

Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries

Atrium Building – Atrium Conference Center

Friday, July 16, 2021 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

via GoToWebinar

MINUTES

State Advisory Council members present: Jessica Chamberlain (chair), Cali Biaggi, Michael Burris, Scott Childers, Dixie Codner, Laura England-Biggs, David Graber, Pat Gross, Lori Long, Laura Marlane, Dana Morgan, Courtney Pentland, Tom Pfeifer, Charlene Rasmussen, Allison Reisig, Sky Seery, and Michael Straatmann. Council members absent: Joy Harvey, Gail Irwin, Stephanie O'Connor, and Lisa Olivigni. Others present: Cecelia Lawrence and Todd Schlechte. Commission staff present: Rod Wagner, Christa Porter, and Jennifer Wrampe.

Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

Chair Jessica Chamberlain welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes of March 19, 2021 Meeting: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2021 meeting. Motion approved.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Reports

Nebraska School Library Association

Courtney Pentland

Courtney reported that the Nebraska Department of Education's *Rule 10* provides staffing guidelines for school librarians. The rule requires school systems to staff at least one half-time certified school librarian and specific staffing requirements per building based on the student building population. This requires that every student receives support from a school librarian. The proposed *Rule* would provide staffing guidelines per system, not per building. A system the size of Omaha with 53,000 students would only need to staff one half-time certified school librarian with all the buildings staffed or monitored by an adult.

A group of school library professionals met over a two year period to provide recommended *Rule 10* changes. They recommended more staff, not less. The proposed *Rule* would create a minimum staffing requirement, and when specific staffing requirements are not in place, schools/districts would meet the minimum and not above. It has been documented that when a school librarian effectively supports their schools, student achievement improves. Courtney stated that every student in Nebraska deserves to receive services, support, and instruction from a certified school librarian. Not having a standard staff requirement based on student population would create inequities as schools will choose how to staff their school libraries differently, leaving some students without a school librarian in their building. Courtney recommends reviewing and sharing position statements from AASL to provide insight about staff, the definition of effective school library programming, instructional roles, the role of the school library program, and the school librarian's role in reading.

Courtney said that Nebraska School Librarians Day is scheduled for October 2021. There will be virtual and in-person sessions with sites in Omaha, Kearney, and Scottsbluff. NSLA is partnering with the regional library systems to feature pre-recorded sessions on virtual technology in the school library.

Nebraska Libraries Association

Laura England-Biggs

Laura reported that in place of Library Advocacy Day, a series of webinars is planned for April 2022. The NLA/NSLA Conference 2021 will include in-person sessions at the Omaha Hilton and a virtual conference.

Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska

Todd Schlechte

Todd Schlechte provided a handout. NLA and NSLA are organizational members of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska. The Coalition has a strong library connection for supporting the intellectual freedom of Nebraska students, teachers, researchers, and libraries since 1988. Other members are Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska State Literacy Association, UNL Faculty Senate, American Civil Liberties Union Nebraska Chapter, and the Nebraska High School Press Association. The purpose of the group is to promote academic freedom in Nebraska defined as intellectual freedom in an education and research context. AFCON has supported and opposed many legislative bills concerning Nebraska libraries. Todd welcomed SAFL members to join the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska.

Everyone is welcome to attend the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska annual meeting on November 13, 2021 beginning at 10:00 am. The theme is *“Race, Sex, and Academic Freedom in Elementary Education.”* There will be three separate sessions with activists followed by questions. Book banning has been a big issue at the Papillion-La Vista community schools. There will be a presenter speaking about controversies in health standards and a speaker about proposed changes in school library rules.

Nebraska Library Commission

Rod Wagner

Rod reported that since the last SAFL meeting, the legislature appropriated funding for the 2021-2023 biennium. The Library Commission was fortunate to receive funding close to its budget request. Higher than expected state tax revenues made it possible to fund some budget requests that typically would not be funded.

Rod reported that a bill, LB282, would remove protections for libraries and schools from prosecution for obscenity challenges. The bill did not advance from the legislature’s judiciary committee. However, the bill carries over to the 2022 legislative session. LB282 is the bill Todd Schlechte mentioned earlier, related to obscenity and the current protections for schools and libraries.

Another bill related to libraries is LB75. This bill concerns township libraries. A number of Nebraska counties have township organization, and some counties have discontinued township organization. There is no formal process in place to determine how township libraries will be funded with the elimination of townships. LB75 was initiated by the Nebraska Association of County Officials to provide a process to determine how libraries will be governed and funded following discontinuation of township organization. There was no opposition to the bill at the bill hearing, and the bill is on general file to carry over for consideration during the next legislative session.

The Nebraska Library Commission will receive approximately \$2.4 million from the *American Rescue Plan Act*. The state will receive \$1.1 billion. ARPA funds will also go to counties, cities, school districts, colleges, universities, and other public entities.

