

Vermont Library Association Board Retreat
August 2, 2011
1867 Room, Dewey Center at Johnson State College
10am – 3pm

Present: Joe Farara, Deborah Gadwah-Lambert, Helen Linda, Jane Napier, Christine Friese, Deb Spackman, Grace Greene, Cindy Weber, Shara McCaffrey, Lucinda Walker, Heidi Steiner, Andy Burkhardt, Kat Redniss, Laurel Stanley, Wynne Browne, Marty Reid.

Meetings minutes by: Heidi Steiner.

Meeting called to order at 10:10am

Joe opened the meeting with a welcome and expression of his enthusiasm for VLA and his presidential year. As some on the board did not know one another, a roundtable of introductions commenced. The agenda was then approved with no additions, but the order of discussion was shuffled.

Conference Updates (Jane)

Report from this year's conference was really good. The only big complaint was everyone going to lunch at once and the sparse vegetarian and gluten free options. There is \$17,000 in the conference budget and the conference costs \$6,000 to put on, so we are in good shape. No one wants off the conference committee so the roster is the same, but there is one new member: Amy McMullen from Hartland.

The committee recently met to wrap up the past committee and discuss locations for 2012 as well as the keynote speaker. Other than St. Mike's, the committee received bids from a few other institutions, but none could match them; the closest was \$8,500 compared to \$6,000. So, it's looking like the 2012 conference will be back at St. Mike's. The committee is getting the insurance together and calling the date as the Tuesday before Memorial Day: May 22nd.

Because of the room in the conference budget, there is some flexibility in terms of how much we can afford to pay for a keynote speaker. Jane has been taking suggestions and sent out "celebrity" e-mails. Stephen Colbert has come up and Joe Raiola is putting in a good word with Colbert's people, but he will probably be too expensive. The typical practice has been alternating between speakers with more of a library connection and then those with less of a connection who are entertaining. The committee is actively taking suggestions. Some of the names suggested:

- Jane has already received suggestions for Bill McKibben and people from NPR.
- Kat mentioned Dan Savage, John Green, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Amy Goodman (not funny, so much, but very good about making topic applicable to libraries).
- Helen has already suggested Neil Gaiman, but reiterated that he often lowers his rate for libraries. She also suggested Simon Winchester.
- Joe named blogged Andrew Sullivan.

Jane noted \$3,000 is probably the most we've ever spent on a keynote and asked if we could spend more? The consensus seemed to be that paying more for someone really great would be reasonable. The other consideration is that last year's attendance was 328 and St. Mike's can only hold 337, so we cannot get much bigger. A lot of people showed up on the day last year and we don't want to turn people away. The keynote needs to be set as soon as possible.

Jane queried the board as whether or not anything has been “missed.” Cindy asked about the closing speaker, but Jane noted feedback has been that people would rather see more content and are opposed to starting earlier or ending later. The only thing people mentioned missing was exhibitors, strangely—they want free stuff. There also seems to be demand for something social/entertaining in the evening. The board discussed the possibility of making a more formal announcement about a social event and there seemed to be agreement something like this was possible.

The deadline for workshop ideas is November 1st, so get them in to Jane. Helen requested something to post to the list so there is a bit more publicity about the call and people don’t feel like they’re being put off/left out. Jane noted the proposal does not have to be formal, just an idea. The conference will all be laid out before Christmas, with the website ready to go by February 1st. Early registration will be until April 1st and we will probably offer VLA prices to VSLA again this year (40-50 registered last year). Will likely be the same price and once there’s a keynote the theme will get established.

Final conference updates included that Joe has been getting inquiries from authors. Anything like that should be referred to Jane, who is prepared to handle solicitations. Kat noted that a Vermont author panel could be really cool and Grace stated there used to be an author/illustrator reception that was a lot of work, but very well received. The response seemed to be there simply probably was not room for something like that in the one-day event.

Budget (Wynne)

We are still under budget. Wynne distributed the budget and also emailed it to the board. Feel free to ask her questions. The Swan Endowment should have about \$100 of interest being transferred in; she just needs to add it. The budget is on the calendar year and Wynne has been budgeting membership income realistically; we have already exceeded the anticipated income of \$10,000 from membership fees.

NELLS (Joe)

There was a flurry of emails recently about the protocol surrounding VLA support/scholarships for members attending NELLS. Wynne confirmed we voted at the board meeting in May that VLA would pay \$300 per Vermont participant. There are five Vermont attendees this year. The money has been sent to NELLS and taken out of the budget.

