

NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

Spotlight on Small Libraries: COVID-19

Did you know that 101 of New Hampshire's 217 public libraries serve towns with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants? These libraries often have smaller staffs with few or no full-time positions, and may be open only a couple of days a week. And yet those libraries and their staff are integral to the well-being of their communities. COVID-19 threw a wrench into "business as usual" for small libraries with no warning, as it did for all NH libraries. Some furloughed staff members for the duration of the closing, many sent staff members home to work and stopped lending, a few continued "curbside" lending throughout their building closures. But no matter what each community chose during the crisis, all have risen to unforeseen challenges and done their best to provide information, diversion and warmth to their small communities.

Virtual Events and Resources

Even while closed, libraries of all sizes bring their communities together. Most book groups are still able to meet virtually; preschool children and their families can still attend story hours, using YouTube, Facebook Live or Zoom technology. Libraries are also reaching out to older kids, like Holderness Free Library's chapter readings of the Magic Treehouse series, or Fitzwilliam Public Library's "Cover to Cover" program with read-alouds of different chapter books. Fitzwilliam has also expanded their "curbside" service to include craft bags with supplies coordinated with virtual Story Hour and Craft times. Libraries also are using their social media accounts to share virtual opportunities from other organizations, including NH Humanities online events, "NASA

at Home" activities, and virtual field trips to places like Yellowstone National Park and the Louvre Museum. Dunbar Free Library has compiled a webpage of museum tours that is available on their website dunbarlibrary.org. Libraries with digital content of their own, such as Langdon Library in Newington, took the opportunity to promote it. You can listen to MP3 audio recordings of some of their library programs here: www.podcasts.com/adult-programs-at-langdon-public-library-b942ca2df.

Libraries are also using their websites and social media accounts to share state and local information about COVID-19 testing, Stay-at-Home orders, unemployment benefits, the US Census, and local cancellations and postponements. Some are offering other in-demand virtual services, such as East Kingston Public Library's remote notary services, in accord with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #11.

Digital Lending and WiFi

Whether or not small libraries continued to loan physical materials, and for how long, has varied with their community's evaluation of risk. For many small libraries, the circumstances warranted an increased focus on eBooks and downloadable audiobooks and movies. Several libraries added the streaming services Hoopla or Kanopy for the first time, or set up OverDrive Advantage accounts to add titles via NH Downloadables for their individual town's use. The majority of libraries have left their WiFi on for public access in library parking lots, and some took extra measures to

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By Lara Berry, Director
Langdon Public Library
and NHLTA Board
member

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Letter from the President . . .



Susan Gaudiello
NHLTA President

Summer 2020

It has been my pleasure to serve on the NHLTA board for the past eight years and as its president for several of those years. As I prepare to retire from the board, I'd like to spend this last letter to our members sharing my thoughts about the present and future of our public libraries.

The Present. Our state is fortunate to have over 200 public libraries, one (or more) in almost every town and city. And for each library there is a dedicated board of trustees, a hardworking staff and, in most cases, an essential corps of volunteers. When we work together as teams the results are impressive: creative programs, welcoming events, and a broad range of materials and digital resources for every resident. That teamwork has been especially important this year, as libraries have grappled with the pandemic and revamped services to continue to meet their communities' needs.

As we look back on 2020, we may realize the need to become more effective in our work and more knowledgeable about our responsibilities as library leaders. NHLTA is here to help by providing education, information and consultation to our members.

Unfortunately, there is uneven recognition of the value of our public libraries. It is shocking how many Select Board members are indifferent supporters of their libraries. No matter what research studies are cited, these critics often oppose library budgets and building proposals, asserting that no

one reads printed books anymore. Yet despite these challenges, NH libraries are busier than ever and many expansions of space and programming are undertaken every year.

What's ahead? Acknowledging, confronting and overcoming racism. Libraries will play a major role in responding to this crisis as well, working to assure a culture of inclusion at the library and in the community as a whole.

Helping people realize that while the information available to us online may be interesting, it is also unreliable. The role of librarians as guides to discover "good data" will grow in importance as libraries continue to offer a broad range of materials on every topic imaginable to anyone who walks through the door or logs in from home, helping to assure we all enjoy access to a broad range of ideas and information.