Legislation pending in Congress that might advance is the *Build America's Libraries Act*. This legislation would provide federal funds for states to support public library construction projects. Each state would receive a minimum of \$10 million plus a per capita amount to be spent over a three-year period.

LSTA appropriations have not been made for the coming federal fiscal year beginning October 1.

Christa Porter

Christa reported that \$7.2 billion has been allotted from the Emergency Connectivity Fund through ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) to help close the homework gap. Funds are to be used to connect teachers, students, and library patrons with better internet connections when they are off campus. Funds would provide internet connections and devices for students and teachers at school and public libraries for patrons' usage outside the library. Christa reported that this will provide options for improved internet connections and devices. K-12 schools and public libraries can apply for this funding. There is 100% coverage of costs relating to access to broadband devices. Laptops, tablets, and Wi-Fi hotspots can be purchased with these funds. Christa explained that this funding offers the same kind of service as E-rate, but it is not related to E-rate. Any library eligible for E-rate can apply for the ARPA funding. Applicants do not have to be participating in E-rate to apply. The web page is on the NLC website for FCC Emergency Connectivity Fund programs.

The IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) received \$200 million, of which \$178 million was allocated to the Grants to States Program. NLC will receive \$2.43 million, and those funds will be used for some statewide initiatives. The Nebraska OverDrive libraries will expand services. Compensation for interlibrary loan will be expanded. The Nebraska Public Service Commission has budgeted \$1 million to help libraries and schools with broadband connections. A matching fund provides that if a library applied for E-rate to run fiber to its building, and they have, for example, an 80% discount, E-rate pays for 80% and the library is responsible for the other 20%. The Public Service Commission will cover 10% of that amount, and because the state provided funds, E-rate will match the state amount. Christa and Holly Woldt will present a two-day workshop concerning ARPA funds for broadband. Six libraries have applied so far.

Council Discussion Topics – Toward Nebraska's Next LSTA Five-Year Plan

Rod Wagner reported that state library agencies are required to conduct an evaluation of their LSTA state programs. Sally Reed, former United for Libraries executive director, has agreed to be the consultant for Nebraska's program evaluation. The LSTA five-year program evaluation report is due March 31, 2022. The state advisory council will be one of the focus groups for the evaluation project. Sally Reed will meet with council members during the March 2022 council meeting. Sally will also meet with NLC staff involved in administering LSTA supported services.

Lunch

Council Round Table – Successes and Challenges

Laura Marlane

Laura reported that the Omaha Public Library is getting a pop-up bookmobile. A donor paid for the entire project. The bookmobile vehicle driver does not require a CDL license. The vehicle will have a Wi-Fi and PA system.

Stephanie O'Connor

Stephanie reported that 1,000 children participated in a carnival ride activity through the Summer Reading Program at Alliance Public Library.

Stephanie reported that she is planning a children's area in the library's basement. Staff is needed to manage the area. Stephanie is having difficulty getting patrons to return to the library for programming. Online programming has been very successful, but physical attendance in the library has not been.

Dana Morgan

Dana reported that a success is support from school administration and getting technology to reach all students. K-8 students use iPads and high school students use laptops. Dana believes her success is having technology available for all students.

Tom Pfeifer

Tom reported that the Follett System installation at the Nebraska State Penitentiary library has been completed. The new system has been helpful for the availability of other library resources. Tom reported that the Nebraska State Corrections budget has been unstable but he is excited about the new grant opportunities.

Pat Gross

Pat reported that she has been busy assisting with the summer reading program at Lied Scottsbluff Public Library. Registration for the program included over 1,600 children. A program held at the Scottsbluff Zoo, "Tail of the Monkey," was very popular. A seed program at the Scottsbluff library has been successful. One Book One Nebraska author, James Kimble, presented at the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering.

Lori Long

Lori reported that space was added to the library at Gothenburg Jr/Sr High School from a former computer lab. The library discontinued fines. Funds from previously collected fines were used to buy furniture. It has been a challenge since the furniture has not yet arrived, and school will be starting soon.

Allison Reisig

Allison reported that Western Nebraska Community College had a new president start in January 2020 that resigned in June 2021. Everyone is hopeful about changes at the college. The college is searching for a V.P. for academic services, which will supervise the Library. Another challenge is that the safety office wants to take over some of the library space.

Allison said she the Pioneer Consortium is researching options to replace the current software. Allison said that they are waiting to hear from ByWater Solutions, a resource-sharing company that supports small libraries with affordable service.

Michael Burris

Michael reported that parking is a problem for programming attendance at Holdrege Area Public Library. Michael said that he mentioned the parking issue at a library board meeting. This led to talk about a new library building. A survey will be distributed to determine patron needs. City administration is supportive

of a new library. On September 14, Holdrege Area Public Library will move from the Pioneer Consortium to Apollo.

