

**Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries**  
Telephone/Online Conference  
Thursday, November 18, 2021 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (CST)

**MINUTES**

State Advisory Council members present via GoToWebinar: Jessica Chamberlain (Chair), Michael Straatmann, Michael Burris, Cali Biaggi, Laura England-Biggs, Allison Reisig, Pat Gross, Joy Harvey, Scott Childers, Lori Long, Lisa Olivigni and Gail Irwin. Commission Staff members present: Rod Wagner, Christa Porter, and Jennifer Wrampe. Other attendees: Sally Reed.

**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: A correction to a typo on page four was made to Pat Gross' report. "'Tail of the Monkey,' was very popular." A correction on page six, under Cali Biaggi's report, Allison Reisig made the comment about looking for other options to replace the Pioneer Consortium service instead of Cali. Allison also corrected that they had lost their president at Western Nebraska Community College and were currently with an interim president. A motion was then made and seconded to approve the July 16, 2021 minutes as amended. Motion approved.

**Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

**Reports**

Nebraska School Librarians Association

**Joy Harvey**

Sara Friest, librarian at Southeast High School, was awarded the "School Librarian of the Year" award. This was the first time that NSLA has given out that award and Sara was definitely a great first-time recipient. Sara is a creative and innovative librarian with an incredible story as a librarian and with family experiences. There have been several *Lincoln Journal Star* articles about Sara as well. Nebraska Department of Education Rule 10 changes are on hold. The current provisions for library staffing are in place. It could be a couple years before anything further happens regarding rule changes. School Librarians' Day was held on October 16. The virtual conference was very successful.

Nebraska Library Association

**Laura England-Biggs**

NLA had a successful hybrid conference in October. There were 208 virtual registrations and 165 in-person, with 22 paid exhibitors and 6 sponsors. Many of the presentations received high marks. NLA received 99 responses to the after-conference survey. Several negative comments were about signage and COVID precautions. Overall, the majority was positive and pleased librarians were able to meet and reconnect with each other. Financially, the conference ended negative \$8,700, but NLA can sustain that this year, knowing that it would be a tight year. Laura England-Biggs received the "Mad Hatter" award. There was a very good session on the previous Tuesday discussing the nuances of advisory boards for libraries, put together by the Advocacy Committee.

## Nebraska Library Commission

### **Rod Wagner**

Tom Pfeifer has resigned. Tom has moved to Kansas City. A replacement will be recruited to fill the vacancy. Charlene Rasmussen, from Wayne, has recently resigned. Charlene is moving to Boulder, Colorado.

The Library Innovation Studios project is coming to its official end on December 31. Originally a three-year federally funded grant, there was an extension of an additional year and then a no-cost, no-additional funds extension of six months. The additional six months is intended to give the final group of project libraries the opportunity to fully host the makerspace equipment, due to the pandemic disruptions. The last official event for the project was the Makerspace Conference held at the Nebraska Innovation Campus on November 2-3. The conference brought together 150 participants. The conference included many presentations and demonstrations. The conference was a good opportunity to recognize the project libraries, librarians, and staff. The Commission will pick up equipment from the last group of library hosts in December and early January. Included are the libraries in McCook, Bellevue, and La Vista. JoAnn McManus distributed a survey to the 35 project libraries, asking about equipment that they have an interest in. Once the responses are received, the NLC will determine distribution of makerspace equipment and supplies among the libraries.

Library Services and Technology Act Appropriations – Congress adopted a continuing resolution extending funding for federal agencies and programs through early December, assuming they will extend that funding into January when a new congressional session begins. When appropriations are made for the remainder of the federal fiscal year, some increase is expected in the LSTA Grants to States program and other Institute of Museum and Library Services programs.

Arunkumar Pondicherry, Commission Chair, and Lois Todd-Meyer, Vice-Chair, were reappointed to a second term on the Commission. Beth Kabes was newly appointed. Beth replaces Debby Bloom who completed her second term on the Commission and was not eligible for re-appointment.

