

**James E. Nichols Memorial Library
Board of Trustees Meeting**

-Approved 4/20/2020-

April 13, 2020

Minutes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 10:01am via Zoom.us. Present (electronically): Chairperson Annette Nichols, Treasurer Sarah Heath, Gayle Lacasse, Bette Miller, Shannon Whalen, Susan Gurney (Alternate), Karen Ponton (Alternate); Librarian Jon Kinnaman (except for non-public session). Due to the COVID-19 situation, Chairperson Nichols declared the meeting to be an emergency and that the meeting would be held electronically.

- I. **Review/Approval of Minutes:** Motion by S. Heath, seconded by S. Whalen that: The Minutes of April 6, 2020 be approved as written. Passed unanimously. S. Whalen asked for the reason the Trustees chose not to try the Kanopy trial. S. Heath explained that the number of patrons expected to use Kanopy was low and therefore not worth the cost of implementing the platform at this time.

II. **Ongoing Business**

A. **Librarian's Report:** J. Kinnaman presented his Report for the past week (see three (3) attachments). S. Heath asked for clarification about the 100 books out on Inter-library Loan (ILL). J. Kinnaman reported that these are books loaned to other libraries and that ILL materials are usually out of Nichols Library for about 6 weeks. A. Nichols asked about interactions with patrons during the past week. He reported one patron called to find out his library card number; two (2) new library cards were issued; and two (2) cards were issued the week prior. No one attended the local author talk via zoom.com on April 7th. G. Lacasse was interested in the Interlakes Elementary School (ILES) media specialist's email request on the NH Librarians listserv asking about providing library connections for students during the April school break. She thought this was a good opportunity to engage students. J. Kinnaman has not yet answered the email. A. Nichols asked what online meetings with other librarians he has been attending. J. Kinnaman reported that video meetings or conference calls are held every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; this morning a representative from the State Library answered librarians' questions about employment, furloughs and reducing operations. He also participated in a Scrooge & Marley Co-op video conference about those same issues. Most libraries have now reduced staff and operations, and some staff are working from home as much as possible. It is questionable whether libraries will be re-opening in May. This may push back the start of any COVID-19 mitigation plans. Motion by B. Miller, seconded by S. Whalen: To accept the Librarian's Report. Passed unanimously.

B. **Non-public Session:** At 10:24am, motion by S. Heath, seconded by B. Miller: To go into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) to a discuss personnel matter. Passed unanimously. Roll Call: G. Lacasse-yes, S. Heath-yes, B. Miller-yes, A. Nichols-yes, S. Whalen-yes. Alternates S. Gurney and K. Ponton attended but did not vote. J. Kinnaman was not present for the non-public session. The Trustees discussed continuing concerns related to Library personnel and staffing implications raised by the emergency closing the Library during the COVID-19 pandemic. Motion by S. Heath, seconded by S. Whalen: To schedule the Librarian for 18 hours this week. Passed 4-1. Roll Call: S. Heath-yes, G. Lacasse-yes, B. Miller-yes, S. Whalen-yes, A. Nichols-no. Motion by G. Lacasse, seconded by S. Whalen: To try the Kanopy trial for 30 days. Passed 3-2. Roll Call: G. Lacasse-yes, A. Nichols-yes, S. Whalen-yes, S. Heath-no, B. Miller-no.

At 11:32am, motion by S. Whalen, seconded by G. Lacasse: To end the non-public session. Passed unanimously.

Meeting reconvened by A. Nichols at 11:32am. J. Kinnaman rejoined the meeting. A. Nichols shared the Trustees decision concerning hours to be worked this week. G. Lacasse and S.

Gurney will meet with J. Kinnaman to offer fresh perspectives on how to prioritize tasks for this week (such as marketing Kanopy, fixing broken WordPress links and contacting the ILES media specialist) and how to move forward through this difficult time towards a new future for the Nichols Library.

