

Director's Report

February 1st, 2023

To the esteemed Board of Trustees of the Solomon Wright Public Library –

Over the past eight weeks, I have been working to familiarize myself with the Library's collection, programs, internal procedures, and finances, as well as its consortial affiliations, local and state government connections, and neighboring libraries. Much of what follows is best described as first steps, but steps which you will soon see developed into initiatives, relationships, and programs that raise the SWPL's profile and impact.

Here are some initial tasks I have completed, or am about to complete.

- 1) Purchased a license to the cloud-based bookkeeping software system QuickBooks; linking it to our Bank of Bennington accounts; setting it up for use in employee time-keeping; getting payroll underway; and identified, categorized and set categorization rules for all bank expenditures, dating to the beginning of this year.
- 2) Renewed our museum memberships with Mass MoCA and the Clark Museum
- 3) Established relationships with the leads at the Vermont Department of Libraries, gathering forms and information about upcoming grant deadlines and requirements, and attending a webinar about our annual report
- 4) Established relationships with two local library consortiums
- 5) Established relationships with patrons, as well as local organizations that use the Library for events, such as the Sunrise Family Resource Center and Easterseals Vermont
- 6) Enlisted the help of Green Mountain RSVP, an organization that initiates volunteer opportunities for seniors, and made contact with a potential volunteer
- 7) Brought in an additional volunteer from among our patrons
- 8) Made cards and bought gift certificates for volunteers, thanking them for their service throughout the year
- 9) Edited the SWPL website to make online catalog search more prominent, and added a section inviting patrons to inquire about volunteering
- 10) Created a budget for the coming year

Plus, the Library hosted Teru Simon's art opening on January 6th, which was coupled with our meet-the-director event. At least 40 people came through the gathering throughout the evening. While there, I met several former volunteers and current patrons who had previously held group meetings (a quilting group, poetry writing and appreciation, a book club) at the SWPL, and discussed the prospect of hosting those groups here again.

Richard Williams expressed interest in the SWPL joining a local KOHA system. KOHA is a knowledgebase that allows library patrons to immediately see what items are available in a library consortium's collective holdings, then place holds and create interlibrary loan requests. Essentially, when looking up an item on our electronic catalog, our users would see everything

that matches their search terms, in every library that belongs to our consortium. Joining a local KOHA system would also enhance ILL processing and delivery for us.

I have reached out to the two local library consortiums, Catamount and Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC) regarding their KOHA instances.

This undertaking – joining a consortial knowledgebase system and integrating our holdings into it – deserves a longer discussion. But in very brief, it looks like Catamount is the way to go.

Though the SWPL is already a member of GMLC, membership in VOKAL (GMLC name for their KOHA instance) has reached saturation; they are accepting one to two new members per year, sponsorship by a current member library required. Integrating our collection into VOKAL would cost us approximately \$800 and if we are allowed to join, we would not be able to do so until June.

Catamount is the more prevalent system in our area. Physical proximity matters mostly in that I may call on local librarians whom I have relationships with, like Lynne McCann of the Bennington Free Library and Jennie Royzicki of the McCullough Library in North Bennington, for guidance as needed.

However, the SWPL is not a member of Catamount; the membership fee is \$350 (pro-rated according to join date). We would pay the same per-record rate to integrate into Catamount's KOHA instance, raising the bill another (approximately) \$800. Integration would not begin for at least six months.

Again, this undertaking demands a much more thorough discussion, which I am happy to undertake in the future.

Among the initiatives I will set in motion over the next few months are the following:

- 1) I am on the agenda for the February 9th meeting of the town of Pownal's Selectboard, where I will introduce myself to the Board members, briefly discuss some of the projects we are undertaking, and set the table for productive exchange and collaboration with the town going forward.
- 2) I have arranged one-on-one meetings with several local librarians, including Jennie (McCullough), and Lynne (Bennington Free). Jen Ryan and I have been attempting, heroically but thus far unsuccessfully, to meet in person for a few weeks now so I can get answers to my more in-depth procedural questions. In the meantime, she has been very prompt and helpful with all my administrative queries.
- 3) Through my work doing community outreach with the Bennington Museum, I have held meetings with many teachers and administrators in the Pownal area, including the principal of MAUHS, and teachers and administrators at Molly Stark, Monument Elementary, and Grace Christian School, among others. This cross-pollination has already paid off in connections with educators, to whom I am proposing information

literacy sessions that can incorporate library materials. I am also in discussions with the local Honor Society and ACT (Alliance for Community Transformation, a youth anti-substance abuse organization) about volunteer opportunities, and ongoing discussions with Easterseals Vermont about hosting one of their family programs at the library.

I accomplished one very big step just this week; I entered my first item into the library catalog. This is probably the primary act of creating any library, and it's kind of a big deal. After this, with budget settled, I can focus on getting more books (and more items generally) on our shelves.

Going forward, I believe one step must be taken as soon as possible.

The SWPL needs an accountant, treasurer, or bookkeeper, to maintain financial matters. While I initially thought I could take on this role, I now believe that best practices favor bringing on a separate, independent monitor to oversee finances. In the interest of accomplishing this quickly, I have gathered a few accountant recommendations, which I can share with the Board upon request.

Respectfully submitted,

Damien McCaffery, Director, Solomon Wright Public Library