Librarians and trustees must grow and change as our environment evolves, so that our libraries remain vital and relevant. We have all been tested during the ongoing situation that has overshadowed our lives for the past several months. Your roles as leaders and stewards has never been more important. I applaud your work and thank you for your commitment to New Hampshire's public libraries.

Best regards,

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

Susan Gaudiello, President

Peterborough Library: Stay-at-Home Talent Show

With the goal of coming together as a community during the Coronavirus outbreak, the Peterborough Town Library has hosted two stay-at-home talent shows for all ages. Called "Library Home Companion," the shows were emceed by Tricia Rose Burt of NPR's "The Moth," and brought together many talented musicians, comics, and a magician, as well as the entire library staff! The programs were aired via Facebook Live and are posted on the library's Facebook page. The next "Library Home Companion" is scheduled for June 28.



Spotlight on Small Libraries: COVID-19

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extend the signal – Effingham coordinated with their Historic Town Hall Project to do so.

Community Collaborations

Small libraries are coordinating with other town groups in a variety of ways. Cook Memorial Library co-sponsored a NH Humanities event with the Tamworth History Center on “Votes for Women: a History of the Suffrage Movement.” Newbury Public Library spearheaded a Community Read Aloud of Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” featuring familiar town faces like librarians, police officers and local business owners. Canterbury participated in a drive-through parade during April vacation, in lieu of their annual Big Truck Day, in which staff from the school, library and town departments decorated their cars and drove through all the bus routes in their school district. Library Director Sue LeClair described the event as a “happy, hopeful sight for us all.”

Acknowledging Milestones

Some of the moments small libraries share remotely with their patrons are bittersweet. Orford Social Library honored the passing of beloved children’s book author Tomi DePaulo in March as part of their “Virtual Story and Art” series. Bath Public Library celebrated a young resident’s milestone of another 100 books read toward her 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten on their Facebook page. Mason Public Library sent graduation notes with library cards enclosed to the fifth grade students when they moved on to the middle school in the next town. Their librarians surely would have preferred to acknowledge these milestones in person.

For all the digital, virtual and remote ways that libraries continue to serve their communities, there is no replacement for seeing each other’s friendly smiles, sharing a treat at a book group, or chatting at the desk about a favorite read. The smallest libraries in the state know that better than most, and look forward to the day they can safely welcome their patrons once again.

Planning for the Future!

East Andover resident Irene Jewett, who turns 99 in July, just had her library card renewed for another five years. Congratulations, Irene!



A Perspective

Recently I stood in Lowell, MA, next to a monument to the first two Union soldiers to be killed in the Civil War, surrounded by immigrants, refugees, and people of color, to protest yet another murder of an unarmed black man by police. It was an incredibly moving experience that I hope to never have to do again.

As I chanted and marched, I thought about libraries. Libraries are the great equalizer. I grew up in incredibly poor circumstances and while I knew I was losing out on the trendy toy, the “right” clothes, the travel and experiences other kids in my town had, I never lacked for

books to read. This wasn’t because we owned a lot of books. It was because I had the supreme privilege of living in walking distance of the public library.

As racial unrest, a global pandemic, and Pride month all coincide I am reminded that the library is more important than ever. I should say, *access* to the library is more important than ever. I sincerely believe that no one becomes a library director, or a library trustee, to consciously stop anyone from accessing library services. It is easy to say that we live in a predominately white state and we don’t have these issues. But, to me, that just means that it is more imperative than ever that we ask ourselves, and our library staffs, tough questions about what kind of

unintended roadblocks might be in place that are keeping people of color, and all other marginalized people, from enjoying everything our libraries have to offer.

I promise, no matter how homogenized a town you live in, there is a minority there. There is a person of color. There is an LGBT youth. There is someone who has lost their job, their internet connection, and who has no idea how to get the help they need. If you ask your library director and they say they don’t see anyone like that come into the library, find out why. It is not enough anymore just to have the library doors open. We need to reach out and make sure we’ve invited everyone inside.

