

NHLTA Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

United Against Book Bans

At their June board meeting, NHLTA's Board of Directors voted unanimously to sign on in support of the American Library Association's "United Against Book Bans" initiative. Both the NHLTA and the ALA have always supported the freedom to read, but the huge increase in book challenges seen in recent years has spurred the creation of the United Against Book Bans campaign.

2021 saw the highest number of challenges to books since the ALA began tracking this kind of censorship thirty years ago. Last year saw 729 attempted bans of 1,597 individual books. 2022 has continued this upsetting trend with many highly publicized attempts to remove books from library shelves, more than a third of which are authored by people of color, those in the LGBTQIA+ community, or other historically marginalized groups.

The ALA'S Office of Intellectual Freedom

describes the United Against Book Bans campaign as "a national initiative to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship." The UABB

website (www.UniteAgainstBookBans.org) offers many resources for readers, educators, and library advocates to fight back against the small but vocal groups that are asking for book removals in our school and public libraries.

More than 25 organizations have publicly joined the United Against Book Bans campaign. Like them, the NHLTA supports the rights of readers, and believes in the importance of library collections that reflect a wide variety of viewpoints and beliefs. We encourage members to check out the information on the United Against Book Bans website.



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In April, The Wilmot Public Library collected and packed 1,000 children's books for shipment to the Beni FP school in Lilongwe, Malawi, as part of the African Library Project. The project generated community support and involvement, with the majority of books donated by area residents. Library volunteers also collected books from other contributing NH libraries.



ABOVE: Volunteers and Library Director Glynis Hart (far right) pack up the donated books.



Marcia McLaughlin
NHLTA President

Summer 2022

I visited Ireland in May. The scenery was beautiful, but I also took note of libraries. In one community I saw the Carnegie Branch Falls Road Library (yes, Carnegie-funded), in another the Clare County Library. Both are free and public. I even had the opportunity to drop in and visit with staff at the Clare County Library. The visit reminded me of the nearly contagious enthusiasm of library staff and the far-reaching influence libraries have beyond our USA borders.

Our 2022 Annual Conference was well attended and received. You can read more about it in this newsletter. I extend my personal thanks to all who planned, presented and performed behind-the-scenes duties which contributed to its success. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, May 9, 2023, when we will be back at the Grappone Center for our annual conference.

Libraries in general are facing increased challenges to the materials which are in their collections. We, as trustees, need to be prepared to respond to them. It is important to have a

collection development policy and within it a clear and concise procedure for responding to a challenge. The NHLTA website provides examples from other NH libraries which may be used to develop or clarify your own libraries' policy. In this issue, read more about ALS's Unite Against Book Bans as well as how to prepare for challenges.

A reminder: there is still time to submit nominations for NHLTA's annual awards. The act of nominating gives trustees the opportunity to recognize outstanding contributions in their libraries, at various levels. Information about the awards as well as the nomination form may be found on the NHLTA website, NHLTA.org. The deadline for submission is July 15.

Lastly, I dropped into my library last week and noted that it is fully decorated embracing the Summer Program Series "Oceans of Possibilities." I hope that your library is also participating and that you will take the time to check out what is happening in conjunction with the theme.

Have a wonderful summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia".

Mont Vernon Library Project Awarded \$655,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

The Mont Vernon Library Charitable Foundation has been awarded a matching grant worth up to \$655,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant will support building a modern, accessible 7,600 square-foot library for the town of Mont Vernon which will replace the current 1,200 square-foot building built in 1909, providing the space, technology, and accessibility to allow library staff and visiting presenters to offer high quality cultural programming for central southern NH residents.

Mont Vernon Library Charitable Foundation President Cindy Raspiller commented, "This award is a signifi-

cant boost to our ongoing library capital campaign and will allow us to make the dream of a new Daland Memorial Library a reality."

In April, NEH announced 23 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants, totaling \$11 million.

These grants leverage federal funding to strengthen and sustain humanities infrastructure and capacity-building activities at cultural institutions.