Dixie Codner

Dixie reported that a challenge is that Central Community College (Grand Island) has had budget cuts the past two years. Most classes remain online so there is not much traffic at the library. Dixie is working to increase use of their makerspace. In June, the library was moved to the campus area, and she is looking forward to the changes this will bring.

Lisa Olivigni

Lisa reported that she is busy with orientation for interns funded by the NLC's Internship Grant. Lisa said that this is a big success for her.

Cecelia Lawrence

One of Cecelia's successes is mentoring other librarians she has worked with in the past. Sky Seery and Lisa Olivigni are two of those librarians. She is thrilled that Sky Seery will be the new North Platte Public Library director.

Cecelia reported that North Platte Public Library's summer reading program has been a big success. The teens held a Renaissance Fair Dinner. Cecelia said that she is looking forward to hiring a children's librarian, a position cut previously to save funds. She realizes now that this is an important position to keep. Other staff shortages have also been a challenge. Cecelia also reported that a new city administration and new board membership have brought many changes to the North Platte community.

Jessica Chamberlain

Jessica reported the Norfolk Public Library expanded a couple of years ago, and they were able to take some park space next to the library. The City of Norfolk has an initiative to use the rest of the park for a story walk trail. The Foundation Endowment Fund has hit the milestone of \$1 million. Read Aloud Norfolk is starting a "Dolly Parton Imagination Library."

Jessica said that a challenge is the mayor's concern for the library's meeting room use for political discussions. Jessica does not plan to change the meeting room policy, but will stress to users the meeting room's purpose. She wants to preserve intellectual freedom for the library's users.

Another challenge is staff turnover since 2020. There have been several resignations and retirements. Jessica has hired one of her former interns.

Laura England-Biggs

Laura reported that she has been appointed Director of Fremont's Keene Memorial Library. Laura has applied for several grants for the library expansion project. The library went fine-free with no problems. Laura plans to hire a children's librarian.

Scott Childers

Scott reported that a challenge for the Southeast Library System region is that several librarians are retiring or leaving their positions (Wymore, Exeter, Western, and Beatrice). Many summer reading program events have been held in person. Scott reported that Crete Public Library will celebrate its

grand opening in September. After several months of closing, the Valparaiso Public Library is open with regular hours. A new library director has been hired with a new library board. Scott reported that curbside service at libraries has been successful and popular.

Michael Straatmann

Michael reported that UNL's Love Library will be fully staffed on August 7, 2021. There are discussions about safety and security for the library entrance. Michael is working on privacy issues such as chat groups and ILS consortium transactions. Another challenge is politics in teaching theories without supporting one opinion or another.

Charlene Rasmussen

Charlene reported that Heather Headley, Wayne Public Library director has been busy with the summer reading program. The Wayne Public Library foundation will sponsor a fundraising drive to provide funds for a needed library storage area.

David Graber

David reported that an anticipated challenge at Wayne State College's Conn Library is changing staff habits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, library staff willingly left their homes or offices to work at the library even though the doors never closed. Library staff used online services as much as possible. The dynamic in the library has changed to mostly students in the library. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty members frequented the library every day. It is a challenge to change faculty behaviors, and David is considering ways to encourage faculty to return to the library. Another challenge is construction activity at WSC resulting in a lack of classroom space. Several classes will be held in library meeting rooms this fall, taking space from library uses. David believes that having classes in the library will bring faculty back to the library.

Cali Biaggi

Cali reported that her biggest challenge is the new president at Doane University. The president made some significant changes at Doane University, and then tenured her resignation last month. There is an interim president, but the board has indicated that it will be a while before they pursue a presidential search. Cali believes that a big success is that the library is ready to accept students coming back this fall, and her staff is excited for the new academic year.

New Business

Recommendations and Resolutions

Rod Wagner said a draft statement was sent to Courtney Pentland and Joy Harvey supporting school librarians' recommendations concerning the Nebraska Department of Education's *Rule 10*. Courtney responded that she would like the statement to include language to address what students would miss without school librarians. Courtney said that she would like the State Advisory Council on Libraries and the Library Commission to submit a statement to the Department of Education in support of school librarians.

Wagner reported that studies in a number of states verify that the presence of a school librarian results in higher student productivity. Presently, there are no Nebraska standards for school libraries. The AASL (American Association of School Librarians) has standards established, but they are not standards endorsed by the Nebraska Department of Education. Pat Gross added that statistics included in the letter would be beneficial, as it would support a higher minimum standard to ensure a good outcome involving all school districts throughout the state.

A recommendation was made and approved to agree to the second version of the support statement concerning *Rule 10*.

Rod invited council members to a brief presentation by Gabe Kramer, Talking Book and Braille staff Service Director, following the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.