– Renee Mallett, *NHLTA board member*

Jefferson Public Library's 17-year Search for Larger Space

By the Jefferson Public Library Trustees

The Jefferson Public Library is excited to announce we will be moving into a new space for our community to enjoy all we have to offer. This has been a long process with a lot of unexpected twists and turns. We are nearing the end of the journey and although it is not the perfect space, it is the right space for our community to continue to grow.

This all started back at the 2003 Town Meeting when a Capital Reserve Fund was started for our

Jefferson Public Library's current building.



existing structure with the intent of expanding if possible or moving if necessary. Expansion and improvement of the current site was found to not be feasible. The current building is a great historic building but lacks the accessibility and modern conveniences necessary to serve our entire community.

The Select Board formed a Library Building Committee which began the process of looking at the different avenues for a new space. They had conversations with the community, hired consultants to advise on future needs and space planning. The committee worked for more than 10 years, including hundreds of hours of meetings, trips to many different libraries, two different building sites, and two different architectural drawings. All this work came to fruition with a three-acre building site in a central location and a plan for a new 3000-4000 sq. ft. library which included meeting space and a small kitchen area to truly serve our community.

Capital fundraising started in 2015. The building committee started looking for donors, holding informational meetings, and applying for possible matching grants. But then in the spring of 2017, the town was presented with a new possibility when

the school district announced the closing of the Jefferson Elementary School which had been built in 1956 to consolidate the Jefferson's five one-room schoolhouses. According to the original deed the building must be returned to the town if it was no longer to be used as a school. The town voted to accept the old building back and figure out the future of the site.

The Jefferson Select Board did a community survey to get feedback on the future of the school building. The response was overwhelming: more than fifty percent of the town responded and eighty-five percent of the respondents said they would like to see the library utilize this existing space. Fundraising for the new building stalled. The library trustees looked at the survey results and fundraising possibilities and decided it was time for a new direction. They let the Select Board know that they felt they should adapt to the wishes of the community, and would support a move to the building that had housed the Jefferson Elementary School.

In 2019 a consultant put together and presented multiple options based on the survey to present to the community. The building committee's previous work was utilized and the committee worked with the consultants in planning for adequate space for the library. After receiving feedback from the community, warrant articles were created to move the project forward. At our March 2020 Town Meeting several articles passed that now allow our Select Board to utilize our former school building as the Jefferson Municipal Community Building. This building will house all the town offices, library, historical society, and community space, including space that can be used/rented for functions and events.

The library and historical society will each be given their own space, as well as a shared room which has possibilities for storage and/or shared collections. The library is looking forward to having a space that will allow us to accommodate our current patrons, and bring in more patrons with the additional space for the collection and more options for activities. We look forward to working with our community, the Select Board and the historical society to create a space that will be easily accessible for everyone in the community.

We are nearing the end of the journey and although it is not the perfect space, it is the right space for our community to continue to grow.

Reopening Libraries During the Pandemic

Reopening. It's what's on everyone's mind. By the time this issue goes to print, many libraries will already have started the slow process of reopening. What that looks like will depend on the library and its community. Some will choose to continue digital-only services for some time; some will start to schedule appointments; others will reopen with limited numbers of the public allowed in the building at any one time. There may be situations where a library can open without restriction. Whatever the case may be in your library, it's important to keep in mind who sets the rules as much as it is important to continue to deliver and expand services.

Who sets the rules for reopening libraries?

Library trustees have unique authority over the library. Unlike other municipal departments, which are subject to the rules and regulations promulgated by the Select Board, libraries are subject to their own governance structure under RSA chapter 202-A. This means library trustees must make decisions about rules for library access, employment, as well as services offered by libraries during the time of the pandemic.

The very nature of library operations means that staff members come into close personal contact with a variety of individuals every day, and there is often an exchange of physical objects, some of which may have been in the hands of someone who was contagious. Minimizing the risk of transmission to staff and the public is paramount.

As we plan for reopening, can we require patrons to wear masks or only recommend that they do so?

Library trustees under RSA 202-A:6 (management of public library property) have the authority to mandate that people entering a town building or library wear a face covering. They may also set limitations on the number of patrons allowed in the building at any one time. Libraries located in town buildings with other activity in that building should seek to work with town officials to design a unified set of rules.