III. Other Business:

Motion by G. Lacasse, seconded by S. Whalen: That the Trustees meet next Monday for a limited time of 30 minutes. Passed unanimously. Next meeting is Monday, April 20th at 10:00am via Zoom.us. The public is welcome to participate.

Adjournment: Motion by S. Heath, seconded by B. Miller to adjourn at 11:40pm. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Ponton, Secretary pro-tempore

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1. Librarian's Report, April 8-11

Monday 4/8. Community enagement, socail media board meeting. 5 hrs

Tuesday 4/9 NH Librarian's video conference, social media, author talk. 2 hrs

Wednesday 4/10 Community engagement, commincation with board chair 2 hrs

Thursday, 4/11 Outline draft of strategic plan 3 hours

Friday 4/12 writing strategic plan for mitigation periond and reopening 7

Satruday 1 review and distribution of reports.

18 salary +18 personal = 36

2. Strategic Plan for Library Services during the Pandemic Mitigation

In the charge to develop a strategic plan for re-opening the library, it was noted that we will need to “develop our value proposition in a post-COVID world”. With all respect, the Nichols Memorial Library needs to be doing this *now*. There is no assurance that the pandemic will peak in a few weeks. Some thought it already would have happened by Easter. “It could”, however, “be months until it’s safe to lift social distancing restrictions.” (Reznik. [Vox](#). 3/20/20). And, as noted in the strategic plan for re-opening, there is likely to be a time gap between the formal lifting of mitigation practices and the processing required for the library to be safely re-open. With that in mind, the library should, with respect, be maintaining a visible role in our community over this uncertain timeline. We can do this by continuing to promote our resources, offering non-traditional programs and by providing digital content.

Having the doors of the library closed does not mean that the library needs to exist on auto-pilot. There are myriad examples of what libraries in our region do to provide value to their communities. Here are some examples of possibilities that are being explored by other area libraries, and which might provide food for thought about what could be done here at Nichols.

Community engagement and virtual programming. In Meredith, the librarian produces a weekly newsletter, hosts a Zoom Genealogy club, and hosts a Zoom Books on Tap book discussion on Friday evenings. The librarian in Bristol is providing a poetry night, book group discussions, Friday morning coffee / open conversation, and movie group discussions. Bristol is also creating online content: listing of cultural venues offering virtual tours, a listing of resources about the history of Bristol, story times, Friday trivia videos. In addition to offering programs, Tamworth is communicating with their K-8 school principal and teachers by sending messages about library resources to them to share with parents via their messaging system. Our library received a request to coordinate with the Interlakes school librarian just this Friday. Tamworth is also calling library regulars who may be feeling isolated (this would be a terrific service).

Nichols has offered several online programs to little response but on consulting with other librarians, it has been learned that the most opportune times might be in early morning or evenings. A compacted schedule of conferences has made morning scheduling more difficult in the first weeks of the mitigation period, but there is room to try these alternatives going forward.

Expansion of Online Material Offerings. The libraries I have consulted have shifted money in their materials budget toward online resources. Bristol subscribed to Kanopy last November, and Meredith just set up a free trial, as well as subscribing to RB Digital. Tamworth added Overdrive Advantage, which allows libraries to purchase exclusive access to select items on Overdrive.

Asked about Kanopy costs, Brittany Overton, Bristol’s town librarian, said the initial setup of 10 film credits per patron per month was too generous, but cutting the number of credits five was manageable. None of the libraries in question experienced difficulties with set-ups.

Overdrive Advantage allows Tamworth to purchase exclusive access to select offerings on the Overdrive platform, thus eliminating waiting lists. Advantage requires a pre-buy of \$500 and charges full cost (\$65 an up) for selections. Meredith’s RB digital plan has a similar option, with the difference that they do not require a pre-buy. It is a steep price per item, but if ten people used the exclusive, the price per person would balance out somewhat. All of these libraries have made the determination that it is important to provide fresh material to patrons now, rather than hoarding their book budget for an uncertain re-opening date.