Committee and Section Updates

Andy (College & Special Libraries) – Just incoming, but helped Charlotte some with the June event “What’s New Under the Sun.” There were about 30-35 attendees and 8 presentations. Topics covered reference and instruction with presenters from a variety of institutions. There is Central Vermont Librarian Meet-Up on Friday night at Black Door in Montpelier. Andy is hoping to organize one for Burlington/Chittenden County as well.

Lucinda (Public Libraries) – There still seems to be a lot of interest from public librarians about ebooks: how to use them, download them to different devices, etc? Would like to see another program about this at the 2012 conference. Lucinda wants to work with the personnel committee to do another salary survey. Others agreed this would be really helpful on many fronts.

Laurel (VLTA Rep) – The VLTA is meeting in November.

Kat (Youth) – Excited about the year and has Amy McMullen as VP. They want to do a day program looking at programs for kids that are “Fresh, Cheap, and Easy.” Part of the day will hopefully include teens themselves coming in to discuss what they need from their library. They are also looking at having regional workshops through partnerships with local public access TV on technology for movie making, etc. Grace noted tying this to the video contest could be a great partnership.

Shara (Personnel) – Not really sure what she is supposed to do. Noted libraries are heading into harder times and we need to be prepared to answer hard questions; not just about budgets, but proving we’re still relevant.

Cindy (Membership) – Reminder cards were sent in January and there was a big influx of membership. Membership this year is 351 with 59 new members. Cindy will start on the next round of reminders in late November/early December. Laurel brought up being curious about how many libraries support memberships for their librarians. Wynne thought checks coming in are about 50-50 between personal and libraries. After some discussion, it was decided to add a question about this to the personnel salary survey Lucinda and Shara will be developing, so it can remain anonymous. Cindy also noted she will make some clarifications to the membership form regarding the listserv/newsletter.

Grace (Awards) – Reiterated there was not a single nomination for the Sarah Hager Award this past year. Grace was very shocked by this as the call for nominations was marketed the same way as usual. She encouraged everyone to start thinking about potential nominees now. There were a number of nominations for the Trustees Award and we ended up awarding two. All VLA awards are listed on the website.

Deb (Government Relations) – The committee is down to three members and is having a hard time figuring out what their focus should be. Wonder if they should be playing a bigger role in advocacy and helping libraries advocate in their own towns? The government that needs to be addressed for many public libraries in the state *right now* is local. Laurel reiterated this and Helen noted having a customizable advocacy packet is something we’ve needed for a long time. Marty thinks it’s a really good time to start talking to our state legislators, showing them the influence we have on things related to them (jobs, jobs, jobs). We need to start identifying possible legislators and talking to them.

Joe reiterated the perpetual issue of fighting the stigma that libraries are no longer necessary. Andy brought up the importance of proving value—not just numbers, but anecdotes. We can play a role in teaching libraries how to demonstrate value and be proactive, not just reactive. How do we capture these things so they are accessible and easy to share? Lucinda said her library started a story template where they collect stories/anecdotes and it has been tremendous, providing infectious positivity. There was lots of food for thought during this committee update!

Helen (Editorial) - The newsletter was rebooted at the beginning of the year and the third issue just came out this morning. Anecdotally people seem to like having it and Helen is tracking click data. Just over 300 people have chosen to receive the newsletter. Helen tentatively plans to follow up with people who said opted out in case there was possible confusion with the listserv (this goes back to the clarifications Cindy will be making on the membership form). Helen wants to be sure people who want the newsletter are getting it. The next newsletter will be November 1st and she will need pieces one week before. New board members who are comfortable with WordPress can write Helen for login credentials. She is also willing to hold another WP training if there is demand, which there seemed to be.

The VT Library Substitute Pool continues to grow (107 people), but Helen is not getting any anecdotal evidence that the connections are happening. If you know someone who has had success, let her know. She is also still encountering employers who don't know about it. She encouraged everyone to take a look at the sign-up sheet and see if anything important is missing. Helen is planning to contact people have been on there for a long time and find out if they need to be removed or updated (the original plan was to only keep folks on for a year).

Deborah (VP) – Thinking about an agenda for her Presidential term, but is leaning towards advocating for the profession.