### **Christa Porter**

There has been a lot of grant work this year and last. From American Rescue Plan Act funding, the IMLS was awarded \$200 million for allocation to state library agencies. Nebraska received \$2.4 million. Grant applications are currently being evaluated. A majority will go to public libraries as formula grants (\$1.4 million). Each library is eligible for a base amount of \$3,750 plus a per capita amount. The Library Commission website includes a list of eligible libraries, the amount available for the library, and the application status. Libraries can request funding through December 31. Since these funds are set aside for libraries, the application acknowledges grant requirements and serves as the basis for issuing payment. Sam Shaw and Christa are working with libraries on the grant process. Christa encouraged eligible libraries to apply. Some of the ARPA funding will also be used for NLC Youth Grants for Excellence and Library Improvement Grants. For these grants, many more applications were submitted than expected. Ninety-five applications were submitted for the Library Improvement grants (\$900,000) and 106 applications for the Youth grants (\$392,000). A proposal to increase the funding for these grants will be presented to the Commissioners at their meeting tomorrow in order to approve more of the applications. Other ARPA funding was used for statewide initiatives: OverDrive, Interlibrary Loan Lender Compensation, regional library systems, Niche Academy, Reader Zone, and purchase of additional books for the Library Commission's book club kits and professional development collection.

In addition to the ARPA funding opportunities, the NLC is offering internship grants and continuing education and training grants, using state funds. The internship grants closed on November 5 with 35 applications received (\$34,000). Because ARPA funds were used for the other grants, more state funds were available for these grants. The CE and training grants are open for applications through January 14.

The public library accreditation process has been on hold for the last two years due to the pandemic. This year, a modified accreditation process was implemented for libraries that were applying for the first time or for those whose accreditation had lapsed. Five libraries were newly accredited this year: Elm Creek, Rising City, Sutherland, St. Edward, and Shelton. The usual accreditation process for renewals will open again next year.

All libraries that applied for E-Rate discounts for 2021 received them (63 libraries). Six libraries submitted a fiber special construction application available from the Nebraska Public Service Commission to install fiber to their buildings: Bancroft, Bayard, Beatrice, Clay Center, Verdigre, and Wymore. E-Rate applications are open. Christa has scheduled virtual training sessions for dates in November and December.

The “Big Talk From Small Libraries” online conference is scheduled to be held on February 25. Christa plans, arranges, and hosts the conference. The conference is co-sponsored by the Association for Rural and Small Libraries. Speakers are from libraries serving populations of 10,000 or less. The conference is intended for all types of libraries. The call for speakers is open. The deadline to submit a proposal is January 14.

**Council Discussion Topic:**

**Nebraska’s LSTA Five-Year Program Evaluation – Sally Reed, Program Evaluator**

Every five years, state library agencies are required to have an independent evaluation of their LSTA funded state programs. Evaluation reports are to be completed by the end of March 2022. The Library Commission contracted with Sally Reed to conduct the evaluation for Nebraska’s LSTA state program. Sally has met with the regional library system directors and Commission staff members who are involved with LSTA supported services.

Sally asked if this Council had participated in the planning process of the plan currently being evaluated. No current members had been involved.

Sally asked if any academic libraries or school libraries received LSTA funded services or programs through the NLC. Michael Straatmann said that he was not aware of the services’ effect on the budget at UNL. Joy Harvey also agreed that it was unclear about school libraries. Pat Gross said that the availability for schools is there, as she had used the Commission’s NebraskAccess service (databases made available for educational research) as a school librarian with her students. Also, through the regional systems, the Commission supported training and workshops for school librarians in the panhandle. Joy Harvey said that LPS had access to these resources as well, but was unclear about the funding sources. Scott Childers added that larger schools and systems may not need the extra support like the smaller schools around the state do, and suggested contacting some of those schools to better understand the impact of the Commission. Allison Reisig reported that Western Nebraska Community College also uses NebraskAccess and some of the group purchasing and discounted rates. Lori Long commented (in the chat) that her school uses NebraskAccess and the consortium pricing discounts.

