

MINUTES

IOWA COMMISSION OF LIBRARIES

Date: January 14, 2022
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location: Online via Zoom

Present: Zach Stier, Sarah Latcham, Carrie Falk, Brandon Denner, Joe Lock, Bob Gast

Staff: Michael Scott, Marie Harms, Gary Krob

1.0 Call to Order and Welcome

C. Falk called the meeting to order. **M. Scott** introduced **Bob Gast**, representing the Supreme Court.

2.0 Set Agenda

M. Scott proposed moving the work session up in the agenda to after Item 3.0 Action Items.
No other comments on agenda.

3.0 Action Items

3.1 Receive & Approve November 2021 Meeting Minutes

Z. Stier made a motion to approve the minutes; **B. Denner** seconded. Motion carried.

3.2 Receive & Approve Financial Reports through December 31, 2021

M. Scott presented the financial reports through the end of December. State and federal budgets are on track at this halfway point through the fiscal year. Administration is making plans to spend the remainder of the additional federal appropriation for the American Rescue Plan Act funding. The interest from the Westgate Endowment will be utilized to offset costs for the upcoming conference for youth services librarians called Pop YS Con. The Enrich Iowa appropriation has been fully distributed to Iowa libraries and the State Library is reminding libraries to deposit checks from this funding as soon as possible.

Z. Stier made a motion to approve the financial reports; **S. Latcham** seconded. Motion carried.

4.0 Public Comment

No public comment.

5.0 Work Session: State Library's Strategic Plan Needs Assessment

M. Scott reviewed the strategic plan process and outlined the purpose of the work session, which is an update on Iowa's demographic landscape since the previous five-year plan, to review the mission and vision statement, and to think about the challenges Iowa libraries may face in the next five years.

- **G. Krob**, State Data Center coordinator, presented on the demographic changes in Iowa since the last five-year plan, based on new data from the 2020 Census:
 - Iowa's population has continued to grow at a slow and steady rate; the growth rate was 4.7 percent from 2010 to 2020 censuses. Iowa is the 31st most populous state in the nation.
 - Iowa's rural counties continue to lose population to counties in or adjacent to metro- and micropolitan areas; this trend is projected to continue through 2050.
 - Iowa has an aging population; the 65 and over age group is expected to jump in 2030 as the baby boomer group ages.
 - For race, the White population declined two percent from 2010 to 2020 while Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Hispanic groups all had considerable growth during the same time period. This trend is projected to continue through 2050.
 - Median income is projected to continue increasing in the state, with poverty rate projected to continue declining. Unemployment in the state is at a record low rate.
 - Projections do not yet factor in impacts from the pandemic.

Areas of Focus:

- **Review the Mission Statement & Vision**
 - The current mission statement is: *“The State Library of Iowa strengthens Iowa libraries and information access for Iowans.”*
 - The current vision statement is: *“Iowans will become proficient information consumers in a democratic society and enjoy exceptional library service.”*
 - **Z. Stier** suggested including the word “community” in the mission statement. The State Library helps the library support their community. The agency benefits the library and the community it serves. **M. Harms:** We’ve talked a lot about libraries being out and a part of their community; they are so much more than a building and checking out books.
 - **B. Denner** asked what is meant by “proficient information consumers” in the vision statement? **M. Scott** said the intent was to emphasize the library’s role to provide information on many different viewpoints. **B. Denner** noted he would trust a library source over something found on the internet. **M. Harms:** The State Library’s role in promoting that concept is to help have really good libraries and well-trained staff. We’re always a step away from the Iowa citizen because we primarily work with librarians, but it does directly impact the citizens of Iowa. **M. Scott** noted another role the State Library plays is providing additional training and support for library boards.
 - **Z. Stier:** Looking at vision statement and wondering if collaborate could be included, and also thinking about the future? Also thinks it’s important to stress this is free access to the library.
- **What do you see as challenges for Iowa’s libraries over the next five years?**
 - **M Harms:** We presented some challenges identified by Gary’s presentation, additional issues were identified by State Library staff include a tremendous amount of director turnover in Iowa libraries that impacts the work we do. Staff are also seeing an increasing amount of distrust in established institutions and are wondering what it could mean if our citizens no longer trust us?
 - **B. Denner:** with populations moving to more urban areas, have we reach the breaking point where some small towns can’t support their library any longer and could be moving to a county library model? **M. Scott:** This is a scenario that our agency has continued to wrestle with. Iowa has 543 public libraries, which is 4th place per capita in the nation. It’s a difficult discussion to have because a community can be identified by its library. But when the population decreases and the tax base erodes, the question becomes how can those libraries continue to be supported at the local level? We are continuing to have that conversation.
 - **C. Falk:** Shenandoah hasn’t seen the trust erosion issue in their small community; maybe it happens more in larger urban areas. Agrees with the library turnover issue and hears of new library directors all the time. It can be hard to keep people with the number of hours and low pay challenges. Now the library is struggling with how to identify community needs and be responsive, especially with new needs that have emerged from the pandemic. **M. Scott:** When the State Library is putting the new strategic plan together we’re still going to be in the throes of a pandemic. How do we use that experience to inform our next plan while keeping in mind it will (hopefully) have ended by the end of the next plan?
 - **M. Harms:** We’ve had one library close and a couple of are on the verge. It’s really difficult for libraries to close. Even though city funding may be decreasing, counties in many cases continue to provide money to libraries to serve the rural residents, and in some cases the library receives more money from the county than the city. The county funding may be what keeps those libraries functioning. Iowa has a very strong home rule, or local control, tradition, which requires citizens vote to close a library. We don’t see many more library closures and don’t anticipate seeing many libraries join together to form a county system. The State Library is preparing an initiative or support libraries that need alternative ways to provide library service, such as contracting or joining together to operate branches.
 - **Z. Stier:** It seems like a challenge, but reframing the plan to think that because of the pandemic we can evolve to keep libraries relevant. One concern is that despite strong

