

Idaho Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2022, 10 a.m. MST, via Zoom

Attendees:

- Board of Library Commissioners: Vice-Chair Dave Mecham, Michael Strickland, Dawn Wittman
- Idaho Commission for Libraries staff: State Librarian Stephanie Bailey-White, Deputy State Librarian Dylan Baker, Administrative Services Manager Jamie Smith, Talking Book Service Program Supervisor LeAnn Gelskey, E-Services Program Supervisor William Lamb, Partnerships and Programs Supervisor Amelia Valasek, Financial Specialist Katy Place, E-Resources Library Consultant Marina Rose, and (serving as recorder) Management Assistant Allison Maier
- Other attendees: Policy Advisor Matthew Reiber from the Governor's office, Ruth Brown from Idaho Public Television, and James Dawson from Boise State Public Radio

I. Call to Order

- A. **Introductions** Mecham called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. MST. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.
- B. **Agenda Review/Approval – Action item (Board Document 23-28)** Wittman moved to adopt the meeting agenda. Strickland seconded. *Motion carried unanimously.*
- C. **Announcements** None.

II. Public Comment – None.

III. Minutes Review/Approval

- A. **October 20, 2022, meeting – Action item (Board Document 23-27)** Wittman moved to approve the October 20, 2022, minutes. Strickland seconded. *Motion carried unanimously.*

IV. Legislation and Policies

V. Federal Fund

- A. Finances

- B. LSTA Grant Applications Received – Information item (Board Document 23-29)** Bailey-White introduced Board Document 23-29, which highlights continuing education grant applications received since the last board meeting. These grants are awarded with Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. There were no questions from the commissioners.
- C. ESSER Grant Applications Received – Information item (Board Document 23-30)** Bailey-White explained these are new grants the ICfL has been able to provide to the library community due to one-time Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. The ICfL, Idaho STEM Action Center, and Idaho Out-of-School Network received these funds, which are directed toward out-of-school and summer learning support. Among the awards are several \$20,000 and \$30,000 grants, as well as smaller grants. The ICfL will also have ESSER funding next fiscal year if reappropriation is approved. Bailey-White said the ESSER grants are a great opportunity for libraries to enhance summer learning and out-of-school time for the youth in their communities.

Mecham asked for more information about the connection between public libraries and the students served by ESSER funds, such as whether the libraries need to have an afterschool program. Bailey-White explained that for the six \$20,000 grants, the libraries had to offer significant out-of-school programs and attend regular training and planning efforts to enhance what they were doing. She highlighted the Donnelly Public Library as the poster child in this area, providing extensive afterschool and summer programs for children in their community. The library is the only provider of out-of-school opportunities in the area. Library staff walk the students from the school to the library. Parents are often working in McCall or out of town, so the children would otherwise be home alone. The library offers a lot of hands-on STEM learning and literacy activities.

Wittman asked who provides the training for grant recipients. Bailey-White said ICfL Youth Services Consultant Jennifer Redford is doing a lot of the training. Many recipients also attended a national training offered last month, and the Idaho Out-of-School Network also collaborates with the ICfL on a regular basis. Redford is heading up a teen and tween training in early spring, which is a collaborative effort.

Bailey-White said she was pleased to see that among the smaller grant applications, many libraries are using funds to enhance continued STEM programming and collaboration with public school systems.

Bailey-White said the ESSER funding will also allow several school libraries to stay open during the summer. She said students often have a hard time getting to a public library due to transportation issues. When a school library in their neighborhood stays open a couple of days a week, they can access programs and books throughout the summer. The ICfL awarded eight Summer School Library Grants. Bailey-White said she is pleased to see the response and hopes it increases next year.

Wittman asked about the difference between the \$20,000 grant and the \$30,000 grant. Bailey-White said one grant option was reduced to \$20,000 because there wasn't as much time to implement the funds, since the grant is falling in this fiscal year and school has already started. For that reason, the summer grants were a bit larger.

