

NHLTA Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

NHLTA 2020 Award Winners



No surprise, in a year where all NH libraries were abruptly shifting gears in order to serve their communities, NHLTA received an impressive group of nominations for our annual awards. And in a year where everything is different, so were the award presentations – some happened on Zoom, others were brief, socially distanced outdoor gatherings – but all were heartfelt, joyous celebrations of well-deserved honors.

In Milford on October 26, a small group of staff and trustees gathered under a tent as NHLTA president Katrinka Pellecchia presented the **Wadleigh Memorial Library** the award for **NHLTA Library of the Year**.

Wadleigh Library's motto is "Connecting Our Community to Information and Each Other". To help make that connection, the library has expanded their breadth of access, resulting in an impressive increase in circulation and number of cardholders. A Teens Teach Tech program and Zoom Tech Tuesdays help people who all of a sudden had to access the library from home. The library added seven Notaries Public and six Pass-

port Acceptance Agents to their staff – the fees generated have enabled the library to improve the outdoor programming area. A Teen Volunteer Program was established, enabling teens to earn community service hours or high school credit while volunteering for the library. The library's involvement with the community has earned praise from the Milford Select Board for their role in "providing a place for our community to share joy and entertainment, as well as to find comfort in times of trouble."

Being named Library of the Year is the result of what is very definitely a team effort – congratulations to Betsy Solon and her obviously capable staff, the trustees and all the library volunteers.

As has happened once or twice before, when it came to deciding the **Library Director of the Year**, NHLTA chose two directors. Coincidentally, they are from neighboring communities: **Julie Perrin**, Jaffrey Public Library, and **Corinne Chronopoulos**, Peterborough Town Library.

NHLTA President Katrinka Pellecchia, yellow jacket, and Library Director Betsy Solon, holding award, with members of the Wadleigh Library staff.

INSIDE

- 2** Letter from the President
McKay Scholarships
- 6** North Hampton's Crazy Compromise
- 8** Racial Justice at PTL
- 9** Hosting Outdoors
- 10** Legal Q&A: Library Budgets
- 11** Spring Conference Update

Continued on page three

Letter from the President . . .



Katrinka Pellecchia
NHLTA President

As trustees, we advocate for libraries year-round. But at this time of year, our advocacy is more important than ever as we negotiate budget season which can frequently be a challenge even in the best of times. This year, even before budget season began, some libraries reported being asked to cut budgets to help as towns prepared for expected deficits due to the pandemic. As stated in this issue's Legal Q & A column (page 10), trustees are in control of their library's budget once it is approved by the legislative body. But first, it must get approved.

If you've been asked to cut your budget, hopefully those cuts are in line with what's being asked of the other departments in your town. If not, it's time to make your decision makers aware of the library's importance to the community, especially at a time when demands on its services are increasing. Like so much of what we do, this is becoming more challenging as communities continue to hold virtual public meetings.

It's vitally important to communicate not just with your supporters, but with your entire community – through Facebook, newsletters and just plain talking. How have library services changed during the pandemic? Perhaps you're spending less on in-person programming, but have increased the subscription services you offer? Are you preparing more crafts for patrons to take home? Have you curtailed the hours open to the public, but is your staff spending more time behind the scenes disinfecting loaned materials and surfaces? (Remember,

your select board may only see how many cars are in the parking lot, not how many residents are using your services from home.) How will your budget restrictions impact your community?

The NHLTA 2019 Spring Conference featured "Advocacy Bootcamp," a two-hour workshop that promoted the art of storytelling to advocate for your library. Storytelling involves a real person, a real problem, a library intervention and a happy ending. The example used was a little girl who read aloud to a library therapy dog for months, eventually overcoming her stutter. Your library undoubtedly has its own stories. They don't need to be long – about the length of a good "elevator speech" – but most of all they should be positive. Remember the mantra presented at the conference: "Libraries Transform Lives."

If you weren't able to attend the webinar that Lori Fisher presented in October, "Library Advocacy During Budget Season," her Powerpoint slides can be found on the NH Library Association website on the COVID-19 resources page, www.nhlibrarians.org/covid-19-resources/. You'll also find links to other helpful resources, including sample budget presentations.

Best wishes for success with your budget and warrant articles at your Town Meeting or Deliberative Session.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katrinka".