The librarian's recommendation regarding these options that Overdrive and Hoopla are meeting reading needs but that we have a DVD audience that would benefit from a better selection than what Hoopla has to offer. The Kanopy 30-day option is still available. The board can be reassured that an automatic rollover is not possible from the trial; for the account to activate, we would have to make selections from their menu of options and do a final setup. They do not have our credit card number. In the meantime, Nichols would have a month to evaluate the service. If we subscribe to Kanopy, there are ways to contain costs, such as limiting user credits, or only subscribing only to the .99 cent per use offerings. While we experienced an initial problem setting up the port to Hoopla, setting up Overdrive and opening the catalog to NHAIS went seamlessly, which suggests that the Hoopla experience might have been an anomaly. The board is strongly urged to reconsider on this.

If the library decides to stand pat on its offerings and withhold material spending, it would not necessarily translate into the purchase of a back catalog of print publications. To do so would create a backlog of processing and a glut of material that our patrons could not readily consume. Measured spending as we go rather than hoarding seems a more sensible approach. Saving the materials budget to return to the town, short of a directive from the select board, is a failure to use the funds for what they have been approved for.

Library administration. The library has a baseline of operational tasks that need to be maintained during the pandemic. The librarians I engaged with are busy cleaning up MARC records in the library catalog. They are preparing order lists as new releases are announced. They are addressing their professional development by attending free webinars. They are also carrying on routine tasks such as responding to patron requests for assistance, registering patrons. All of the librarians in question work in their buildings at least one day a week. In any case, If this work is not done in an ongoing way, it will create a backlog to be processed along with the necessary decontamination work once the library is able to reopen.

It should be noted here that any ongoing operational needs of the library, even the processing of new library registrations or answering of informational questions, cannot by law be taken over by volunteers or trustees in lieu of paid staff. Both state (NH LAB 803.05 Exemption; NH RSA 275.42-II; NH RSA 279:1-X) and federal law (29 CFR 553.100-.106) clearly states that a volunteer cannot take the place of a paid worker who is already employed by the library.

Fiduciary Responsibilities. We have an approved budget by the community from town meetings. By law, the town's budget committee cannot do anything about a town budget that has already been passed by the town, per RSA 32:22. They can request a review of expenditures from each town department, but they cannot mandate any changes to a budget passed by the town. By standing down and not offering new services, the board would be failing to expend duly appropriated funds for the purpose of library operations. This would result in disappointing the community that the library presently serves without necessarily gaining the goodwill of those who do not partake.

Mary Cronin of the Cook Library in Tamworth states that during this period of mitigation, "communication is key. Taking the time to let people know what you're doing is important". Cutting off all communication by shutting down staff is counterintuitive to the charge given by the board to engage with the community. We need to stay involved, not batten down the hatches and ride the storm out. As stated in the NHLTA manual, one of the principal duties of library trustees is to "advocate for the library and library service in the community, state and nation." Trustees of our neighboring communities in this region are doing this by supporting the ongoing work of their library directors. They are approving the provision of alternative materials. They are looking to the ongoing administration of the library and the development of its staff. While they also may have ratepayers who have concerns about the library's role in the pandemic, these trustees are responding by supporting and promoting the library to their community. A proactive stance might well go much further to advancing the brand of the Nichols Library than a retreat. We would be well advised to continue the work of community engagement that began before the closing.

