

VACDaRN

Vermont Arts & Culture Disaster and Resilience Network



Steering Committee Meeting Notes

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

10 January 2020

Present: Sara Amos, Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, Carrie Cleveland, Eileen Corcoran, Jamie Duggan, Ann Lawless, Tom McMurdo, Rachel Moore, Rachel Onuf, Ben Rose, Joseph Watson

Regrets: Michele Bailey, Michael Billingsley, Carol Devlin, Carolyn Frisa

- **Introductions:** Those of us on the call introduced ourselves. Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, an archivist at the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration (VSARA), has joined the steering committee and will work with Rachel O., Amy, and Michele to lead and support VACDaRN.
- **Review and update on network organization:** While still using the *Cultural Placekeeping Guide* as our framework, Amy asked if members were in agreement that for the time being, we continue to keep our organizational structure informal: the Vermont Arts Council and VSARA will serve as co-leads, supporting and supported by the Steering Committee. Members were in agreement that our network does not need a more formal governance structure at this point. As the network matures, we might decide to formalize roles and responsibilities, develop bylaws, incorporate, and pursue nonprofit status but at present staying loose and flexible is the better approach. We do intend to list the co-lead organizations and Steering Committee members on the website and ask that you draft a brief sentence (or two) explaining why you participate in VACDaRN, to demonstrate the many different types of organizations and individuals coming together in this network.
- **Review and discussion of proposed website:** Sally led the committee through the proposed structure for the website. Overall, people liked the structure.

- It was suggested that Individual Artists should have their own category, and not be combined with Arts Organizations (we might explore combining Performing Arts and Arts Orgs).
 - As we design the site, we might decide that topics rather than audience should be the highest organizational level, to avoid the possibility that someone would come to the site and not find the information they seek because they do not see a role they identify with.
 - To avoid duplication of effort, the website will link to existing resources, but those need to be curated and annotated (what is the resource and why is it there) so users can rely on our site for trustworthy, up to date information.
 - Reviewing website platforms, SquareSpace did not seem as accessibility-friendly as WordPress. Since we are planning to try to develop the site in-house, and Sally and Rachel O. have some experience with WordPress, we are inclined to use that platform. Rachel M. suggested working with Taproot Plus (<https://www.taprootplus.org/>), which pairs non-profits and “fiscally sponsored organizations” (VACDaRN’s situation) with graphic designers, who use the Wix platform. If our attempts at in-house design tank, we may pursue this option!
 - Committee members are welcome to contribute content, if there are specific sections you would like to develop. All will be asked to review content once the site is built.
- **Updates on communications systems:** VACDaRN is maintaining a “list of lists”: a list of organizations that have existing distribution lists through which the network can disseminate information efficiently and effectively. We also want to have our own distribution list for communications to our constituent partners and organizations. Amy led us through two options: a more interactive Google group, or a more one-directional newsletter or email list (our current communication tool). When we consider the content that we want to put out, this might dictate the best platform for our needs. There was some reluctance to the idea of having to develop content just to have it – can the website cover what would be in the newsletter? A third option, social media, particularly Facebook, was suggested, though some thought that a Facebook account should be in addition to another mode of distribution, and social media accounts can be a huge time commitment. The final consensus was to move forward with the website and make that a priority, then to revisit the communications questions when we have a better sense of how the website will serve our needs.

- **Organization highlight: CERF+** The committee would like to highlight our parent organizations and/or personal backgrounds by having someone talk each meeting about the organization they work for or relevant experience they bring to the group. Carrie started us off by talking about CERF+, which started as the Craft Emergency Relief Fund, a nonprofit to help craft artists who have faced a career-threatening emergency (<https://cerfplus.org/>). Emergency was defined broadly, covering disasters as well as things like taking time off for family illness, etc. The fund started out giving 0% interest loans and now awards grants. Hurricane Katrina was the “aha moment” that made CERF realize they could also help artist to prepare for emergencies beforehand, and this led to the “+” in the name. CERF+ has since produced many resources for readiness, response, and recovery; advocated with insurance companies to help them understand appropriate coverage; and given readiness and recovery grants.

Group updates:

- The National Coalition for Arts’ Preparedness and Response (NCAPER)/South Arts will be releasing ArtsReady 2.0, an online emergency preparedness service by and for arts & culture nonprofits later this winter (<https://www.artsready.org/>) and the revamped dPlan is allegedly going to be launched soon as well (<https://www.dplan.org/>).
- The Performing Arts Readiness Project received another round of Mellon Foundation funding (<https://performingartsreadiness.org/>)!
- Rachel O. met up with Allie Bryer, who works with emergency preparedness and public health, to discuss her interest in VACDaRN and possibly partnering with us for training. Allie is currently working with a group that has funding to offer free Stop the Bleed workshops. Rachel will also be leading a disaster response and recovery workshop at Rokeby Museum, with a focus on collections. She also reported on behalf of Carol Devlin, Bolton Assistant Town Clerk: the town had a hot water tank failure that put 1.5” to 4” of water throughout the building, including the vault. Thanks to the preparedness steps Carol had taken, including removing important materials from lower shelves, the only losses were some supplies.
- Ben reported that various state agencies are on alert and the state emergency operations center (SEOC) is prepared to activate if the flooding forecasted for this weekend has widespread impact.
- Rachel M. mentioned that the Helen Day Art Center will be having an opening January 16th for “Love Letters” <https://www.helenday.com/exhibitions/upcoming> (up until April 18th) and that a year after their flood, they are still recovering, and having to redo some of the work that was done during the initial recovery.
- Tom said that the Department of Libraries is beginning their dPlan, with assistance from a consultant team participating in the Vermont Certified Public Manager Program.

- Jamie participated in a webinar with the National Park Service about a flood adaptability framework (can we have a link?) and mentioned the Association for Preservation Technology International, a multi-disciplinary, membership organization dedicated to promoting the best technology for protecting historic structures and their settings (<https://www.apiti.org/>).
- **Hopes and dreams for VACDaRN in 2020:**
 - Updating our own institutions' disaster plans
 - Another potential VACDaRN event to keep momentum going
 - Or we can piggy pack off another event to have a presence there, such as VEM's emergency preparedness conference (2020 date and venue TBD)
 - Successful launch of website
- **Next meeting** will likely be held in March, with a skeletal mockup of the website to review. Since our call, a couple members have let it be known they would like to have an in-person meeting in 2020, so we will discuss that next call.
- **Don't forget!**
 - Please send Amy a brief bio
 - Please let us know if there is a section of the website for which you would like to be content selector
 - Please let us know if you would like to share information about yourself and your organization (if applicable) during an upcoming meeting