Katrinka Pellecchia, President

McKay Scholarships Are Available

Scholarships are available to public library staff and trustees from NHLTA's Mildred P. McKay Library Scholarship Fund. NHLTA awards scholarships for graduate courses (e.g., MLS and MLIS courses, etc.), certificate courses, library conferences (including NHLTA's Annual Conference) and library

workshops. Applications for spring 2021 semester graduate courses must be received by March 1, 2021.

Applications for certificate courses, conferences and workshops may be submitted any time before the event. Virtual courses, conferences and workshops are also eligible for scholarship awards.

Criteria for scholarship eligibility and a scholarship application can be found

on NHLTA's website, www.NHLTA.org. Past McKay scholarship recipients may apply again for a scholarship for that next graduate course, certificate course, conference or workshop.

Mildred P. McKay was New Hampshire State Librarian, 1942–1964. NHLTA established the Mildred P. McKay Library Scholarship Fund in 1965 with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

NHLTA 2020 Award Winners *continued from page one*

Julie has only been at Jaffrey Public Library for a little over three years, but in that short time she “has transformed the Jaffrey Public Library from a sleepy, small town library into the de-facto community hub of Jaffrey”. She encourages the staff in their interests to the benefit of them and the library; under her guidance a small grant from the community center resulted in such creative



NHLTA Board member and Jaffrey Library Trustee John Stone presents NH Library Director of the Year Julie Perrin with her award.

programming that other businesses wanted to donate more. This year, she obtained a \$20,000 STEAM grant from a local business that enabled her to put together summer learning kits that included microscopes and binoculars.

When COVID hit, Julie was one of the first directors to put together a pandemic policy – a policy that she very generously shared with the NHLTA membership. It became a model that other libraries followed (it can be found on the NHLTA website). The library has since implanted an Interim Service Plan, which has been added to the Pandemic Policy, allowing for phased reopening and “tiers of service.” The pandemic has not slowed what Jaffrey Library offers to the community – in fact, Jaffrey now offers digitally more programs than it had in person – including a digital storytime episode that featured Julie reading to Fran, her chicken.

Katrinka Pellecchia virtually presented Julie with her award during a Zoom ceremony on October 2.

According to the Peterborough trustees, in the six years that Corinne Chronopoulos has been director, “she has transformed a mediocre library into a top-notch operation”, while at the same time “breathing new life” into the fundraising project for a new library building, which finally got the go-ahead from the Select Board in late April 2020 . . . in the middle of a pandemic. Somehow, she managed the move – the library’s free wi-fi was only down for a few hours during the several-day move and virtual programming continued uninterrupted. Corinne is also the co-chair of the library construction project which began in June and is expected to be completed by August 2021.

But’s that not all. A new website is up and running; a blog and book recommendations regarding race in America have been made available; the library has also put together a three-part, nine-hour training program on anti-racism to educate the staff as well as a shortened version for their trustees. (See Racial Justice and the Peterborough Library, page 8.)

Corinne has accomplished so much that the trustees’ biggest problem is what to say during her annual review: “We can’t say she’s perfect at everything, can we?” They eventually agreed that “Sometimes, you just have a star.”

The Nesmith Library Board of Trustees nominated the **Friends of the Library of Windham (FLOW)** for the **Sue Palmatier Award for Outstanding Support by a Friends of the**

Left to right, standing: 1833 Society members Ronnie McIntire (Chair), Audrey White, Carl Mabbs-Zeno, and Tina Kriebel; Library Trustee Deb Caplan; and NHLTA President Katrinka Pellecchia. Front center: NH Library Director of the Year Corinne Chronopoulos.



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NHLTA 2020 Award Winners *continued from previous page*

Library Group this year in order “to celebrate this all-volunteer group, which works so relentlessly behind the scenes and has supported our library for more than 50 years since their founding in 1966. Especially during this difficult time, we appreciate the way that our Friends group has stepped up to help Nesmith Library continue to reach out to and



NHLTA Board Member and Nesmith Library Trustee Mark Branoff (center front) with members of FLOW, fellow trustees and Nesmith Library Director Sylvie Brikiatis (back row, third from left).

provide services for our patrons. Their support, both in person and financially, has helped the library do far more than what we could hope to accomplish relying solely on the annual budget this and every year.”