Preparing for Material/Program Challenges, Part 2

By Lori Fisher, Assistant State Librarian at the NH State Library

Back in the Winter 2021/2022 issue of the NHLTA Newsletter, I provided some initial suggestions for preparing for material/program challenges in your library. A review of those tips is a good idea right now, as we look toward the fall and a new NH legislative session.

The NH State Library continues to add resources to their Censorship Guidance & Resources LibGuide (<https://nhsl.libguides.com/censorship>), including policy samples, slides from national, regional, and state presentations, and talking points shared from other states that are useful when creating your library's consistent messaging for staff, trustees and Friends groups.

We haven't seen a lot of challenges in public libraries yet in New Hampshire. But there will most likely be an uptick in challenges starting in the fall, and we also could see more state legislation proposed related to "obscene" materials. In Iowa, they have experienced proposed legislation that takes power away from library boards of trustees, changes library governing boards to advisory boards, and makes it a criminal offense (misdemeanor or felony) for library staff to provide "obscene" materials to minors. We are fortunate in New Hampshire that we have NH RSA 202-A, the "Public Library Laws," which provide strong governance powers to elected boards of library trustees. For more information on what is happening around the country, take a look at the slides or the recording from the 5/24/2022 webinar, *Book Challenges and Intellectual Freedom: Proactive Planning for Public Libraries*, which can be viewed through WebJunction once you create a free log-in. (<https://www.webjunction.org>).

Other actions that we may see more of in New Hampshire are non-traditional challenges to materials in our libraries, such as patrons checking out entire displays related to certain topic areas and not returning the items, or flooding library staff with challenges, either by individuals making multiple challenges or multiple people making multiple challenges at the same time (in the hopes that library staff will become overwhelmed and make a media blunder that can then be broadcast far and wide on the Internet).

What can trustees do to help themselves and library staff prepare for these potential issues? Here is a prioritized list to consider, meaning I would strongly encourage library trustees to DISCUSS this list in a public meeting and start putting some of these actions in motion.

Make sure your key library policies related to challenges are up to date. This should include the library's Collection Development policy, the Reconsideration of Materials/Programs Form & Process, the Patron Behavior policy, and if you allow exhibits or displays by community members in your library building, an Exhibits/Displays policy. A great document to start the discussion at the board level is United For Libraries' Materials Challenges: Key Library Policies to Review and Revise, available at www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org/united/files/content/IF/materials_challenges_key_library_policies_to_review_and_revise_united_for_libraries.pdf.

Coordinate with your Library Director regarding board and staff discussion about these policies. Not only should each staff member and trustee be familiar with those key policies, but discussion about them can help identify areas where you may receive the most questions from the public. Also, discussion gives these two groups a chance to help develop talking points that are consistent. See the NHSL Censorship LibGuide (linked above) for a couple of examples of talking points for staff and boards from Illinois and Mississippi, which can be used to create your own talking points.

Consider having staff and the board take 10 minutes out of a regular staff meeting or board meeting to do a role-play scenario. What does this mean? I have developed short scripts for both a staff encounter at the desk with a patron who wants to make a challenge, and a script for a trustee who is approached at the grocery store by a neighbor who wants to challenge a book. There are two scripts for each – one is "not good" (meaning the staff/trustee reaction has problems) and the other is "better." The main point is that doing a role play puts people into a situation where they can react like they might need to in real life. Practice makes

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We are fortunate in New Hampshire that we have NH RSA 202-A, the "Public Library Laws," which provide strong governance powers to elected boards of library trustees.

2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Trends Shaping the Future: The Basics and Beyond

As we planned this year's conference, we wondered if people were ready to resume meeting in person, but after two long years, NH library trustees and directors were more than ready – approximately 280 registered for the 2022 Annual Conference! Thanks to all who helped make the day a success: attendees, presenters, sponsors, exhibitors and the volunteers who kept things running smoothly! And thank you to those who responded to our conference evaluation with suggestions for improving the experience, feedback on what went right and wrong (we're going to work having more microphones and on making sure slides are easier to read!) and especially, suggestions for future conferences.