If a library does decide to adopt a rule such as mandatory facemasks, it should have a supply available for those who arrive without a mask. A mandatory mask policy must be carefully crafted. While the Center for Disease Control recommends that everyone aged two and older wear a cloth face covering, it is important to recognize that some groups – such as young children or those with special needs – may be unable to wear a mask. Any rules created by the trustees should account for any individuals or groups who may not be able to abide by strict social distancing, mask-use, or other medical recommendations. Rules should be prominently posted so that the public is aware of them.

If a person refuses to wear a face mask or covering, that person could be denied access to a town building, including a library. Library trustees should meet with the appropriate municipal officials to work out a course of action if rules are not obeyed. The “action plan” should be clearly conveyed to staff, and periodic discussions should occur to ensure that the “action plan” is still viable in light of any new information as the response to the pandemic evolves.

What rules can we set for library employees?

Library trustees, under RSA 202-A:11, have the authority to set employment rules for the librarian

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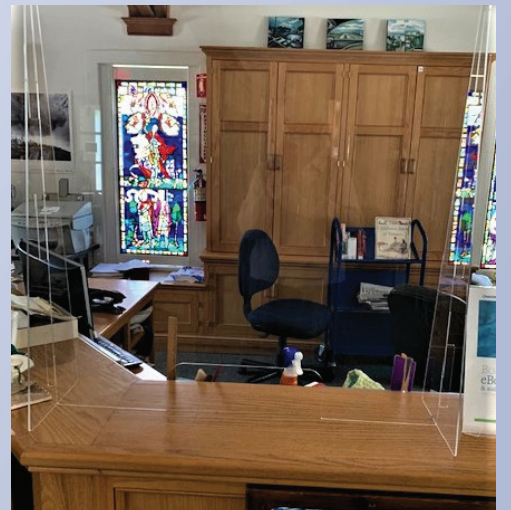


By Natch Greyes,
Municipal Services
Counsel,
NH Municipal
Association (NHMA)

Preparing to Re-open

The Olivia Rodham Memorial Library in Nelson is currently offering curbside service only, but they've installed plexiglass shields at the checkout desk. Concerned about possible shortages, they wanted to get things in place so they would be ready when they are able to open. The shields were purchased from a supplier in Strafford.

PHOTO: KRIS FINNEGAN



Reopening Libraries During the Pandemic

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and all employees of the library. These may include whether to require employees to wear masks or take other precautions to avoid becoming sick or spreading an illness. These rules should be flexible. Encouraging employees who may be sick to stay home – and thus prevent the risk of infection of the rest of the staff and members of the public – and adopting rules to allow employees the option to take their own precautions – such as wearing masks, etc. – even if those precautions are not mandated are encouraged. In addition, hand sanitizer or other hand-cleansing methods should be made available to staff and, if possible, the public.

As they move towards reopening, library trustees and librarians should regularly check the NHLTA website and the NHLA website, as well as NHMA's COVID-19 Resources Page: www.nhmunicipal.org/covid-19-resources. These sites have the most up-to-date and relevant information about everything from Emergency Orders to funding availability.

Helpful Resources

In addition to the many pandemic resources listed on the NHLTA website, the following downloadable PDFs are available: *NH Libraries Task Force Best Practices on Reopening NH Libraries* and the *Jaffrey Library Pandemic Policy and Pandemic Interim Service Plan*.

Examples of communications with the public about reopening plans can be found on the Portsmouth Public Library website and the Nesmith Library's website.

For what smaller libraries are doing: Walpole Town Library; Ingalls Library, Rindge; and the J.A. Tuttle Library, Antrim, have posted curbside service information on their websites.

Protective equipment is available from NH Division of Public Health Services, Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Service Unit at ESU@dhhs.nh.gov. Libraries are eligible for free disposable face-masks. Email your questions to maskrequest@dos.nh.gov (State Emergency Operations Center). The NH State Library is working to distribute hand sanitizer and masks to NH libraries.

NH Librarians Association (NHLA) maintains a clearing house of resources on their website: nhlibrarians.org/covid-19-resources/. NH Municipal Association also has resources on their website: www.nhmunicipal.org/covid-19-resources.