Since its inception in 1986, FLOW’s Strawberry Festival and Book Fair has been the social event of the year for Windham, NH, drawing thousands of people for a day of books, activities, entertainment and, of course, homemade strawberry shortcakes. All of the proceeds from this event, which has earned up to \$22,000 in a given year, have been used to benefit the Nesmith Library and its programs for Windham residents. Since the Strawberry Festival was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FLOW chose to introduce an all-ages art and poetry contest for Windham residents. The contest helped to give patrons a chance to participate in an event that was sorely missed and drew highly creative entries from the town. The Friends group organizes and staffs two book sales a year, bringing in another \$4,000 annually. This has allowed FLOW to purchase and install an all-weather book drop (essential during

the pandemic), provide ADA-compliant doors for the library’s main entrance, and fund the redesign of the children’s area. FLOW also funds an annual scholarship program for local students, sponsoring three educational scholarships totaling \$8,000 each year. The support that the Friends of the Library of Windham gives the Nesmith Library is definitely outstanding! On October 1, NHLTA board member and Nesmith Library trustee Mark Branoff presented FLOW with its well-deserved award at an outdoor ceremony on the library steps.

How many trustees can claim to have served as library trustee for 48 years? That’s exactly how long the **Lillian Edlmann Trustee of the Year** award winner **Sally Miller** has been a Keene Public Library trustee. She was first appointed to the board in 1972, and then was appointed to be a Thayer Trustee, which is a lifetime appointment.

Sally has worked tirelessly for the library since the first day of her term. Among her many accomplishments: She worked to organize the Cheshire County Literacy Coalition, a nonprofit organization, and obtained grant funding to support the development of Adult Basic Education services. She spearheaded three different library renovation projects (1980, 1999, 2019); she was central to the development of the plans of the three federal literacy grants that the public library received and has been extremely active on various committees. She has been involved in fundraising projects and somehow also manages to find the time to provide orientation training for new trustees.

2020 was Sally’s last year to serve as a trustee, and to quote board chair Jennifer Alexander, “We are going to miss her long-term institutional know-

Keene Mayor George Hansel (yellow box) reads a proclamation honoring Trustee of the Year Sally Miller (directly above) during a Zoom presentation on Dec. 11.



ledge, know-how, experience, pleasant personality, and warm smile.” Sally was honored on a Zoom celebration on Friday, December 11, where she was presented with a library room named in her honor, a resolution read by the mayor, and named a Trustee Emeritus.

The **Dorothy M. Little Award** is rarely given, which makes it a true honor for an individual to merit such recognition. We cannot think of anyone more deserving than **Lori Fisher**, New Hampshire State Library Assistant State Librarian.

Lori Fisher is well known throughout New Hampshire as a leader and library advocate. While Director of the Baker Free Library in Bow, she received both the NHLTA Library Director of the Year award and the New Hampshire Library Association’s (NHLA) highest honor, the Ann Geisel Award of Merit. In her current position as Assistant State Librarian, Lori brings library- and community-level experience to help support librarians across the state. Her leadership roles have included NHLA Vice President and President, Chair of NHLA’s advocacy committee, and the ALA Chapter Councilor for NHLA from 2019 through 2021. In 2013, Lori was the only New England librarian selected to take part as one of 24 Leadership Fellows at the Public Library Association’s Leadership Academy: Navigating Change and Building Community. In 2019 Lori was selected by the ALA to serve as one of 10 library and information professionals across the country to participate in the ALA Policy Corps; once again, she was the only New Englander. She has generously shared her knowledge, speaking at national conferences and of course here in New Hampshire. Lori’s standing in the national library community means she frequently travels to Washington to promote library issues with congressional members and their staff. She was also recently appointed to the ALA Committee on Legislation which is responsible for ALA’s legislative agenda. The connections Lori builds help to make NH libraries stronger.

Then came the coronavirus pandemic. The NH library community faced great uncertainty as they dealt with questions about internal operations, budget shortages, and how changes to staffing and services would affect policy and liability. Lori helped guide library workers and trustees in navigating these obstacles through regular virtual