VI. General, Miscellaneous Revenue, and Library Service Improvement Funds

- A. Finances
- B. Program
- C. **Bucks for Books Grant Applications Received – Information item (Board Document 23-31)** Bailey-White explained this is the fourth year the ICfL has partnered with the Idaho Lottery Commission on the Bucks for Books program. The Lottery Commission has been able to increase the amount awarded to elementary schools every year, providing \$50,000 for the program this fiscal year. Nineteen elementary school libraries received grants, and Lottery Commission staff have presented big checks and boxes of books to those schools.

Bailey-White noted that Board Document 23-31 includes information on school library book budgets. There are still a significant portion of elementary school libraries that lack a regular budget. Bailey-White said even these small awards of \$1,000 to \$3,000 make a big difference when a school library has a budget of \$0. She said she is happy the Lottery Commission sees the value in providing these funds. She said it has been a great partnership and benefit for the awardees.

Mecham emphasized that this money helps schools. He said unless schools are getting \$2,000 a year, they have a hard time keeping up with lost and damaged books. About 63% of Idaho's school libraries don't have enough money to maintain current collections, let alone improve them. He said that's especially the case for nonfiction books, which are expensive – an average of \$20 a book. He said this money will help to provide good things for kids to read.

- D. **Library Services Improvement Funds Approval Consideration – Action item (Board document 23-32)** Bailey-White explained this is the third year the Idaho Scottish Rite Foundation has provided funding to support summer reading, allowing the ICfL to purchase books at a bulk discount rate and get them out to every public library in the state. She thinks the foundation has been pleased by the results provided by the ICfL staff and the thank you notes from children and library staff from across the state. The foundation increased its donation this year, and the ICfL will be able to provide about 7,500 books with this funding.

Strickland moved that the expenditure of up to \$16,000 from the Library Services Improvement Fund be approved for implementation of projects outlined in Board

Document 23-32. Wittman seconded. *Motion carried unanimously.*

VII. Operations Report

A. State Librarian and Management Team Members' Report – Information item (Board Document 23-33)

Bailey-White provided her report to the board:

- The ICfL had several events in the last couple of months, and all of them were successful. She said it was great for public libraries to get together in person for the Public Library Directors' Summit, which they had not been able to do for several years. She said the speakers, the energy in the room, and the effort by the ICfL staff really paid off. It was a great summit.
- The ICfL helped plan and co-host the Internet for All: Idaho Local Coordination Workshop, which is a later agenda item.
- Matthew Reiber is the ICfL's new policy analyst and liaison to the Governor's office. McKenzie Johnson has moved to another group of agencies.
- Bailey-White will be working with Reiber on the 360-degree evaluation that recently came out. She is happy to share that report with the board now or during the annual evaluation process in the early spring.

Baker provided his report to the board:

- He echoed Bailey-White's note about many recent ICfL events, including the Internet for All: Idaho Local Coordination Workshop.
- The ICfL awarded a contract to Boise State University's Idaho Policy Institute to collaborate on developing the statewide Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan. Bailey-White and Baker had an initial kickoff meeting with the Idaho Policy Institute staff last week and planning for 2023 is underway. Baker said he thinks it will be an excellent partnership.
- The ICfL had a fantastic Public Library Directors' Summit in Boise at the beginning of November, with great attendance and speakers. Baker said it was good to have everybody back in person. The last summit was right at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. Baker said the 2022 event has fostered engagement from public library directors, with ICfL staff seeing an uptick in the amount of consulting based on interactions from this event.

Strickland also attended the Internet for All workshop, and he noted takeaways from the event. He said rural Idaho is shrinking and urban centers are growing. When that happens, the people who are hurt most are marginalized populations. He said broadband is one of the keys to that problem. The lack of access to broadband in various areas of the state hits the people who need it most the hardest. He said there needs to be continued coordination on infrastructure and all the things full internet access can do, from telehealth to education to other essentials for all people in the state.

Mecham said rural towns are not only struggling to get access, but their current infrastructure is not capable of providing it. If the wind blows too hard, they have power bumps. He said a lot of help and upgrades are needed to make sure rural Idaho is not left behind.

