson – Mandy said she is excited for 2024 and said she has the best "library buddy" to help her. Mandy said she takes her ideas and breaks things down really well into manageable steps. Mandy came back from the national conference with many ideas that will help solve some accessibility issues. They are looking at physical space and programming to determine how best to connect students with the library's resources. The effort is to try new things but also keep a lot of older things that have worked well. Mandy said it is nice to have support in her school in order to try something new. An intent is to define what success looks like in each of these areas and determine what works and what didn't. Much work is involved – moving things, re-cataloging, collaborating within the building and with teachers. In the end, Mandy expects that they will have a much stronger program for the next school year.

Lisa Irwin – Lisa said 2023 has been a difficult year for the library. Lisa had to take over a counselor role. As a result, library support has taken a side role. Lisa expects to get back to devoting more time to the library in 2024. Lisa mentioned some new technologies added to the library and said that kids have been asking when they will be able to use the new items. Lisa said there is not a lot of opportunity for juveniles in a detention center so efforts are to do things that they wouldn't be able to do at home or in their home schools. Lisa said it is great to be a part of the library community and hear all the things that are going on since she has been out of the loop since last June.

Joy Harvey – Joy said she is looking forward to working with the Lincoln school district's new librarians. Much effort has gone into developing new lessons and curriculum to support the new librarians who have just started their endorsement program. Joy said Lincoln High School has an incredible archive site that will post information from social media. Those who attended Lincoln High get excited to see an event they attended when they were at the school or even their own photo. The media staff want to expand the archive. Work has included scanning yearbooks. The district has a new reading curriculum that has opened opportunities to create digital e-book collections.

Council Round Table: Successes and Challenges

Mandy Peterson – Mandy commented about first quarter successes. During Teen Read Week 150 books were given away to middle and high schools kids. Students could sign up for any book from a list of titles. Another success has come from students embracing new events, programming, and other activities that have been happening in the school library. One challenge is the result of an updated library policy approved by the school board involving selection guidelines and challenge procedures. There have been no challenges thus far but a challenge process is in place. Only one challenge will be considered at a time. Challenges will be taken up in sequential order. The updated policies are not currently in the board policy manual or on the school website.

Allison Reisig – WNCC library created a new interlibrary loan request form for the library's discovery service. A link was added that pulls information into the form. This change increased use by more than 500% just for having that easily accessible feature for students. Receiving funds for the scanner was another success. A recent challenge is that the library's evening staff person submitted their resignation and will be gone in two weeks, right before finals week. Allie said that it is always a challenge to find someone to work only evenings and weekends.

Joy Harvey – Lincoln Public Schools Library Media Services has received positive responses to its library lessons and website. The media services library has a couple of documentarians. A series called "A Seat Beside You" tells the stories of the LPS's diverse students. Joy said that one of the videos won an Emmy award. The idea was inspiration from a conference staff attended a few years back and based on a book some students had written titled "Green Card Voices." The media services staff wanted to highlight some of those stories in a similar but different way. Joy said LPS has a new success the result of a new student e-hall pass and cell phone policy. Since students can't use their cell phones as much, they are checking out more library books.

Jennifer Norton – The Lexington public library completed a portion of the digitization of local newspapers (1912-1999). The papers are accessible on the library website. Jennifer hopes the digitization project will be completed in the coming year. Jennifer said the library recently hosted an adult program night with many young adults in their 20s and 30s playing board games. Those participating want to do this monthly, so the library will be adding this activity to its programming. Jennifer is working with the Lexington school district to start a high school teen book club. Alternative titles to several books suggested by Jennifer were provided by the administration.

Lisa Irwin – A challenge can be an opportunity. Lisa said that maintenance workers were in the library and asked about any changes that may be needed. Lisa said a new circulation desk and more storage are needed. Current items are from the 50s or 60s. Measurements were taken and a proposal will be presented. A challenge for Lisa is having more time in the library.

Gail Irwin – A significant success for the Ainsworth library is getting a new roof and rain gutter installed this fall following hail damage in the spring. An affirmation came from a child following story time who asked Gail "Oh, I love that, can we do that again?" Gail said, yes, we

do this regularly” and the child said, “Can you do this Monday through Friday?” Gail said the library has 82 children signed up for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The Ainsworth Chamber of Commerce is a co-sponsor. A challenge is keeping funds coming in to cover the cost of \$5 a child each month. Children from newborn to five years old receive a book once a month delivered to their house from the library.