meetings, curating relevant resources on the NHLA website, leading a Reopening New Hampshire Libraries Task Force, and securing funding and materials that support libraries’ safety efforts. Thanks to Lori, every public library in the state received sanitizer and two spray bottles at no charge. For some libraries this could mean the difference between staying closed versus being able to welcome their communities back into their spaces. Lori worked to demonstrate just how essential librarians are. She coordinated phone calls with New Hampshire’s congressional representatives where librarians shared the important work they are providing during the pandemic and the challenges they face, bringing to light opportunities for Federal support. In April, Lori was a guest on New Hampshire Public Radio’s morning show “The Exchange,” where she related how libraries have played a critical role in helping the public access important information and how librarians and trustees together have overcome challenges during the coronavirus pandemic. Possibly the most valuable services Lori continues to provide to New Hampshire librarians during the pandemic are the virtual meetings for directors to ask questions, share best practices, and problem-solve common obstacles. Lori has guided discussions that involve federal and state laws, intellectual freedom values, and the human resource dilemmas no one wants to face. Lori’s ability to transform challenges into opportunities has created a space for the 100-plus librarians who join the calls to be supported and share a wealth of knowledge that then in turn strengthens libraries of all sizes throughout New Hampshire. NHLTA has also benefited from Lori’s guidance as she joined the virtual roundtables we held this past year, providing answers to many of our members’ questions. The next one is scheduled for January 27, 2021.

Lori’s nomination was submitted by a large group of library directors from across the state – directors who have worked with Lori and benefited directly from her tireless and passionate advocacy and guidance. Lori’s dedication and achievements would make her a worthy recipient of the Dorothy M Little Award in any year, but this year, particularly, it seems especially appropriate.



Lori Fisher, Assistant State Librarian, Dorothy M. Little Award recipient

Thanks to Lori, every public library in the state received sanitizer and two spray bottles at no charge. For some libraries this could mean the difference between staying closed versus being able to welcome their communities back into their spaces.

A “Crazy Compromise” Helps Decide Dueling Library Projects in North Hampton



By Susan Leonardi
Chair, North Hampton
Library Board of
Trustees

In 2015, the North Hampton Library Trustees and the North Hampton Select Board attempted to construct a Town campus, which would include a new library building on a vacant lot next to the library, which had been purchased in 2004. Town offices would then relocate into the current library building. Unfortunately, this attempt failed to achieve the required 61% voter approval.

Then, in 2017, having been told by two members of the select board that they would not guarantee the vacant lot for library use, the trustees spent two years developing a plan for an expansion and renovation of the current library building, choosing what they considered to be a practical alternative that would serve the community, as well as a solution that would allow both town boards to move forward with capital improvements. The library trustees could finally move forward with a solution to the ever-increasing restrictions on the library's ability to meet its current and future needs and the vacant lot located beside the current library would be set aside for another town department. With the help of a building committee, the trustees had selected an architect (Ron Lamarre of Lavalley/Brensinger Architects); they solicited community input on the schematic designs through listening sessions; and in 2018 they chose Bonnette, Page & Stone as their construction manager for the project. A shovel-ready plan was in place for the March 2020 ballot.

The question then came up: “Can the North Hampton Library Trustees expand the library without select board approval?” The North Hampton Select Board Chair requested that the Town Attorney opine this question of authority on June 5, 2019 and received a response in August. Not satisfied with the Town Attorney's statement that “the planning, design and construction of library buildings lies exclusively with the library trustees, subject to the appropriation process,” the two select board members resurrected the 2015 plan that placed a new library building on the vacant lot. The library trustees felt this additional cost and time to redesign was unfair to taxpayers.

The library trustees saw the select board's actions as overstepping the authority of the library trustees as elected officials, and were disappointed that their attempts to work with the board members fell flat.

Over the next six months, a series of events unfolded without the trustees' involvement: the two select board members hired their own architect, designed a library building for the vacant lot and secured a construction firm. They created a new library building plan and began marketing it to the community without input from library staff, support from the library trustees or feedback from the Library Foundation. If this proposed plan passed on the ballot, the library trustees would have an outer shell of a library building that would need all interior spaces designed and finished.

There was now the very real possibility that two different library plans could be placed on the warrant. Library supporters felt this would only confuse voters and that ultimately both would fail to win the supermajority needed to improve the library. The trustees knew that the only way to stop the two select board members involved litigation, a cost to the taxpayers and the library's reputation that they would not risk.

At the deliberative session, a budget committee member and library supporter proposed a "crazy compromise" combining both articles. Voters "killed" the article to expand the current library by zeroing out the funding and instead proposed an amended article to construct a new \$3.9 million library which would be built on the vacant lot under the supervision of the trustees, using their architect and builder. This was approved at the Deliberative Session by a secret ballot vote of 103 to 10. North Hampton voters approved the library bond in March 2020 by 63%.