Marty (DOL) – It was really great to work with VLA on the marketing project, as it was a great example of partnerships that she hopes to do more of. There are a some big things and many projects on the horizon:

- Letters went out to public library directors about the Catamount Library Network and creating a state-wide, open source ILS. The five pilot libraries are set and expect to be up and running in 2013. A consultant has been hired to look at Koha and Evergreen, they will then determine what fits best. An ILL Task Force chaired by Mara Siegel and Emily Alling has been convened and a survey went out to look at options. Both of these projects are a natural fit for state funding.
- DOL continues to work on two federal broadband projects.
- The E-Vermont Project delivered equipment and technology to 13 libraries and another 10 are anticipated in the coming year.
- One partnership possibility between DOL and VLA is looking at a bus rental, scholarship, or some other idea for getting VT librarians to PLA in Philadelphia in March. Something to work together on?
- DOL is looking at the local, state, and federal fiscal pictures. IMLS is really going to be making changes and evaluating their priorities, which trickles down to the states. DOL has hired consultants to evaluate their five-year LSTA plan. The report will be finished sometime in February and then they have to write a new five-year plan. Marty wants to form a planning group for the new plan that includes librarians from outside DOL.
- Having strong citizen advocacy networks in place has saved some states (New Jersey, for example) and we do not have one. DOL is starting to develop that network as a priority.
- Universal class is a Recorded Books sponsored product that will launch in all public libraries in September. It features everything from hobbies to lifelong learning, job training, Microsoft Office Applications, and much more. Citizens can take up to five classes at a time, there is a real instructor, in some cases there's CE credit, and you have six months to finish classes. They are working on marketing.
- Marty attended a day long retreat for all other state department heads with Governor Shumlin. His #1 priority is job creation and workforce development. Also access to healthcare information and reduction of repeat offenders. Libraries have a roll to play in all of these things. He also wants saved funds to go to early literacy education.
 - Grace noted the Early Literacy Initiative reaches out to children directly, through their parents, and through childcare providers. It started with 30 libraries and 23 more are being added; a good chunk of the viable libraries will be participating. It is a costly program because books are provided and is thus not sustainable, so they are looking at ways to reach other funders.

- Considering sponsoring an Annual Summit on a specific topic with some extra funds. Marty is looking for topic and speaker ideas? They want to have working sessions, not just sitting around listening to people talk. Stemming from the earlier discussion, an advocacy bootcamp seemed to be a well-received concept. Kat mentioned PLA's Turning the Page 2.0 six-week course as a possible model. She is taking it soon and will report back, as well as write it up for the next newsletter. Please send any other ideas to Marty.

Meeting Schedule for the Coming Year

Tuesdays are hard for some folks to get away, so the second Wednesday of every other month will be the rule this year. All will be at 10 am.

- October 12th – Brownell Public Library, Essex Junction
- January 18th – Norwich University, Northfield (*not this date changed since the meeting!*)
- March 7th – Department of Libraries, Berlin
- May 16th – Goddard College, Planfield

Organization Handbook (Grace)

Grace volunteered to work with Nancy Wilson and former VLA President, Daisy Benson, to create an organization handbook. They met once and talked about what should be in it. The handbook will include position descriptions, policies and possibly how-tos (like: how to plan a program). It will be a living document and will never truly be finished. Grace requested everyone look at their position's description on the website and make sure they are accurate. She encouraged everyone to also contact people previously in the position for additional information. Send Grace updates to the descriptions by the end of August.

A discussion of the role of Vice-Presidents in sections resulted. Why don't all sections have them?? It was decided VPs would be useful all-around for continuity and that this would be discussed further.

Strategic Plan (Joe)

The Strategic Plan was last updated on 9/2/2008. Joe proposes we undertake rewriting the new five-year strategic plan since the current one ends in May 2012. Helen stated it was reviewed two years ago and a record of it should be in the minutes, but she's not sure if it was ever translated into the document or posted. John Payne may have a copy, as well. Joe will review minutes from previous years and circulate an updated plan well before the next meeting. It was also mentioned that the minutes need to be more visible on the website.

Other Business

Helen proposed an option of a combined VSLA and VLA membership would be less expensive than both individually in an effort to maintain a relationship between the organizations. She felt like it would not be unprecedented. Wynne stated it sounds simple enough to look into and suggested that perhaps adding on VLA for a certain amount would be a good option. Marty noted they already have a dual membership option with NEEMA, so there is precedent. Cindy will contact the Membership chair for VSLA.

Grace asked the status of the logo. Helen stated the logo got stalled. She reviewed that nobody likes it, it's dated, and is too small so renderings are very bad. We worked with a graphic designer who quoted reasonable to improve the logo, but it was ultimately decided that it really needed to be redone. Laurel questioned why we need two anymore (one for VLA and one for VLC) and we don't since it's no longer a

joint conference. The prospect of using Champlain College students was presented. Andy will look into it and talk some graphic design professors. It could be a good learning experience for students to have clients and present multiple options.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00pm