***Rachel Steiner** – Omaha Public Library is proceeding with the new central library project and advocating for more staff to open it. Some challenges include time to train new staff and parking spaces. OPL was approved for nine new positions in 2024. Rachel said that OPL’s biggest challenge is when the new central library is opened the programming model that is used now is not sustainable.

***David Graber** – A success is no longer staffing the reference desk. The approach has been to empower and trust student workers to do what they normally wouldn’t do. The library’s late night position has health challenges and trusting student workers to cover at night has so far worked well. A WSC campus-wide challenge is staffing and retirements.

Michael Burris – Michael said that he previously talked about library programming participation being up 50%. That activity level is being maintained. Funding has been requested for new computers. We had an employee turn in their notice and a former employee who left has come back in replacement. A continuing challenge is the library building. The library’s new building plans didn’t go through.

Michael Straatmann – A challenge was damage from a coffee drain that leaked over a portion of the library collection. UNL has a \$23 million budget reduction of which, there is a \$12 million structural deficit. The library response is reducing its faculty expenditures. UNL Libraries is currently not filling any positions when they become open and reducing service hours.

Holli Duggan – NLA’s challenge is membership numbers. The association is down 66 members from last year. A success is a committee chair stepping down, but some committee members stepped up and took over. Holli said that Nebraska Library Week has been awesome.

Pat Gross – Pat said Western Library System libraries do a great job in programming. A success is Deb Carlson. Deb recently retired after 46 years at the Scottsbluff public library. Deb’s creativity, energy, and passion contributed to the remarkable successes for children and youth programming in the Scottsbluff community. Richard Landreth is Scottsbluff’s new library director. Pat said he is doing an “awesome job.” The Scottsbluff library held 11 adult programming special events this year with 276 participants. The Gering library had a humanities storytelling program and a musician. Scottsbluff had a movie night, fiber arts club, and active teen programming. Gering and Scottsbluff both had board game nights. Morrill had an open house for community awareness. Pat said the Morrill library has an adult community get together and book club every Friday night. Pat said that the challenge for libraries in western Nebraska is funding.

Tammi Thiem – A success for the Three Rivers Library System was taking a bus to Wichita, Kansas for librarians to attend the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) conference.

A challenge is libraries, library foundations and library friends groups dealing with local officials regarding library management, funding and policy issues.

Laura England-Biggs – Fremont will open its expanded and renovated new library in early 2024. Laura credited Fremont’s excellent construction team. The contractors have helped with contingency spending on a new circle drive that was ruined, construction, sod and building a library donor wall and interior signage. A challenge is departure of the library’s adult services librarian. That position now needs to be refilled. Laura said work is underway on library policy updates.

Jessica Chamberlain – Jessica said library staff is looking into revamping the Golden Sower Literacy festival with authors visiting schools in the community. All library position openings have been filled. Jessica said that a challenge is leaving the library automation consortium that Norfolk has been a part of for many years due to high expenses. A challenge is a rise in the number of patrons in the building with mental health issues.

Michael Sauers – Michael said that two weeks ago Do Space celebrated its eighth anniversary. Do Space has a new series on AI programming. Michael said Do Space is getting laser technology to offer to the public that sketches metal and doesn’t affect organic materials. Michael said staff training is being done online through a learning management system (LMS).

Cali Biaggi – Cali said that library space has improved with new furniture. An ongoing challenge is not having a dedicated archivist. Funding is available to hire a consultant. A large collection of vinyl records was disposed of freeing up a lot space. A continuing challenge is the library director position that has remained unfilled for the past year.

***Celine Swan** – One success is work on the library’s strategic plan. A naturalization ceremony was held at the library, a special and celebratory event. Celine noted other successful programming including support for book clubs. A funding success was a \$307,000 donor gift.

Stephanie O’Connor – not able to attend or participate in the meeting. Stephanie sent comments via email with copies distributed to members.

New Business

Special Recognition – Admiralships in the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska and certificates of appreciation were given to Jessica Chamberlain and Pat Gross for their two terms of service on the state advisory council.

Next meetings (2024) – March 20 (Nebraska Library Advocacy Day), July 19, and November 15.