



**Steering Committee Meeting Notes 1 – 2 PM
February 4, 2025**

Present

Amy Cunningham, Rachel Onuf, Eileen Corcoran, Michele Bailey, Katelynn Averyt, Tom McMurdo, Joseph Watson, Paddy Reagan, Carolyn Frisa, Noel Clark, Jane Cadwalader, Jamie Duggan

Introduction

Jane Cadwalader, new Roving Archivist for VHRP and VACDaRN Co-Lead, made introductions with the Steering Committee members in attendance.

Housekeeping

VACDaRN maintains a group text with members that was set up during the floods. Its purpose is to send out information Network wide. The group text needs to be updated with new members [and remove former members].

The VACDaRN website also needs to be updated for new members and removing former members. At this time, the VAC Communications Team will be assisting with updates of the website. In the future, Rachel Onuf and Cadwalader can take on editing permissions to update as needed. Noel Clark volunteered to assist with the updates. Onuf mentioned that the website was created by Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, who developed the website in 2019 and it does need refreshing.

VACDaRN now has a standing meeting link on Zoom.

With Ben Rose retiring from state employment, Taiga Christie will represent VEM at VACDaRN meetings. VACDaRN encourages participation by emergency management and is aware of other gaps in representation within the community.

Social Media Discussion

Discussion turned to VACDaRN's current social media, Facebook, and whether the organization should leave it and set up an account with another company, BlueSky. VACDaRN uses social media to get messages out and to search for impact of disasters on other cultural heritage and arts organizations.

Noel Clark said the Vermont Humanities have a BlueSky account because NEH has one as well. They have abandoned their X account. He commented that many organizations are heading to

BlueSky, but the audience isn't there to fulfil the main purpose of social media—send out news and information about the organization. Clark suggests creating a BlueSky account and following other member organizations to start building a following.

Tom McMurdo commented that VTLIB recently left Facebook and Instagram and left X a while ago. One issue VTLIB has is keeping up with posting. They don't have the capacity currently to develop and post content. He added that BlueSky is adding one million users a day.

Amy Cunningham commented that VAC never had an X account. VAC's Facebook and Instagram accounts are still active. She said that Facebook is a lifeline, and it has value in publicizing grants. Issues are evident and Cunningham hopes that the State of Vermont will create a platform like Front Porch Forum.

Clark commented that using FPF as a marketing tool for the Vermont Book Awards and the costs associated with the platform. He said that it is more measurable and grass roots than Facebook which makes it useful as a tool, but not for everyday use.

Rachel Onuf commented that SOS actively uses FPF, and we could potentially utilize that account to Promote VACDaRN's posts. She can talk to the SOS Communications Team.

Joseph Watson commented that Middlebury College uses Facebook and Instagram and has no current plans to change platforms.

Eileen Corcoran commented that VHS left X last year. Facebook is their primary platform, and they do use Instagram. VHS also created a Bluesky account, and they are currently building their network. She also mentioned that VHS needs to consider its audience and what type of platforms they use.

Jamie Duggan commented on the Historic Sites Division of VDHP currently uses Facebook and is not considering other platforms at this time. He is focused on how to gain and keep people's attention, especially younger audiences.

Updates:

Jamie Duggan reported that Vermont Historic Sites had 60,000+ visitors in 2024. There are two UVM Grads working in temporary FT positions with Jamie in the Historic Sites Division.

Tom McMurdo reports that a third of VTLIB's budget is federal funding. With the uncertainty of this funding, VTLIB's focus is continuing the important work that they provide to the public. McMurdo will be testifying this week in the Legislature on budget needs.

Amy Cunningham reports VAC is opening the grants program for FY2026. They are going full steam ahead with the grant timeline.

Michele Bailey adds that the VAC grant guidelines open this week, and she will be testifying in the Legislature on budget needs.

Noel Clark commented that the Vermont Humanities is working on strengthening ties with other foundations in the light of current events. He praises VACDaRN for its support of Arts and Culture in disaster both environmental and manmade.

Katelynn Averyt reported no major updates. Staff of the SCRI have been recalled to the office. Applications for the Heritage Emergency Response Training (HEART) for Native Communities close in early February. Averyt is happy to provide VT support to any applicants that network members know.

[Heritage Emergency and Response Training \(HEART\) for Native Communities | Cultural Rescue Initiative](#)

Paddy Reagan reports no major updates.

Carolyn Frisa reports no major updates.

Joseph Watson reported a busy fall term at Middlebury College with 52 class sessions held in Special Collections. History of the Book, 1500-1800 was taught during the J Term and meant several sessions a week for four weeks. The Armstrong Library was closed due to decreased circulation. Staff weeded the collection by 40% and moved it to Davis Library. The former Armstrong building will be repurposed. He thought the moving company did a good job. Lastly, Middlebury College hired Polygon Group to aid in recovery of records in collections with mold. Polygon provides services based on a minimum requirement of 3 cubic feet of materials. Since the records didn't meet that size, Middlebury Staff were able to include additional records from another collection to meet requirements.

Rachel Onuf suggested that Watson write a case study on their experiences with Polygon Group and their services for a small collection.

Eileen Corcoran reported no major updates, but she is supporting younger staff during the current environment and helping them gain self-preservation skills.

Next Meeting

Rachel Onuf commented that VACDaRN will meet in early March with more updates about the Waterwheel Foundation. Date TBD.

Book Recommendations

Carolyn Frisa: [Still Life by Sarah Winman | Goodreads](#) — Highly recommends this historical novel.

Noel Clark: The Vermont Reads pick will be announced in about a month. This year's pick, [The Light Pirate](#), is by Vermont-connected author Lily Brooks-Dalton and touches on climate change. Clark recommends the Network members check it out since it relates to their work.