



## Steering Committee Meeting Notes

1 – 2:30 PM

May 6, 2022

**Present:** Katelynn Averyt, Michele Bailey, Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, Carrie Cleveland, Eileen Corcoran, Amy Cunningham, Jamie Duggan, Carolyn Frisa, Tom McMurdo, Rachel Onuf, Ben Rose, Joseph Watson

**Guests:** Doug Babcock

### Updates

*Michele & Amy:* Vermont Arts Council is partnering with the UMass Amherst arts extension service to pilot a training program on climate change and cultural organizations. They recently put out a survey and got a good number of responses. A workshop is being developed and may be co-hosted within the next year or two. The Cultural Facilities Grant application deadline has passed and there were fewer applicants than normal. The VAC is also working with funding from the Vermont Legislature to build the digital capacity of cultural organizations, helping them to expand upon virtual offerings begun during the pandemic; awards will go out in June. There is \$9 million slated for the creative sector in the Legislature's economic development omnibus bill, and VAC is hoping it will pass. Craig Nutt of CERF+ came to some of the VAC's meetings with Vermont's Congressional Delegation during Arts Advocacy Day. VAC's Communications Director, Catherine Crawley, posted an article about managing performing arts spaces post-COVID, featuring interviews with several performing arts organization directors (<https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/blog/managing-performance-spaces-post-covid/>).

*Tom:* Vermont has a new State Librarian, Catherine Delneo (read about her in *Seven Days*: [https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/vermont-born-cathy-delneo-returns-home-for-a-new-role-as-state-librarian/Content?oid=35488266&\\_ga=2.213097239.2059162258.1652207210-1262040815.1652207210](https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/vermont-born-cathy-delneo-returns-home-for-a-new-role-as-state-librarian/Content?oid=35488266&_ga=2.213097239.2059162258.1652207210-1262040815.1652207210)). The Department of Libraries is administering the second round of LSTA ARPA grants, focusing on EDI collections; launching the Lyrasis Palace app, which combines e-books and audiobooks in a single stream; and is partnering with Big Heavy World to distribute lendable

microphones to public libraries (thanks to digital capacity funding through VAC). There is \$16 million in the federal infrastructure bill to help Vermont libraries with building and digital upgrades, with the potential for another \$10 million through an earmark from Senator Leahy. It's not enough to cover all of the renovation needs for Vermont's libraries (Tom estimates the need to be about \$150 million), but it is a start.

*Rachel & Sally:* The Vermont Historical Records Program has launched an online basics of emergency preparedness module (<https://sos.vermont.gov/vsara/partner/assistance/trainings/emergency-preparedness/>), the first in a series of other training modules that will be addressing the highest needs of cultural heritage organizations as identified in the 2021 VHRP survey. Sally recently presented about the survey project for a webinar of the Council of State Archivists. Site visits have begun to pick up again. VHRP is procuring the technology to launch a mobile digitization unit that should be mobile later this summer. Rachel has been working with members of Dartmouth College's cultural heritage and emergency management staff, planning a kick-off meeting to reengage around emergency preparedness. A member of the college community received funding to establish a New Hampshire Alliance for Response network, like VACDaRN. In the fall, Rachel led a series of disaster plan writing workshops for the Association for Rural and Small Libraries, and they went well. The State Library of Iowa has reached out to Rachel to request similar training for Iowa which Rachel plans on doing – but she really wants to do a similar program in Vermont! Rachel will be tabling at the Resilient Vermont conference at Norwich University later this month, representing VACDaRN – contact her if you're interested in assisting. She will also be relaunching the disaster supply kit working group shortly.

*Joseph:* Middlebury College Library's emergency preparedness plan is now being updated by the circulation supervisor since that staffing unit is first to respond if something happens. Joseph is working on a recovery procedure manual that he will be sharing with the College's public safety officer, and he's hoping to do tabletop exercises later this summer. Joseph also learned about the Poison Book Project ([http://wiki.winterthur.org/wiki/Poison\\_Book\\_Project](http://wiki.winterthur.org/wiki/Poison_Book_Project)), an international project to identify Victorian-era books with bindings laced with arsenic, and four books were identified in the Middlebury collection as having high levels of toxicity that are now logged in the project's database.

*Jamie:* Historic Sites are getting ready to open; most will open on May 28. A few sites will not be opening due to staffing issues. Bill Jenney, the longtime administrator of the Coolidge site (and others) has retired, a big change for the division. The division is beginning to look at environmental conditions in their buildings, and they've found that having some buildings closed during the pandemic has established bad microclimates. The 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of America's independence is coming up in 2026 and there will be some federal money coming that could be used to improve buildings at historic sites. The Bennington Battle Monument has been monitored for a year to see the effect of weather on the structure, and a consulting firm will be conducting a project next week, rappelling down the monument to document what they see.

*Katelynn:* Katelynn has left her position with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and returned to her position as the Cultural Heritage Disaster Response Specialist at the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative. The SCRI manages domestic and international disaster response programs and research data related to cultural heritage under threat. The SCRI has been doing a lot of work with the Ukraine crisis, and their work has been covered by the Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2022/03/19/ukraine-cultural-heritage-preservation/>) and PBS

(<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/ukraines-cultural-sites-under-threat-from-russias-invasion>). The SCRI is also planning a cultural heritage mapping summit to be held in the future.

*Carolyn:* Carolyn has been doing site assessments at cultural organizations around VT and NH, many of which have been closed for the pandemic. These sites are having financial issues due to a lack of visitor-generated income, and some have problems with pest infestation. Her studio work is also really picking up. Carolyn will be teaching salvage workshops this summer with funding from the NHPRC via the VHRP programming grant.

*Eileen:* The Vermont Historical Society is also having staff turnover – longtime librarian Paul Carnahan is retiring and there will be a reception for him in June. VHS facilitated a hybrid Vermont History Day and 175 kids participated. VHS is in the planning stages of developing a potential statewide digital platform in conjunction with the Department of Libraries and the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. Eileen will be offering a four-part cataloging workshop series with Rachel and Erica Donniss this summer, and she is visiting more local historical societies. VHS is also hoping to get state funding to improve collection storage environments.

*Ben:* There are a lot of world issues going on that are taking up Vermont Emergency Management's focus. The statewide contract with Polygon for post-disaster document recovery has been renewed until July 2023 and we will go through the RFP process for the year after. Vermont's contract is broader and more inclusive of the types of institutions that can use the services than other states. VEM is also working on the State Recovery Plan and the Historic and Cultural Restoration Task Force tab has been sent out for input; VACDaRN will be included as a resource for helping cultural organizations.

*Carrie:* Cornelia King, the longtime executive director of CERF+ is stepping down; she was the force behind making CERF+ a national organization. CERF+ is going through a strategic planning process to have a current snapshot of the organization for the new director. They've also created an equity council to evaluate their materials, services, and programs.

### **Crisis Analysis & Mitigation Coach Training**

Carrie has been in the pilot cohort of the crisis analysis and mitigation coach training and the curriculum has been finalized (more here: <https://www.airinstitute.org/cam-coach-pilot-cohort/>). The training is a 2-hour interactive workshop that brings the arts and emergency management sectors together. Carrie would like to see Vermont offer one of these workshops. The Steering Committee is very supportive of the idea and believes the best time to offer it would be in September, during Preparedness Month. VACDaRN would also have to make sure that there's enough representation from the emergency management side; we probably would have no trouble filling the arts and culture side. Carrie will share more information with the Steering Committee as the process moves along and will develop a flyer that we can distribute to our various networks.