We look forward to seeing you again at the Grappone Center next year on Tuesday, May 9, 2023!

“Roundtable discussions are super useful and this one did not disappoint. Other libraries sharing ideas, practices, and news of what they are doing – how they are getting it done – is invaluable.

“I was amazed at how positive the presenters were considering their harrowing experiences planning and building. A true cautionary tale. Showed the importance of knowledge, patience, persistence and knowing your library's advocates.



Exhibitor Amy Tardiff/Bar Harbor

“Speaker was funny, entertaining, riveting, and full of useful information. I am inspired to get to work on the emergency plan for our library

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Craig McLaughlin



Keynote speaker David Paige



**NHLTA President
Marcia McLaughlin**

“There were so many ideas in this workshop that I plan to implement in our next budget process. I have already begun to use some of the suggestions. Great balance of speaker/audience participation.

“Great presenter. Took what could be a boring topic and turned it into an interesting, thoughtful discussion of very important information. I truly appreciated his sense of humor, as well.

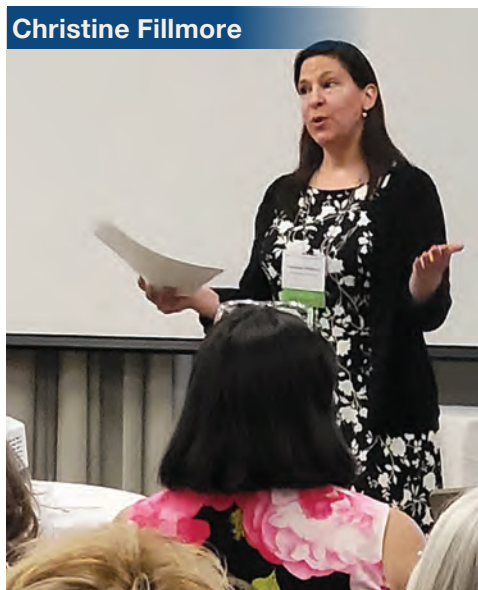
“It was wonderful to have a keynote speaker from NH who was familiar with what is going on here. Sometimes those flown in from “away” have no clue about our issues here.



Lucy Santos Green



Lori Fisher



Christine Fillmore



Terry Knowles

“Lori Fisher is such a knowledgeable presenter. As always, I left the meeting with great information and ideas.

“David Paige and Lucy Santos Green were outstanding speakers. I was thrilled to see NHLTA branch out and host a program on this topic.

“Terry Knowles gave a wonderful presentation, question/answer session. So much information for trustees. Please invite her back!!



By Natch Greyes,
Government Affairs
Counsel, NH Municipal
Association (NHMA)

The Right-to-Know Law & How It Affects You!

I was very fortunate to be invited to present at this year’s NHLTA conference, and greatly enjoyed giving an overview of the statutes pertaining to libraries and some hot topics that have arisen over the last year. I didn’t quite realize, however, how popular the Right-to-Know Law, RSA chapter 91-A, would be during the presentation.

One of the particularly tricky areas of the Right-to-Know Law is when a “meeting” of a “public body” occurs. The term “meeting,” is, for better or worse, defined at length in RSA 91-A:2, I. It means, “the convening of a quorum of the membership of a public body...whether in person, by means of telephone or electronic communication, or in any other manner such that all participating members are able to communicate with each other contemporaneously...for the purpose of discussing or acting upon a matter or matters over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.” In other words, enough members of the public body meet about board business that they could make board decisions.

If the entire board meets at the town Fourth of July festival and refrains from discussing board business, there is no issue as it is a social encounter according to RSA 91-A:2, I. These social and other non-board business encounters are something that can and frequently do trip up new board members. For instance, many are reticent to travel in the same car with another board member to a board training or talk with them at their child’s sports practice.

What is more difficult is understanding what qualifies as a “public body.” The definition provided in RSA 91-A:1-a, IV is necessarily lengthy. It contains not only the component parts of government, but also all “subcommittee[s]” and “advisory committee[s].”

