President's Letter
by Kevin Unrath

Heading back into fall, much is up in the air for Vermont’s libraries right now. What will COVID-19 look like over the cold months? What will our funding look like next year? These are challenging times, and no one can predict what 2021 will look like right now any more than we might have predicted 2020. It’s important to realize that we have more uncertainty now than in the past, and that uncertainty is stressful. I’ve been telling my staff to make sure they engage in the self-care they deserve right now, and if they’re feeling overwhelmed, have someone to reach out to for help.

In order to alleviate the uncertainty of next year’s conference, the VLA board has decided to hold an all virtual conference in 2021. Perhaps some in-person gathering will be possible, but planning all virtual will allow for us to get together, learn, and grow regardless of what’s happening. We hope this encourages more attendance statewide, lowering the barrier for participation.

We’re currently recruiting a virtual conference chair to help facilitate the conference. This position comes with a $1000 stipend, and is a good opportunity for someone who enjoys bringing people together online to share their skills! Please send me an email by November 9th if you’d be interested in this role: kunrath@shelburnevt.org.

Very best,

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Vermont Library Association
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Public Libraries
by Barbara Ball

The VLA Public Libraries Section has been busy drafting a public relations campaign. This campaign is aimed at raising awareness around what Vermont's public libraries achieve collectively, and highlighting local libraries' contributions and successes. The end result will be printable posters that individual libraries can alter to highlight their particular situations and the value they provide to their communities. A huge thanks to Dana Hart, Ilsley Public Library Director, for envisioning and spearheading this project, and to Margaret Woodruff, Charlotte Public Library Director, for helping out. Text from a sample poster from this project follows.

"Vermont Public Libraries find you the answer. There is a lot of information out there, and navigating it can be overwhelming. Librarians are specially trained to help locate, access, and evaluate up-to-date information. Last year ______ Library answered ___ reference questions. Keep 'em coming!"

Thanks for all you do for Vermont's libraries!

Barbara Ball, MLIS
Director, Windsor Public Library
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802-674-2556

Friends & Trustees
by Adriene Katz

Happy autumn! Hope you have been enjoying the fall colors as much as I have as I travel through the colorful hills and valleys to the Northeast Kingdom, to the town of St. Johnsbury.

Recently, the VLA Friends and Trustees Section was actively planning a conference for Friend groups, boards of trustees, library directors, and anyone else who was interested to learn more about the issues, expectations, and challenges facing this indispensable sector of public libraries. This year, it would be entirely virtual and available free of charge. Held the week of September 21st through the 25th, Lara Keenan, Joy Worland, and other staff from the Vermont Department of Libraries primarily organized the event, along with suggestions, input, and feedback from the VLA section leaders Past President Dana Rozyczki and myself, current President Adriene Katz. Online -- created in response to the concerns about safety of meeting "in person" with the ongoing
Oversees VLA awards and scholarships.

Vermont Library Conference Chair: VACANT

Roundtables

Inclusion Chair: Bridget Stone-Allard
Supports libraries in providing better service to diverse populations.

Personnel Chair: Sarah Snow
Assists librarians with questions related to personnel issues.

Technical Services Chair: (inactive)
Organizes workshops & assists technical services librarians.

Youth Librarians President: VACANT
Organizes workshops and assists youth librarians.

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ALA Councilor: Jessamyn West
Represents Vermont in the national organization.

NELA Representative: Amy Williams

VT Dept. of Libraries Representative to the Board: Jason Broughton

Jobs & Subs

For library jobs: VLA Job Postings

pandemic (as this sector usually offers a day-long affair somewhere in the state) -- it was a delight to prepare for this version virtually, which allowed for different possibilities.

Last year, 120 people attended the annual conference. This year, online, there were 232 registrants. This included some participants, who, unexpectedly, joined us from outside of Vermont!

The conference topics encompassed a broad spectrum of interest to both trustees and Friends: strategic planning, fundraising ideas, human resources, even what librarians do (a session of which included comments from my own director at the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, Bob Joly!). If you were not able to participate when the conference was “live” in the last week of September, you can still view a number of the video recordings, slideshows, and handouts online, as well as more information about the conference as a whole, on the Vermont Department of Libraries website: libraries.vermont.gov/2020TFC. Please check it out!

Of these sessions during the conference, the keynote “Slow Democracy and Power of Community” with speaker Susan Clark was the most viewed, followed by the Town Hall with State Librarian and Commissioner of Libraries, Jason Broughton, also known as "Librarian Extraordinaire."

Sadly, only thirteen people turned out for the library-based trivia night! It was unfortunate turnout for a well-organized, enjoyable, knowledge-packed event, hosted by Amanda Gustin of Vermont Historical Society (with a lot of trivia fame and following of her own!). The trivia was composed of histories of Vermont libraries, the current state of libraries, as well as library practices. Perhaps if we marketed it more broadly to all in Vermont's library land, or to the general public, it might have had a different result. Trivia is more fun with a crowd! If you have feedback on this, or about any element of the conference, please submit your comments to Lara and Joy at the Department of Libraries. With these reflections and ideas, it will help with planning for future conferences for the sector, whether we are able to do in-person, online, or possibly, a hybrid of the two, to reach as many people as possible.

Thank you again for “coming” (or, perhaps, “joining” in the future!). I hope you all got a lot out of the week!