Sally explained that there are three major goal areas in the five-year plan:

- 1) “All Nebraskans will benefit from lifelong learning and cultural enrichment delivered through their library programs and services.” Sally asked the Council how effective they feel the Commission has been in providing that kind of lifelong learning and cultural enrichment. Michael Burris commented that their library is a big OverDrive supporter and uses that service to find out-of-print books for their patrons, making them cheaper and accessible. A much bigger collection is available using OverDrive. Michael Straatmann commented on the Commission’s interlibrary loan services, and ability to send materials all over the state, which can be critical for smaller

libraries. Joy Harvey commented on the professional staff of the Commission, for example at conferences, staff members present on best books, which helps librarians curate their collections. Jessica Chamberlain commented on grant opportunities and projects, such as the Library Innovation Studios project that contributes to lifelong learning. Michael Straatmann brought up the Talking Book and Braille Service which is significant for making sure all Nebraskans have access, as there is no other program like it in the state. Pat Gross added that the Commission's support of summer reading programs is significant across the state, helping promote library programs. Without their help, many libraries may not be able to sustain a summer reading program. ReaderZone is also available through the regional library systems with support from the Commission. Michael Burris said that this has helped double participation at the Holdrege library. Joy Harvey said (in chat) that the support for summer reading extends to school libraries, especially as they offer more programs through ESSR funds. Allison commented (in chat) that the Commission has helped bridge the digital divide for rural Nebraskans without access to internet connections – to get funding and to work with schools to get fiber internet connections into public libraries. NebraskAccess also contributes to lifelong learning as well.

- 2) “Library staff and supporters will have the tools and skills to provide and sustain needed programs and services to their target audiences.” Sally asked in what ways does the NLC help with continuing education and their continuing skills? Michael Straatmann commented about the data that's made available through the website for libraries on things like communities or funding. There are a great number of information resources provided on the website. Michael Burris mentioned that he has worked in two other states and was referred to Nebraska's website in both places for training, especially NCompass Live. Many agreed how great the sessions and presenters are, as well as the “Big Talk From Small Libraries” online conference. The “Data Services” page on the NLC website has a huge number of statistics available to Nebraska libraries that they can use to help with planning. Gail Irwin commented (in chat) about the NLC support and hosting of the libraries' WordPress sites. Jessica Chamberlain mentioned the grants to attend conferences like PLA or ARSL for library staff. In addition, the United for Libraries resources made available through the NLC and meetings with the regional library directors.
- 3) “The Nebraska Library Commission promotes library services statewide and collaborates with libraries to effectively market their programs, their services, and their value to the community.” The personalized local-level data sheets the NLC made for Advocacy Day were very helpful to share with elected officials and other state officials. The NLC working with Nebraska Library Association (NLA) to have a presence at the League of Municipalities to present this information directly to city administrators which has been a challenge. Allison commented (in chat) that the NLC regularly has training on social media, marketing, advocacy, etc. on NCompass Live. Scott Childers commented that the NLC and the regional library systems work closely together to meet and fill needs across the state. Sally commented that she had met with Tessa Terry earlier and their discussion of goals to create a general library marketing campaign. Pat Gross emphasized the makerspaces project (Library Innovation Studios) and summer reading programs. Jessica mentioned the great service and effort of the NLC staff to help librarians with questions.

### **Council Round Table: Successes and Challenges**

**Cali Biaggi:** Cali (Doane University) is no longer the interim library director. Doane appointed a new permanent director, Roger Getz, who started November 1. Cali reported that COVID is not as bad on campus this year and generally, conditions are better. Doane just had its HLC (Higher Learning Commission) accreditation/insurance visit. The meetings seemed to go well.

**Joy Harvey:** Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) has been able to boost library collections that have aged or been lost, as well as digital collections. LPS is opening two new schools and have hired the librarian for the new high school. Joy reported that LPS has experienced increased book challenges from parents.

