



Steering Committee Meeting Notes

2:00 – 3:00 PM

January 14, 2021

Present: Katelynn Averyt, Michele Bailey, Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, Eileen Corcoran, Amy Cunningham, Carrie Cleveland, James Duggan, Ann Lawless, Tom McMurdo, Rachel Onuf, Joseph Watson

Introducing Newest Member & Updates

Katelynn: Katelynn and her family just moved to Vermont in May and she serves as the Development Coordinator for the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Before that she worked briefly at the Helen Day Art Center and with the Smithsonian's Cultural Rescue Initiative, working closely with Lori Foley, Coordinator of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force.

Ann: helped to submit a Preservation Assistance Grant for the Old Stone House Museum and has been doing a lot of work for the town of Wheelock, whose select board has recently signed off on a four-town hazard mitigation plan.

Michele & Amy: The Vermont Arts Council has been focusing on distributing CARES Act funding and has established three new grant programs. About 5 times more money has been distributed than in normal times. Most recently they are learning about the funding efforts and programs available for shuttered performances spaces and organizations.

Tom: Department of Libraries used a \$120K grant from the Community Foundation to distribute \$1,500 regrants to 80 public libraries to help with internet connectivity. Rumors of a third stimulus has the Department hoping for funding for Communications Union Districts (CUDs) to expand broadband access throughout Vermont.

Eileen: The Vermont Historical Society's museum is closed for January, and they have been holding virtual roundtables to engage with local historical societies.

Sally & Rachel: The Vermont State Archives & Records Administration remains open to researchers by appointment only. Sally has taken on more of the duties of the roving archivist under the Vermont Historical Records Program but due to the pandemic has been unable to visit with many repositories. Looking to 2021 as an opportunity to reach out to repositories and gauge their needs. Both are working with a group of Green Mountain Digital Archive partners to market and increase usage of Vermont's DPLA hub. Rachel has been spending much of her time looking for common threads and efforts to connect with people and groups and has been assisting with grant applications around the state.

Carrie: The CERF+ standing relief fund was not intended to respond to market loss, so they now maintain a COVID relief fund that so far has issued 592 \$1,000 grants. A third cycle has been opened. They are also helping artists navigate federal resources and are tailoring their trainings, which will be put online, to be reflective of COVID issues.

Jamie: Historic Sites was really struck by the attack on the US Capitol, and they are looking at security and access at sites. They are also looking at their sites through a sustainability and resilience lens.

Update on NHPRC Funding

The Vermont Historical Records Program's application for federal funding was successful. Starting in June, this grant will purchase equipment and supplies, including dataloggers for small institutions to borrow for environmental monitoring programs and disaster supply caches for each county. Anyone interested in helping with the disaster supplies should contact Rachel. The grant also funds two collection salvage workshops to be led by an outside consultant. VHRP will continue to keep VACDaRN projects in mind as we apply for grants.

Working Group Updates

All working groups met in the time between steering committee meetings. Members from each working group brought their ideas back to the steering committee.

1. Education & Training

Want to focus on developing training for individual artists as the steering committee decided this is a priority audience. Carrie drafted training based on an existing model from CERF+ and the group hopes to offer it in April. They would offer content split over two sessions so that it's not too long, including walking through standard procedures such as risk assessments, identifying artists' assets and vulnerabilities, and offering participants the opportunity to share their experiences and to connect with each other. Offering in the spring is ideal as it's a time when Vermont is vulnerable to flooding, and we don't want to lose sight of general emergency preparedness in the wake of the pandemic. The topics in the training would apply to all artistic areas. Pro tip from Carrie: describe this as "resilience training," because "emergency preparedness" is a real turn-off.

In addition, there are many relevant webinars already available from other organizations. The working group feels that we shouldn't reinvent the wheel and instead could host watch parties to view existing

webinars and host discussion sessions after. Any activities would be limited to Vermont participants only, as it would keep the content relevant to Vermont issues and keep it local for networking purposes. The steering committee was very enthusiastic and supportive of these ideas.

2. COVID Documentation & Artistic Response

The group first gathered existing resources in one place and a new page has been added to the VACDaRN website to feature them (thank you, Sally!). Resources include documentation projects at archives and historical institutions, artistic exhibits and projects that highlight reactions to the pandemic, and available virtual exhibits and performances.

The Vermont Historical Records Program has a related initiative to establish a digital repository collecting artistic responses, and the repository currently includes portraits taken by two photographers that highlight their neighbors during the spring lockdown. The committee is discussing how to reach out to other artists doing this kind of documentation and response work. The steering committee was enthusiastic about the gathered resources and excited to see where this progresses.

3. Communications

The communications working group first discussed who the audiences are for VACDaRN and how different communications tools would differ for each. The group identified: 1) institutions that are part of VACDaRN (the primary audience) *or should be* 2) Individuals who are interested in those member institutions and 3) People in other states involved in emergency preparedness work in the arts and cultural heritage sector.

VACDaRN currently has a Facebook page and Sally has been posting occasionally, as appropriate. The group felt that social media really is tailored to individual experience, while VACDaRN's main audience are the institutions that it helps serve. In addition, one of the top ten priorities that came out of VACDaRN's launch was the desire for a way for members to share information and connect with each other. Therefore, the group feels it's best to focus primarily on the listserv as it will be the most meaningful for the primary audience and to continue using Facebook as we have done so far.

The group considered groups.io and Google Groups as the listserv platform but recommended Google Groups as VACDaRN is already using a Google account. The steering committee was in agreement about the group's assessment and felt fine with either platform but expressed concern that Google Groups might not be user friendly to those people who don't already have a Google account. The communications group agreed to meet again to review the choices one more time and to come up with a plan to establish the listserv. The group could also explore whether we could get a state-supported listserv.

Next Steps

The goal-setting agenda item was tabled until the next meeting. In the time before the next meeting, members were instructed to think about what they want to see VACDaRN do in the coming year and working groups were instructed to keep moving their work forward. The steering committee will meet in 2-3 months, giving the working groups time to meet again and advance their objectives.