We are grateful to our town and library supporters. The library trustees spent years trying to align our library's plans with the select board's dream of a comprehensive town campus and in doing so, discovered that their good will ended when they were not willing to acknowledge the



authority of the North Hampton Library Trustees to opt out of that "dream" after voters repeatedly rejected such plans.

In the end, the community stood up for their library and agreed that authority belonged to the trustees. Our new library construction is now in full progress, but we have a few more hurdles to cross. The trustees continue to keep our community updated and we now have hope that the new library building will represent what a community can do together.

ABOVE: Architect's rendering of the Children's area. BELOW: Construction is finally underway!



Racial Justice and the Peterborough Town Library

By Mary Hubbard,
Assistant Director

As good things often do, it started with a question.

After reading *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* by Michael Erik Dyson and *The Case for Reparations*, an essay by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic* magazine, Peterborough Town Library patron Allen Davis was struck by the concept of reparations for descendants of enslaved people in the United States. Interested in learning more about this subject, Allen came to the library and asked for help in tracking down the history of reparations. During the research, we began to talk about what he was learning and his desire to share it with the larger Peterborough community.

As Allen's work progressed, so did the idea of a possible library program. Allen, Grace Aldrich, Jim Guy and I came together to design a two-part program entitled **Talking about Race: Staying Curious, Moving Forward and Being Part of the Solution**, a program that encouraged thoughtful investigation.

Talking about Race: Staying Curious, Moving Forward and Being Part of the Solution was developed to explore and, we hope, to begin to understand the issues that inform the daily lives of people of color. Grace Aldrich and Jim Guy generously offered to share their personal experiences of what it means to be Black in the United States today. Their stories were the starting point for the program and encouraged those in attendance to examine and explore the various issues raised by their fellow community members.

This two-part program was the most highly attended adult offering we have had since I began my tenure at the library in July of 2016. The structure of the program, which guides the participants through introduction to exploration and, eventually, to action has been repeated by this core group, along with the addition of Claire Holston, Doug Sutherland, and Luis Rosa at various libraries and community centers in the area.

It is from this program that the "Conversations About Race" reading group emerged. Many of us felt that we should begin by learning more about this history which affects all of us but which often goes unacknowledged, particularly within predominantly white communities. The book club ran

from July of 2018 until just recently. During that time the group read a wealth of books and articles and also watched videos which explore the history of race in the United States. The ensuing conversations have been important and thoughtful.

This year, our director, Corinne Chronopoulos, acknowledged she did not fully know how best to answer questions about how our library should continue to provide resources and programming about racial justice. She decided that it was past time for her to engage in further learning for herself and the library staff. She asked me to create a training for the staff. Starting at the end of June, we held a three-part training. The initial session was about the role of race in US history. The second session covered racism in all its forms and why it is so hard to dismantle it. And, finally, the third session was about practical steps for moving forward. The staff was paid both for reading time and for the training sessions because we felt it was important for them to see how seriously the library takes this topic. From there we condensed the program and ran it for the trustees in August. This was an additional block of time to ask of our busy volunteer trustees, but they stepped up to the challenge and agreed this was very important for all staff and leadership at the library.

Working with the knowledge we gained from those trainings, we turned our attention back out to the community. In September and October, the library hosted a Big Read of Austin Channing Brown's "I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness." Over 36 participants attended at least one of our three discussion groups and over 90 people either checked the book out or downloaded it from OverDrive. The discussions proved invaluable and we knew that we were committed to doing more.

What does "doing more" look like for the Peterborough Town Library? Well, we are currently working with community allies to develop more programming that will enlarge the engagement in the community. Our hope is to bring in Black educators to provide ongoing programming so that this conversation may continue. We are also applying for an ALA grant to support small rural libraries in creating community conversations. We are eager to have the courageous conversations

Many of us felt that we should begin by learning more about this history which affects all of us but which often goes unacknowledged, particularly within predominantly white communities.

that are called for in these turbulent times.

We are also committed to incorporating Racial and Social Justice prominently in our next strategic plan. But before that happens, we are already taking steps to improve access and remove bias in our collections. By the time we move into our new facility, we will have reorganized the non-fiction collection eliminating the

Dewey system and replacing it with the Book Industry Standards and Communications System. This rather large undertaking requires us to look at every volume and recategorize it according to a more intuitive and flexible system which will continue to respond to the needs of our patrons.