Bibliography: NH guides for remote work

- Spreadsheet for sharing ideas for work librarians can do remotely (started by Amy Lappin on 3/19/2020):
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1M3SbMzztfWKzZiR4samnBmRoEEeXJG1t1X-MhMHMT0E/edit?usp=sharing>
- Sandown Public Library Daily Activity Tracking Google Document template:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14PovsAG4tdlAYA7Qv5PZAioNrD5Jdk5dpdGZjGMvMEE/edit>
- Sandown Public Library Work List for Teleworking:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hjT6fZerqt7N0o56NCM7HCllqUQFLJDBNfWL7xL8aiU/edit>
- Deb Hoadley (Sandown Public Library, Director) tips for staff teleworking:
<http://nhlibrarians.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Sandown-Library-staff-telework-tips.pdf>

3. Strategic Plan for Re-opening of the Nichols Library

The overall goal of actions during the post-peak COVID-19 period is to address the health and social impact of the pandemic on the library, as well as to prepare for a safe relaxation of mitigations and the resumption of physical services. Timing of the re-opening process should be keyed on determinations made by the state government and local public health officials, but also needs to take into account necessary preparations within the library itself.

Preparation for re-opening should begin with a thorough consultation of reports prepared by disease specialists and library professionals on the persistence of the COVID-19 virus on various substances, the proper methods for the decontamination of such materials, and guidance on the relaxation of social distancing. A bibliography of resources is cited at the end of this report.

Part of the uncertainty in reopening is that there are many questions that remain unknown about the virus. It is not known where we are on the infection curve, whether or not it is seasonal. It is not known if immunities have developed and how readily people can be reinfected. There is also a question as to whether there are sufficient tests to measure the prevalence of the virus in the population. A vaccine is not in sight. With these considerations in mind, a more lengthy mitigation period may be in store.

Decontamination requirements.

The first requirement for re-opening will be to assure that the building and its contents are as free as possible from contaminants. Materials and spaces within the library may already be safe, having been unexposed since mid-March, but appropriate authorities should be consulted. All materials placed in the book drop, however, will need to be decontaminated since there can be no certainty as to when the most recent deposit was made.

Secondly, there will need to be a period for processing materials that patrons have had out during the pandemic. There are 100 items out on interlibrary loan to 60 public libraries throughout the state. These items will need to be gathered, quarantined and processed. These items cannot be processed until the NH van service resumes, and it may take two to three weeks for the process to be completed.

There are an additional 333 items held by 143 patrons that will need to be returned and processed. It would be desirable to create a return period for the processing of these materials prior to a general reopening. Ideally, these materials would be collected outside the building for processing by staff, possibly with volunteer assistance. This would require a timetable for notifying patrons, setting a return period, setting a deposit point, and then treating the materials once they are collected.

As a baseline, it would be advisable the library not reopen to the public until outstanding patron and interlibrary materials have been processed. As noted, it may take several weeks to complete this process from notification to completion of processing. The timing may to some extent be determined by the schedule set by the NH state library for the resumption of van service.

The above schedule is premised on treating returned materials in batches rather than by ones or twos in an open library. A batch approach would be more likely to lead to consistent and orderly treatment of the materials. Ideally, these materials would be collected outside the building, cleansed outside, if weather permits, and then stored in a decontamination area for at least four days. The purchase of several large storage bins to supplement to book drop for collection of returns would be worth considering.

Treating items in ones or twos, particularly if the library were open and staff were also interacting with the public, would likely result in a less thorough cleansing and might increase risks of exposure to both staff

and patrons. For these reasons, library staff recommends treating materials in batches. If materials are not returned within a set time period, a further decision might need to be made whether to continue to process the remaining materials or dispose of them, so as to not slow the re-opening process. While cases have been relatively few in our area, provisions might need to be made for the return of materials by patrons who have been infected, and whether these should be marked for special handling or disposed of.

The ALA has provided [guidelines](#) on nature and length of time the virus remains active on materials and suggests guidelines for processing the materials (see bibliography). It would be advisable to acquire supplies of disinfectant wipes, gloves and masks to deal with this process.

Non-pandemic preparations for re-opening.