Wittman seconded those comments. She lives in a rural area, and she said schoolkids are impacted when it snows, or the wind blows, and their internet goes down. She expressed kudos to the library workers focusing on this work.

Smith provided her report to the Board:

- The ICfL should be getting its budget hearing schedule soon.
- The state is going forward with Luma. It will happen in a little over six months. Instead of a phased approach, the state will start with human capital management a couple of weeks before the fiscal year ends, then implement finance and supply management at the start of the fiscal year. The team will be getting ready for that over the next six months, and the transition will be simultaneous with year-end close.
- HR modernization is proceeding alongside Luma and will also be effective on July 1, 2023. The ICfL will hear more about what that looks like for the agency, but Smith said it seems to be going well. There will be lower impact on staffing and greater consistency with HR support.
- The ICfL's new buyer will start December 14, 2022.

Lamb provided his report to the board:

- He shared a highlight from the Internet for All workshop: He had good conversations with an internet provider who may be able to help rural libraries by providing low-orbit satellite service. Lamb and the library technology consultant on his team are gearing up for E-rate season. He said it will be interesting to see which of the small rural libraries get bids for that service, based on the conversation.
- The ICfL's new digital inclusion consultant has taken the lead on new activities, including creating digital access workbooks and writing a report based on a survey that went to cities.
- Lamb is also working on streamlining some IT processes.

Valasek provided her report to the board:

- The ESSER funds are part of her update because the staff members who are carrying out this major project are under her supervisory umbrella. She will continue to provide updates going forward.
- The other major initiative Valasek is working on is telehealth. She has seen an exciting shift – initially, the ICfL was reaching out to arrange meetings with potential contacts. Now Valasek is getting contacted by people about this

initiative. An example of this is the School of Nursing at Boise State University. A professor reached out about the program and wanted to see how nursing students could be involved.

- The Upgrade Your Space Project is moving along on schedule. Valasek is grateful for her colleague at Idaho Health and Welfare, who has been meeting with the 13 participating libraries to get supplies ordered and ready.
 - Valasek reiterated the importance of high-speed, reliable internet for libraries with an example from Clarkia in northern Idaho. A library there had applied for the Upgrade Your Space project, and funds were available to get a pod to their location. However, in talking with the library director, they decided the library's internet access might not be reliable enough to support high-quality video calls between patrons and doctors. Valasek said this is a missed opportunity to help a community where residents must otherwise drive a long way to access medical services. She said working with the ICfL's e-services team on ways to get reliable internet to rural, remote libraries is a great way to leverage the other work the agency is doing.
- Telehealth Trailblazers is wrapping up. The ICfL is set to get another small grant from the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health next year to close out this project. This will involve creating toolkits and resources that will be available for libraries that are interested in offering telehealth in the future.

Gelskey provided her report to the board:

- It was a busy fall for travel and events, including Essential Facilitation Training in Denver, the Idaho Library Association Annual Conference, and the Public Library Directors' Summit. Gelskey made a lot of connections with new directors in the state.
- The Talking Books team has been busy getting players and marketing materials out to those in need.
- The Talking Book Service Advisory Committee just had a meeting and talked about a workplan for the upcoming year. One area of focus is working with academic libraries in the state to connect with campus disability centers and hopefully reach students who might be in need.
- The Let's Talk About It program continues, with in-person events and opportunities for communities to learn about themes with scholars.

Mecham asked for more information about the Essential Facilitation training. Gelskey explained it was an intense training in which staff members learned how to facilitate meetings, especially when seeking consensus from a group. This is part of the ICfL's culture already, and how the agency runs meetings and works with others in the community, including libraries. Gelskey said the training solidified the agency culture and gave staff needed skills.

B. Personnel Report – Information item Bailey-White noted that Essential Facilitation was one of the first trainings she took 30 years ago, and the ICfL has been using those methods for three decades. She said it is great to onboard staff with those skills and time to practice.