We have learned that there is no roadmap to working on racial justice in

a community. However, for the work to be most successful, we encourage libraries to involve all library staff and trustees in a basic training and grounding in the history. For the work to make the best impact, it cannot be just one staff person assigned to do the racial justice programs, we all must engage, and it has to start with an internal examination.

Hosting Outdoor Story Time in All Kinds of Weather

By Amy Carter and Polly Mahoney,
Cook Memorial Library, Tamworth

We all love our friendly, chatty group of kids and adults who attend our story times! Unfortunately, as COVID-19 rates rise this winter, sharing the air in our libraries' children's rooms is not a healthy option. So how *do* we continue to safely gather to support our library families?

After several months of Zoom story time this spring and summer, the Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth, New Hampshire decided it was time to bring in-person story times back to the library. Prior to the pandemic, the library had hosted one of



their monthly story times in the library's backyard. To increase safety and access this fall, story time transitioned to being 100% outside. Families bring their own blankets and spread out from one another. Librarians carefully choose books with large, bright pictures, act out some of their stories and have learned to project their voices even more!

After stories, songs and related movement, a play scenario is introduced. When children play in nature it adds depth to the learning already taking place. The open space lends itself to expanded gross motor movement, which equals warmer bodies. The limitless natural supplies (think sticks, dirt, leaves) inspire cooperation and creativity. Enticing open-ended play invitations, introduce engaging play challenges.

Helpful hints for creating your own safe outdoor story time:

- Ask each family to bring its own blanket and leave six feet between family groups.
- Choose books with large, clear, bright pictures or use a felt board, puppets or acting to share stories with your well-spaced group.
- When engaged in group play, require masks for everyone two years and older.
- Design play scenarios that include some distance between children.

A few of Cook Memorial Library's favorite outdoor story time themes, books and accompanying play scenarios:

- Story time theme: **Feasts** (can be done at Thanksgiving, Halloween, or as a Spring celebration)
- Books: *Stone Soup* by Brown, *Room on a Broom* by Donaldson, *Thank You, Omu* by Mora
- Play Scenario: Create a big stew in a few buckets using water, sticks, leaves, etc. Play can lead to all kinds of outdoor "cooking."
- Story time theme: **Create a Town**
- Books: *Mattland* by Hutchins, *Snow* by Eastman, *The Snowy Day* by Keats, *Katy and the Big Snow* by Burton
- Play Scenario: Create a town out of snow and other materials. No snow? Modify using dirt and found objects.
- Story time theme: **Moving Our Bodies** (also can be done with a Halloween or an Owl theme)
- Books: *Bears in the Night* by Berenstain
- Play Scenario: Act out the obstacle course the bears go through in the story, and/or create your own courses for one another.
- Story time theme: **Animal Homes**
- Books: *Over and Under the Snow* by Messner, *Keep Looking* by Selsam, *One Winter's Day* by Butler
- Play Scenario: Create homes for animals using snow and a few plastic animal friends. Play can transition into tunnel digging, exploring snowy footprints, snow forts and sliding.



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

Library Budgets & Payment of Employees: Who Controls Them?

The economic fallout from COVID-19 has many municipalities worried about December's property tax collection and taking action to try to preserve municipal services in the coming year. That has caused a number of library-related questions to come to NHMA as library trustees, budget committees, and select boards have begun to formulate next year's budget. Perhaps the most popular library-related questions that NHMA has fielded relate to the power of library trustees over library budgets, and, most importantly, who determines library employee pay.

Libraries are unique among town entities in much of what they do is independent from other town entities. For example, RSA 202-A:2, II makes the board of library trustees the governing board of the library. There are few other town entities which grant the power over their operations to a board other than the select board, and many of those boards lack the breadth of power given to the library trustees in other statutes, notably, RSA 202-A:6 and RSA 202-A:11.

RSA 202-A:6 vests the library trustees with the entire custody and management of the library and of all the property of the town relating thereto, except trust funds held by the town. RSA 202-A:11, II-IV states that the trustees determine how to expend, and have the power to expend, all funds provided to the library. Taken together, these statutes make the library an almost sovereign entity within the town, controlled solely by the library trustees.

Now, as a practical matter, many boards of library trustees have agreements – formal or informal – with their respective select boards. These agreements cover an array of areas, but most commonly focus on areas of cost saving, such as the consolidation of utilities and utilization of town administrative resources. Unfortunately, such consolidation often leads to confusion about which body – library trustees or select board – have power over certain areas.