**Scott Childers:** For the Southeast Library System area, some libraries have been able to hold in-person events. Pawnee City and Central City both celebrated milestone anniversaries of being in their current buildings. Some libraries have had director changes, which is an opportunity to bring in some new librarians in smaller communities. Rising City recently received accreditation and is working on building plans. Scott agreed with Joy about the increase in book challenges and commented on the increased focus on libraries by the community, though this could be an opportunity to reinforce the value and importance of libraries.

**Gail Irwin (in chat):** Success was attending the November makerspace conference. Gail thanked JoAnn McManus and the Commission for all their hard work. The library's adult programming has had good participation. COVID has continued to be a challenge. Children's programming has been on hold again.

**Pat Gross:** At Scottsbluff, Jill Winchell has taken over the book club and is quite successful back in-person. Most programs have returned to in-person and things are improving. At the Gering library, a summer reading school challenge was held with public school and homeschool students. The school that won gets to display the trophy for the year. Christie Clarke, children's librarian, has started LEAP (learn, explore, achieve, play) which is an early childhood literacy program for children ages three to five. At the Scottsbluff library, Elaine Bleisch started a teen book club. The teens get together and talk/defend their books (grades six through twelve). Another new program is STEAM Punks for third through eighth graders. Ethan Nelson started a board game club. The club meets monthly. The "Very Merry Christmas" market has asked the library to come in to help with a Christmas story time on December 4.

**Allison Reisig:** The Dean of Instruction resigned several months ago. The position has been restructured. A new Dean has been hired and will start in January. Staffing has been a challenge as has limited hours. Hopefully, they will be able to hire another part-time person and increase hours.

**Laura England-Biggs:** Justine Ridder is Fremont's new youth services librarian. Justine is starting new programming. Fundraising is going great. Laura recently finished a survey about the "Shovel-Ready" grant that they applied for. Laura said a challenge is keeping library aide positions staffed.

**Michael Straatmann:** At UNL, the east campus library is nearly a year old. Student worker hiring has been difficult (about 70% capacity). They are looking at adjusting the 24/7 schedule for finals week. Architecture library is closing for renovation and downsizing. Most services are back in place. As a result of strategic planning, the organizational structure is undergoing changes (new departments, new reporting). Michael reported an anticipated challenge and success related to the editorial by Chancellor Green in the Omaha World Herald regarding UNL's journey for anti-racism and equity published the previous day. The libraries have released their own statement. This should be an opportunity to engage the community and the state.

**Michael Burris:** A cataloger will be retiring at the end of the year, after thirty-two years. Two applications have been received and Michael hopes to fill the position soon. Moving forward with new building plans (21,000 sq. ft.). The proposed location is near the high school and junior high, so those students would have better access as well. To keep costs down, the architects suggested a park with memorial trees. The location may be difficult. Some community members who live in the area are not happy with possible increases in taxes and traffic. Everything in the library has returned to in-person.

**Jessica Chamberlain:** The library will get an electric vehicle charger from a citywide grant. The grant funding available right now is both a success and an exciting challenge. Library staffing is also difficult (resignations and retirements). Increased scrutiny is also a challenge, as others have mentioned. Services are back to normal, but COVID is still a struggle.

**Lisa Olivigni:** Summer reading was a success with 14,000 registered. All programs were outside. The city is working on new facility plans.

**Stephanie O'Connor** (via email): Stephanie reported that the library has had many problems with its HVAC system (just under \$1 million to replace). A bookmobile service was launched to deliver hundreds of books to schools, daycares, and homebound patrons. Funds are being sought through the city to complete/finish the library's lower level and hire another librarian.

#### Recommendations and Resolutions

There were no recommendations or resolutions brought before the Council.

Rod Wagner said that the 2022 One Book One Nebraska selection is Jonis Agee's *Bones of Paradise*. Jonis Agee is excited to travel across the state for presentations and book discussions. Humanities Nebraska has added Jonis to its Speakers Bureau.

Charlene Rasmussen and Laura Marlane are completing their second terms. They will both receive recognition items for their council service. Several members are completing their first terms and Rod will be contacting them about second terms. Rod thanked Jessica for her work as Council Chair this year.

#### Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting date will be March 2022 (date and location TBD).