library programs and success, the city council doesn't see the library as relevant. Relevancy becomes how the library is branching out and how it is relevant in the community and presenting that information to the council. Market libraries as 21st century institutions and focus on messaging that. City council sometimes wants to make decisions that conflict with Iowa Code. Helping library directors and board members on how to speak about libraries to the city council members, there continues to be an archaic perception of libraries, when in fact libraries have evolved to be much more. Their library is developing community dialogs to demonstrate collaborative initiatives and how the library is having conversations in the community and is an investment in the community. Another thing that might be helpful is a toolkit for libraries to market their services to the community. Those small and rural one-person libraries probably don't have the time to put those pieces together or maybe don't have the experience in libraries.

- **S. Latcham:** In thinking about the trust in libraries; we need to make sure that libraries are seen as a value-added place, whether that's our ability to pivot and provide new services, or look at our community and see what types of services we can offer. It has to be a burden on State Library staff to train all of those new librarians. Also sees continually educating patrons on the importance of the library is a challenge. How do you keep things fresh in the library to keep patrons interested?
- **B. Gast:** Agree with Carrie's observation that the public continues to have trust in public libraries and hasn't seen the decrease like in other institutions. Might need to have more marketing about the vital role the libraries play in those communities. The pandemic has taught us that there is a lot of stuff we can do better, including more collaboration. The libraries have become an integral cog in the community where people can go and find the resources they need and use technology to get things done.
- **J. Lock** noted that at the last meeting it was presented that 80% of State Library staff time is taken by the smallest of libraries in the state.
- **M. Scott:** We continue to hear from libraries that toolkits, training, things they can tap into easily would meet a need.
- **Z. Stier:** Current censorship issues will most likely continue, we have to be thinking about that more than we probably have been the past couple of years. **S. Latcham:** Had the same question coming from the school perspective. Increased challenges in schools and will that happen in the public sphere too? Being reminded that those reconsideration policies should be in place, which should also be the case in public libraries. Maybe another campaign is making sure libraries have those policies in place and know what to do in the event of a challenge would be a good idea.

6.0 Communications

6.1 State Librarian's Report

M. Scott presented the State Librarian's Report.

- Continuing to work on ARPA funding and making progress with library grants and reimbursements. Determined it would be a statewide benefit to use ARPA funding to enhance the Bridges collection in order to decrease hold times.
- The job opening for the Library Program Director closed and will start screening candidates and scheduling interviews soon. Hopefully will have a final candidate and position accepted in the next month or so.

6.2 Commission Reports

- **S. Latcham:** The Wellman-Scofield Public Library had fundraiser selling hand-lettered canvases done by the new youth services librarian. Washington local radio station has done a good job promoting the library on the air. The director was invited to be on the local daycare board, increasing the library's partnerships within the community. The library also started mystery nights on Mondays with case-file projects. They are thinking about reviving a trivia night fundraiser. Iowa City schools are trucking along; no book challenges in the district so far.

- **C. Falk:** She and **Z. Stier** will be part of a panel to talk about the libraries transforming Communities grants. The Shenandoah Public Library debuted escape rooms today in an unboxing video on the library's Facebook page; already have seen them getting checked out on this snow day. They are exploring more partnerships with the Parks and Rec Department.
- **J. Lock:** no report.
- **B. Denner:** no report.
- **Z. Stier:** no report.

7.0 Change of date – March 2022 Commission Meeting

The next meeting will be changed to Tuesday, March 8, 2022; an in-person joint meeting with the State Library Advisory Panel and in conjunction with Iowa Library Legislative Day in the State Capitol. Meeting time TBD.

8.0 Adjournment

C. Falk adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by: Emily Bainter, Information Specialist