2019 non-fiction remains to be moved to the stacks. Selections will likely need to be made to accommodate these materials within the stacks. Renewal of magazines that are expiring will need to be considered. Advanced releases for the current period will need to be tracked and ordered, as well as selected titles issued during the period of mitigation. If furloughs are enacted as planned, staff will likely be behind the curve in preparing for new releases, particularly if the period of social mitigation extends longer than proposed by some. It would be advisable for the maintenance of administrative hours so that some of these preparations would be in process rather than being taken up from scratch.

Note that It would be more advisable to focus spending on current releases at the time of reopening. Attempting to acquire in bulk from titles issued during the mitigation period, might create a glut of material beyond the capacity of patrons to digest, resulting in little used materials. Shifting of resources to downloading and streaming services during the mitigation materials would be a more balanced approach to collection development.

No special changes in spatial arrangements in terms of placement of furnishings would likely need to be made in the library, as work and browsing spaces are adequately dispersed within the existing space of our facility. One policy change to consider might be in the short term to close the stacks to minimize contacts between staff and public. This would not be a popular measure but might be worth considering , at least initially, to avoid late contagions. Maintaining the chord in front of the circulation area to keep patrons from leaning on the front desk might also be advisable for the safety of the staff. Continuing wiping of computer workstations and cleansing of returned materials would also be advisable.

Duration of preparation process.

It is recommended that the doors are not reopened until the above processes are in place. How long this takes will depend upon the promptness of patrons who have materials out in making their returns and the resumption of state van service. Perhaps a time limit for returns should be tied to the notification. A minimum of several weeks would be required for this process to complete.

Ideally, staff would also have sufficient time to order and present a selection of new materials ready for circulation upon opening. This will also require a minimum of a week to 10 days to issue a first order and prepare materials for circulation. This process will take longer if pre-orders are not in place, due to staff furloughs. Glenn's assistance would be necessary in decontamination work, transfer of materials within the library, and processing of new acquisitions.

Re-opening and public engagement.

Once a target date is set, communication of, first, the return process, and then a full reopening will need to be sent via email, local press and social media. Expectations will have to be tempered by letting patrons know that there will be a gap between the formal lifting of social distancing requirements and the actual opening of the library due to the need to process materials. There will need to be clear instructions delivered on the time frame and process for returning. A second series of announcements would then need to be made of the library's opening to the public. Once circulation resumes, it will need to be

determined whether to continue with cleaning newly loaned materials (recommended) and whether or not to encourage extended browsing or shorter visits. It might be advisable to encourage visitors to maintain social distancing; in an abundance of caution, it might be advisable to restrict patrons to the reading room, at least initially.

Programming and Community engagement. It will also need to be determined when to resume activities that involve concentrated gatherings of people, such as story times, author talks and book groups. The library will need to follow public health guidelines in resumption of these kinds of activities.

Continuity of services. Finally, the charge in writing this report noted that ‘we will need to step up to demonstrate our value.’ With all respect, the time for stepping up is *now*. There is much uncertainty about when it will be possible to ease mitigation procedures. With the coming of Easter, we will have already passed one premature date for easing. It is uncertain if the easement can begin in May. Given these uncertainties, it would seem that it should be our object to continue to provide services and engagement in the indeterminate present. If we do not continue to reach out and establish our value now, then we will be that much further behind when we're-open. Further, if administrative and planning activities cease during the remainder of the mitigation period, our limited staff will be in the position of both having to process returns and prepare for the resumption of regular service without advance preparation. In short the time to “step up to demonstrate our value” is now. Now, while people are in need. Now, to address and nurture the community we have, rather than an imagined other.

Bibliography

“CDC’s guidance for community settings and environmental disinfection”. Join Dr. David Berendes and Dr. Catherine Rasberry, Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Webinar. to register<[“How to Sanitize Collections in a Pandemic”. American Library Association.
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“Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States” CDC.
https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/pdf/community_mitigation-sm.pdf Has section on duration of mitigation periods.

“Social distancing can’t last forever. Here’s what should come next”. Brian Resnik. Vox. 3/20/2020.
<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2020/3/26/21192211/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing-end>