While the term “subcommittee” is almost universally acknowledged as some smaller portion of a whole committee – the term “advisory committee” has created and continues to create issues. Fortunately, this issue has been addressed

several times by the New Hampshire Supreme Court. In the first case, *Bradbury v. Shaw*, 116 N.H. 388 (1976), the Court looked at Rochester’s “Industrial Advisory Committee.” The committee had been created by the Rochester City Mayor and consisted “primarily of prominent businessmen, but also ... newspapermen and members of the city council.” The committee met for a variety of purposes, but the Court noted its involvement in the sale of several parcels of city-owned property and frequent discussions concerning the extension of city water and sewer lines and the construction of new streets. As such, the Court found that the committee advised the City and, subsequently, fell under the provisions of the Right-to-Know Law.

More recently, the Court again visited the term in *Martin v. City of Rochester*, 239 A. 3d 1002 (N.H. 2020), and the rule promulgated in that case is directly applicable in many municipal contexts. In short, Rochester created a Technical Review Group (TRG) that was comprised of city employees from various departments and a representative of the conservation commission. The purpose of the TRG was to review applications that were to be submitted to its planning board in order to apprise applicants of the relevant concerns of the municipal departments represented by its members. In other words, it was providing advice to applicants to the planning board, not the planning board itself, and that advice *could* be provided in one-on-one meetings with department representatives in meetings that would not be subject to the Right-to-Know Law. As such, the Court determined that the TRG did *not* qualify as an “advisory committee” and, therefore, was *not* subject to the provisions of the Right-to-Know Law.

There are many instances where citizens and citizens groups seek to assist their local governments, and it is unclear whether and when such organizations subject themselves to the provisions of the Right-to-Know Law. A simple example can be found in planning the library’s annual cookie

Continued on next page

RSA 91-A:2, III(d)
and RSA 91-A:2-a, II
jointly warn against
trying to circumvent
the “spirit and
purpose” of the
Right-to-Know Law.

NHLTA New Board Member: Kathryn Parenti

No matter where Kathy lives, she is an avid reader and library patron. One of her earliest memories is walking to the Manlius, NY library with her mother in search of something exciting to read. Kathy now shares that love of books with her grandchildren.



Working at Disney World during college helped her public speaking skills, which, as chair of the Wadleigh Memorial Library Board of Trustees, Milford, NH, she has to do quite a bit. About six months into her first term, in the middle of a big expansion/renovation project, she was asked to be co-chair. When her co-chair moved out of town, Kathy became chair.

While Wadleigh Memorial Library has struggled to get financial support from the taxpayers for its much-needed renovation and addition warrant articles, they have received some wonderful donations which have allowed them to repair and renovate, including a beautiful new skylight to replace the old and yellowed one, and to add a new fenced-in outdoor program space.

Kathy looks forward to making a positive impact on the NHLTA board.

Legal Q&A *continued*

sale in coordination with the annual book sale and apple pie festival. While the approval of activities taking place on town property or requiring a town expenditure need the approval of the relevant town board, the actual organizational activities may take place in the gray area of the law. Where exactly the line is between a private proposal to host a cookie sale and an entirely public “advisory committee” to suggest the same kind of thing is something that will have to be determined on a case-by-case basis under current law.

The better approach – for public celebrations, at least – is to be cautious. RSA 91-A:2, III(d) and RSA 91-A:2-a, II jointly warn against trying to circumvent the “spirit and purpose” of the Right-to-Know Law. It may be more laborious, but certainly less risky to consider any planning of these types of events to be meetings subject to the Right-to-Know Law.

Preparing for Challenges, Pt. 2

continued

perfect is the mantra we all know, and these simple scripts can help both staff and boards do that with little effort on the part of either group. To obtain a copy of the sample scripts, email me at lori.a.fisher@dncr.nh.gov.

Preparation will help the library staff and the library board feel more confident before a challenge occurs. Let’s take the next couple of months to prepare well, so that crisis management is not the default reaction we experience in our NH public libraries.

Calendar 2022

August 9 • 10 am-2pm

Library Finance Workshop:

The Budget and Beyond

NHMA Building,

25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord

NH Library Trustee

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