

May 2008

Vermont Library Association Government Relations Committee Report

During the summer and fall of 2007 the GRC met regularly with members of the Legislative Study Committee that was mandated in the 2007 Act 25. The legislative study analyzed aid for public libraries in 11 states that are comparable to Vermont. The average amount of state support from this sample group was \$2.24 per capita. If we were to receive this amount in Vermont, public libraries would receive \$1.4 million. In 2005 we received \$15,500. It also contained the VLA Case Study, created by the GRC, to inform Vermont Legislators of the issues facing Vermont's public libraries and to make our case for direct state aid. Members of the GRC along with VLA lobbyist, John Shullenberger, worked closely with the committee to provide resources for this mandated document.

At the same time, in collaboration with the VLA Intellectual Freedom Committee, and especially Trina Magi, the GRC worked to create and pass a new confidentiality law for libraries. On both of these legislative initiatives lobbyist John Shullenberger worked diligently to counsel VLA and create opportunities for us to appear and influence (!) members of the House and Senate on both direct state funding and confidentiality.

The GRC organized the annual Library Legislative Day on January 18 at the Statehouse. Librarians, trustees, Friends and supporters gathered to meet with legislators and hear from Vermont authors Howard Norman, Reeve Lindbergh and Philip Baruth in support of state aid to libraries.

In spite of broad legislative support, the initiative for direct state funding did not succeed this year. Exploring creative funding streams outside of or along with the general fund would help to move this important legislation forward in next year's session. The GRC is committed to the proposition that the state of Vermont needs to join the 42 other states that recognize the fundamental importance of libraries in strong communities and provide support for their vital services to Vermonters.

Meetings with the Vermont Telecommunications Authority Board began in March with potential collaborations explored.

Committee Members 2007-2008

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