Barrington Library: Story Time Goes Virtual

How to conduct our popular story time was one of the first challenges to be addressed when the library closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Knowing that one of our main goals was continuing our story time routine with our younger patrons, we adapted our in-person routine to a virtual setting, making sure this was a time for parents to enjoy as well, whether or not they participated fully. Staff had to quickly learn new technologies and tools such as Facebook Live and camera settings so that things don't appear backwards, how to organize a Zoom meeting and research rules and guidelines for reading some of our favorite story time titles in an online environment.

With so much information whirling around regarding fair use and reading children's books to the public, the article *Publishers Adapt Policies to Help Educators*

from the *School Library Journal* was helpful in book selection. Our Facebook Live story times had a great response; we were happy that we could connect to our youngest patrons, but something was missing. We opted to switch to Zoom and have families register through our calendar or email our children's librarian, Wendy Rowe, for the link to the private Zoom meeting. Switching to this platform not only allowed Wendy to see all the faces, it allowed the kids to see each other – we had found the missing piece! Social interaction is such an important part of story time and our young patrons weren't able to interact using Facebook Live. Many story time sessions start and/or end with kids sharing their favorite toys, books, art creations, etc. and even though they aren't all sitting together in one room, they are still able to connect with each other. Not only do we

miss our patrons but our patrons also miss each other!

When we noticed how many older siblings were joining in, Wendy started a second story time for our patrons aged 4-7. She has done a great job of getting templates or other quick art projects to use during story time out to the parents to complete beforehand. Our numbers averaged 12-15 children each week when we first held virtual story times, and adding in the second session, our numbers have fluctuated in the most recent weeks. Knowing that parents (and children) are most likely experiencing "meeting fatigue" we may consider taking a short break to regroup and find creative new ways to make our virtual story times more engaging and enriching. After all, a short break between our spring story time and our summer reading program story time is part of the routine!

– Melissa Huette, Library Director

Meet the New NHLTA Board Members

Deb Caplan has served as an alternate trustee of the Peterborough Town Library for the past seven years. She is also a member of the 1833 Society's Capital Campaign Committee that is raising the funds to renovate and rebuild the Peterborough Library (groundbreaking scheduled for June 2020).

Deb serves on NHLTA's education committee and holds an M.L.S. from Simmons College. She is an outplacement consultant and runs her own art business, LineScapes, a small home business that offers prints of her sketches of Peterborough, the State of NH and beyond.

Deb says she is looking forward to working with "such a dedicated group of board members, committed to public libraries across the state."

Renee Mallett is a former library trustee of the Chester Public Library and one-time director of the member library



of Loading Dock Arts, an arts education non-profit 501(c)(3) located in Lowell, Massachusetts. Renee is the author of a series of local interest books and has had work ranging from poetry to fiction published in many print and online literary journals. Last year she opened "Pop Cultured," a comic shop and indie bookstore, in Mill No. 5 in Lowell. Renee lives in Windham, NH with her family.

Marcia McLaughlin is a member of Board of Trustees of the Weeks Public Library, located in Greenland. She and her husband, Craig, have lived in Greenland for 10 years. They have two children and four grandchildren.



Her earliest memory of a library is being walked to the local library with her kindergarten class and being issued a library card. She has stated numerous times that "the library is one of my favorite places in the world."

Marcia has been a full-time volunteer for over 45 years, serving a myriad of organizations. She looks forward to advancing the mission and purpose of the NHLTA.

Library Trustee

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Library Trustees Association

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POSTMASTER:
Address Correction Requested

Staying in Touch Since the Annual Conference and regional trustee meetings have been canceled, NHLTA has been holding virtual Trustee Roundtables. Summaries of the discussions can be found on the NHLTA website.





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2020 CALENDAR

August 5	10:00 am–11:30 am	NHLTA Board of Directors meeting via Zoom
September 2	10:30 am–12 pm	NHLTA Board of Directors meeting NHMA Building, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord
October 7	10:30 am– 12 pm	NHLTA Board of Directors meeting NHMA Building, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord



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The NHLTA assists Trustees to be knowledgeable and effective in order to serve, improve and promote New Hampshire Public Libraries.