

# URBAN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATORS CONSORTIUM (ULAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

Friday, July 29, 2022

10:00am – Meeting IN-PERSON, Durham Public Library, Durham, NH

Attendees: Sheryl Bass (Durham), Natalie Ducharme (Salem), Erin Matlin (Londonderry), Todd Fabian (Concord), Denise LaFrance (Dover), Marie Lejeune (Rochester), Miriam Johnson (Bedford), Heather Ranier (Hooksett), Eric Stern (Derry)

- **CALL TO ORDER - 10:04**
- Treasurer's Report – Betsy reported to Eric ahead of the meeting that the current balance is \$6,414.08.
- Association reports
  - a) NHSL – No report
  - b) NHAIS – No report
  - c) NHLA – No report due to vacations
  - d) NELA - No report due to vacations
  - e) ALA; PLA – No report due to vacations
- Old Business
  - Employment Retention - Todd reports that Concord has created a task force to work on and improve employee retention. Wondered if anyone had any ideas or had inserted into their policy parameters for allowing frontline staff to work from home.
    - Yvette might be a good resource as she has work from home percentage actually written into policy.
    - Marie asked if anyone has work from home opportunities for snow days.
    - Sheryl responded that Durham does allow hourly staff to work from home under most circumstances (Snow, COVID, illness) if they have the skills necessary to work on value-add projects.
    - Group agreed that many of the tasks that hourly staff were working on at home during COVID could still be used for work at home tasks post-COVID.
    - May not make sense for employees, whose sole function is working with public, to be allowed to work from home.
- New Business
  - **The role of the Reference Department in ULAC libraries.** (Question from Linda, who was not present due to illness.)
    - Derry has two full-time reference librarians and two part-time reference employees. They are looking for another reference staff member for 10-15 hours/week. Very busy in reference, most of it is technology and device help. Also, do other traditional reference tasks like genealogy help. ARPA grant allowed them to get a Zeutschel digital scanner and so they are going to work on their digitization projects. Once they get through their grant required projects they will be moving on to other projects of local

and internal interest. Some of the increased reference traffic at Concord might be because surrounding libraries have reduced their reference services. They do a ton of genealogy!

- Erin in Londonderry does reference but most of it are book questions and tech/device help questions. Would like to explore different options for tracking reference. Erin really liked the Gimlet (sp?) software for tracking and recommends it.
- Natlie – One of the best most beneficial reasons to track ref stats is to figure out what services that you aren't offering that patrons are requesting.
- Derry has an all-MLIS ref department (with the exception of 1 lawyer, who has a JD) which he feels really steps up the professionalism and ethics of the entire library.
- **Assistant Directors** – Denise inquired which Libraries have Assistant Directors.
  - Derry has one who can step in for Eric at any time. Todd has an assistant with signing authority for timesheets, administrative tasks, banning patrons, etc.
  - Dover shifted reference department. When she became Director, they changed the reference services librarian they made the position Teen and information Services. They do get reference but most of it is tech/device related.
  - Erin has promoted someone from within to AD who now is on a career path.
  - Sheryl doesn't have one but would like to have one and thinks that there is a compelling argument that it is part of a career path for a future Library Director, but that having one also clarifies the hierarchy of authority in the library when there are multiple Dept. Heads.
  - Todd mentioned that posting positions as Librarian positions as such, without an MLIS, is not good for the profession. Many agreed, however many Directors responded that they have positions that don't require one but do prefer one. Denise remarked that it's tough because she feels she would have missed out on a great hire by requiring one. The group agreed that posting positions that don't imply too much authority can be tricky.
- **Employing Minors** – Marie inquired whether anyone employs minors at ULAC libraries – any restrictions in policy or practice? Most employ at 16 (or 15 -3/4). Some hired pages at 14 under particular circumstances.
- **Magazines** - Erin asked if anyone is increasing magazines. Most people responded that usage is down. Eric and Sheryl are reducing through attrition. Erins's numbers are up. Sheryl's digital usage numbers are up.
- **Wage/benefit increases** - Todd asked anyone if there had been any thought or discussion about increasing wages/salary to accommodate the rising costs of insurance. His concern is that COLA is not keeping up with the increase in health insurance so now the people at the top of the step are losing money.
  - Rest of the group mostly just gets a straight COLA increase.
  - Marie reported that in Rochester if you reach the top of the pay scale and your merit and COLA exceed the top of the range, the City will pay a percentage of the overage as a "bonus".
  - Dover gives a lump sum bonus if you are at the top of your range. They also get longevity bonus.
  - Todd further inquired if anyone has a retirement plan on their own like Manchester. Group said no they are with NHRS.
  - Salem bids out insurance whenever the cost gets too high. Concord shops for new insurance teams annually.

- Erin asked if anyone has a high deductible NHSA plan. Todd and Denise report that they both do.
- Denise reports that they have several COVID long haulers that are driving the costs up.
- Todd commented that there is a lot of benefit to staying in the NHRS system for 20 years but not so much for 10yrs in. Heather thinks the 10-yr minimum is not ideal.
- Other Topics and Notes of Interest
  - Market Basket really knows how to train young people to work. Market Basket Sushi shops are individually owned shops.
  - Canobie Lake really does a nice job coaching young people, too.
  - Todd slayed his emotional dragon – terminating people is really hard. Erin is having a similar difficult situation, but all agree that it is essential to have difficult conversations about work performance and document everything.
  - Heather Ranier asked about policy review and libraries with legal services. Most reported that they either use the Town/City Lawyer or retain a private firm.
    - Derry is *very* fancy with not one, but TWO lawyers on staff! 😊
  - Stranger Things – Marie shared that they missed the purchase window for the most recently released Stranger Things seasons. Is worried about purchasing outside normal channels because of piracy concerns. Wondered if they group knew if Season 3 was authorized for release, and when season 4 would be.
    - Many librarians report that DVD circulation are trending up. It's suspected that the economy and patrons inability to pay for streaming services may be a driving force.
  - Todd asked the group to send out Hoopla Data from the last 12 months. He will collate the data and share. Please report by format.
- Future meeting locations and dates:
  - August 26th – Portsmouth (in-person)
  - September 30 – Zoom (virtual)
  - October 28 – Lebanon (in-person)
- **ADJOURNMENT – 11:59AM**