In 1994, that confusion led to a lawsuit, *Town*

of Littleton v. Taylor, 138 N.H. 419 (1994). That case settled the issue of who employs library employees – it is the library trustees, not the select board – and saw the court reiterate that the statutes not only see the trustees appoint the librarian and determines the librarian's salary, but also manage and control the library.

As a practical matter, the case settles one of the more common issues: the trustees want to give a library employee a raise but the select board (or worse, the town's financial officer) says "no." Who wins? Well, if the library trustees have the funds in their budget, they can give their employees raises, regardless of the opinion of the select board. See *Taylor* at 423. They would simply use the same ability to transfer funds around their budget as is given any governing body and codified in RSA 32:10. (If such a power did not exist, it would not be possible for governing bodies to make decisions regarding the proper use of funds.)

A more difficult question stems from the budget creation process itself. Library trustees often draft a budget request and forward that to the select board or official budget committee (depending on whether an official budget committee exists). The governing body, or the budget committee if there is one, then makes a recommendation to the legislative body (i.e., town meeting) for a budget. RSA 32:5. Because the library trustees do not have the power to submit their own budget directly to the legislative body, that recommendation may be different than the recommendation that the library trustees made to the governing body. Even if that is the case, the trustees – like anyone residing in town – have the ability to address the legislative body and argue for an adjustment at town meeting via an amendment. (Note, of course, in SB2 towns, this would take place at the deliberative session, not during official ballot voting day.) In the end, it is the legislative body that sets the budget.

After the budget has been set, that is the amount of money that the library trustees have at their

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Public libraries are often the only option for those who are unemployed to access free resources to help them regain employment, and, unfortunately, that may be something that is sorely needed in the year ahead.

disposal for use throughout the year. RSA 202-A:6; RSA 202-A:11. The select board does not have the authority to use its transfer authority under RSA 32:10 to deprive the library of funds allocated to it by town meeting.

Unfortunately, there are some unknowns. For instance, RSA 202-A:4 requires municipalities to “annually raise and appropriate a sum of money sufficient to provide and maintain adequate public library service therein or to supplement funds otherwise provided.” While “adequate” is not defined, it is possible that the newest round of “adequate” funding for schools may provide some useful *dicta* for those interested in the

contours of “adequate” library service, but we will have to wait for the New Hampshire Supreme Court to issue its opinion.

We do know, however, that “where a public library has been acquired by the town in whole or in part by donation or bequest,” the town has some obligation to continue funding it, regardless of the economic outlook. RSA 202-A:18; RSA 202-A:4. Those reading this column undoubtedly already know that that is a net positive: public libraries are often the only option for those who are unemployed to access free resources to help them regain employment, and, unfortunately, that may be something that is sorely needed in the year ahead.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

NHLTA 2021 Spring Conference MAY 12 & 13

By Lara Croft Berry, NHLTA Education Committee Chair

The NHLTA Education Committee will hold the 2021 Spring Conference virtually on May 12 and 13. During this year of upheaval and uncertainty, we feel our conference theme **Embrace Change** was chosen for us, rather than by us. As this will be our very first virtual conference, we are grateful for the guidance of NHMA, who recently held theirs virtually.

We saw changes within our own organization this year, with veteran Education Committee chair Jan Clark finishing her term of service, and my taking over, as well as changes in three out of four NHLTA Board officer positions. No library in the state escaped change in 2020, and those changes are continuing into 2021. To succeed and thrive we need to move forward with creativity and renewed commitment. To that end, this conference will include presentations from NH librarians and their post-COVID-19 vision, including Julie Perrin, one of NHLTA's 2020 Library Directors of the Year, presenting “Future-proofing Your Library.” In 2020 the George Floyd protests also challenged the status quo, prompting libraries to ask “What can we do?” and also “How do we need to change?” This conference will focus on antiracism and equity, including a “Courageous Community Conversations” presentation from Goffstown Public Library Director and Ann Geisel Award of Merit winner Dianne Hathaway, and James McKim, Manchester NAACP President and managing partner of Organizational Ignition. Other topics of interest include strategic planning, social media in libraries, virtual programming, roundtable discussions and many more. Registration details will be forthcoming in the next newsletter and on our website, www.NHLTA.org.

NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the
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SAVE THE DATE: The next NHLTA Virtual Roundtable will be **January 27, 2021, 2-3 pm.**