Have a lovely November,

Adriene Katz
VLA Friends & Trustees Section President
Librarian, St. Johnsbury Athenaeum

Friend of the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum
Friend of the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library
Board Member, State of Vermont Board of Libraries
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Scholarship & Awards

by Lisa Milchman

In my book group this month, on Zoom of course, one of our members said, after the word "weird" came up for the umpteenth time in referring to our new reality, "weird is the new normal." Our club members may not always share an opinion of the book, but we could all agree that this really is the case (and also that it would make a great bumper sticker!). Weird IS the new normal. And in this new Weird, I will readily admit that I am struggling a little to find the "right" words to write for this, my submission to our quarterly newsletter.

As always, some of the "right" words are the reminders. VLA is here for you and because of you, and I am always happy to remind you that one of the perks of membership is the opportunity to apply for funds for continuing education. Online educational opportunities abound, and this fall there is a chance to apply for either a $1500 graduate school (MLS or MLIS) scholarship for the spring semester or a $250 grant for a class or workshop. Applications for either opportunity are due November 15. You can find more information about these at Graduate Student Scholarship ([www.vermontlibraries.org/vla-graduate-student-scholarship](http://www.vermontlibraries.org/vla-graduate-student-scholarship)) or Professional Development Grant ([www.vermontlibraries.org/scholarship-committee/vla-professional-development-grant](http://www.vermontlibraries.org/scholarship-committee/vla-professional-development-grant)).

And while it is very satisfying to award funding to worthy recipients, it has been equally, if not more gratifying to chair the awards side of this committee. One of the things I have truly loved is having the chance on a regular basis to write words of acknowledgement and thanks, and to encourage you all to value and thank each other, whether in your everyday work or in our annual celebration of libraries and librarianship known as the Vermont Library Conference. It has been this celebratory side of things which has been more greatly altered by the new Weird — and sadly, more difficult to move into an online space.

While we are halfway in the yearly cycle to a new Vermont Library Conference, I do not want to let this crazy 2020 slip by without giving a shot to some kind of celebration of our individual and collective excellence and resilience. The new Weird gives us an opportunity to think outside the box and be appropriately, well — weird. Would you like to have funny awards? Parades? Zoom cocktail or mocktail party? No idea is too weird, and I would love to hear the thoughts that anyone has for what/how/when/where this might be able to happen.

Until then and as always, take good care and my many thanks to all of you for the work you do each day.

Lisa Milchman
VLA Scholarship & Awards Committee Chair
Assistant Director, [Norwich Public Library](http://www.norwichlibrary.org)
[802-649-1184](tel:802-649-1184)
Inclusion
by Bridget Stone-Allard

SAVE THE DATE!

Understanding racism's influence on Vermont, our libraries, and our library associations.

The first step in developing an anti-racist agenda is to understand systemic racism's deep influence on our culture and institutions. In this session, we'll take an unflinching look at how racism is part of our state and the profession of librarianship, including our associations. Building on this understanding, we'll discuss what we can do to undo the harm caused by this history, and ask how we can reframe our efforts in the language of anti-racism.

**Date:** Thursday, December 3rd  
**Time:** 2:30-3:45  
**Location:** virtual. Check the VLA website ([www.vermontlibraries.org](http://www.vermontlibraries.org)) for access details TBA.

**Presenters:**  
Bridget Stone-Allard  
Jessamyn West  
Mike Roy

Jessamyn is preparing a brief history of state library associations, particularly segregated state library associations before the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Mike will offer a lit review and a reflection on librarianship/professional efforts to fight racism.

Bridget will discuss an initiative underway among Catamount and potentially other Koha users in Vermont to help patrons find materials without using outdated terms.

Please join the conversation!

Bridget Stone-Allard, M.A. Ed.  
VLA Inclusion Roundtable Chair  
Director, Georgia Public Library  
director@plv.org

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Government Relations & Advocacy  
by Margaret Woodruff

Greetings! I’m looking forward to getting the committee up and running and invite you to join me. Current plans include more direct contact and connection with VLA members through the membership platform. As we move into the winter season with
continued concern about everyone’s health and well-being, I hope this network can provide the means to share information and ideas as well as stay in touch.

In addition to these more general notions, there are the formal library advocacy events to prepare for. Remote or not, library legislative day and associated activities can raise our spirits along with our profiles as the community connectors that we are.

Please contact me with any interest, ideas, or inspirations!

Margaret Woodruff  
VLA Government Relations & Advocacy Committee Chair  
Director, Charlotte Library  
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New England Library Association  
by Amy Williams

News from NELA

Some good news from other New England area libraries:

- The Maine Library Association (and individual members!) have been lobbying state senators to cosponsor and pass a Library Stabilization Fund Act of 2020 prior to the November election. Similar moves are being made in other New England states.

- Rhode Island Library Association received a $20,000 grant from EBSCO which will fund statewide training for library staff. The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee is currently deciding how best to spend the money.

- New NELA website in the works! The site will be switching to MemberClicks software.

- NELLS I has been set for an in-person session in August 2022.

And finally, don’t forget the NELA Virtual 2020 Conference (conference2020.nelib.org/nela-2020-virtual-conference-series)! There are only two sessions remaining: Session #7 is Nov 12, 1:00-5:15 PM featuring comedian Juston McKinney. Session #8 is still to be decided.

Amy Williams, MLS  
VLA Representative to NELA  
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People of Vermont Libraries

St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont:

by Adriene Katz

Following the retirement of librarian Frank Moulton, Amy Petersen started at the Athenaeum in August. Amy does circulation and supports the interlibrary loan program. Next time you are visiting our National Historic Landmark (perhaps viewing our collection of paintings and rare books), please say hello!

Edit This Newsletter

Interested in newsletter design or editing? VLA’s new membership software comes with newsletter possibilities. If you would like to work on the VLA News, please contact vermontlibrariesnews@gmail.com.

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http://www.vermontlibraries.org

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