Bailey-White said for the first time in years, the ICfL is fully staffed. There have been no interviews for a couple of months and no retirements. The new buyer is starting this month. There is nothing major to report.

VIII. Old Business

A. Update on Digital Access for All Idahoans Statewide Plan – Information item (Board Document 23-34) Bailey-White said the ICfL wants to make sure board members are included in statewide digital access planning. Having the RFP finished and awarding the contract to Boise State University is huge. Historic funding will be coming into the state to implement the plan once it is drafted. The timeline is firmly in place for planning: November 15, 2022, was the start date, and the ICfL has a year from then to submit the plan. Baker is the lead for a large team working on this project.

Baker echoed that it's exciting to get the award and to contract it out. The Internet for All workshop had great attendance, and the ICfL has been involved in a lot of meetings. He thinks Idaho is in a unique and fantastic position. He explained there are parallel efforts underway, with the state developing a broadband plan for the next five years while the ICfL develops a digital access plan for the next five years, and they work in lockstep together. The ICfL has been meeting regularly with the broadband office at the Idaho Department of Commerce. Baker said it will be a great partnership that will lighten the load for everyone. He emphasized a key message: For the state to get both the digital access and the broadband implementation funds, Idaho needs both plans. It is key for the Department of Commerce and the ICfL to work closely together to make this happen. He hopes internet service providers and other stakeholders and partners throughout the state have heard that message.

Bailey-White noted the elements each state must include in their digital access plan, such as a vision statement and a timeline for implementation. There also needs to be a 30-day public comment period, and the team is hoping to do that in July or August. BSU is working on English and Spanish telephone surveys. BSU will also help lead focus groups in six regions, working with the covered populations who need to be included in the planning. Bailey-White reminded the board that 76% of all Idahoans fall into at least one of those categories, especially looking at aging populations and the rural nature of the state. As part of the listening phase of planning, ICfL staff have conducted 40 one-on-one interviews with other state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and people who have direct contact with the covered populations. The aim is to identify barriers and ways to overcome them as a state.

Bailey-White noted that the ICfL will be presenting at the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board on December 20, 2022. They are partners in this planning process. Bailey-White and Baker also have regular recurring meetings with the state broadband office manager, the new contract partners at BSU, and an internal digital access team.

Bailey-White said the ICfL will also be forming a statewide coalition. Board members are encouraged to attend those meetings for a deeper dive on the subject and opportunities to hear from partners. The meetings will be virtual to allow for as much representation as possible, and they will be open to anyone interested in learning about the human barriers that may prevent people from accessing internet services. The first meeting will likely be in late January or early February.

Strickland said he is optimistic about the overall processes in place. He said there is tremendous buy-in from mayors, city council members, local development officers, engineering firms, and broadband access companies, which is a positive jumping off point. He noticed that stakeholders are interested in hearing more from the ICfL about supporting libraries. He said funding for broadband is only as good as what's around it and reiterated that a lack of infrastructure is a challenge. Collaboration will be key to ensure the proper infrastructure is in place. He noted the uphill battle of advancing technology, with everything that is currently in the works set to need upgrades in the coming decades. He said it's important to get the process for streamlining and coordination in place.

Mecham said he agrees with Baker's statement that Idaho presents itself as an excellent opportunity to explore and develop this kind of program. He said the state is small enough that it feels doable – it's not such a big population that the state can't keep in mind all the people it is trying to help. He's excited to see how it gets done.

IX. New Business

X. Strategic Issues

- A. **Relationship building – Discussion** Bailey-White noted discussion in recent meetings about the need for board members to reach out to legislators in their region to answer questions about the role of the ICfL and to provide a preview of the budget bill. At the Public Directors' Summit, the ICfL also talked about the need for library directors to have those conversations, especially if they are interested in the \$3.5 million in construction funds that will be presented as part of the ICfL budget. That funding would help keep students learning, adults earning, and improving the health and well-being of Idahoans. As an example of the need for this type of funding, Bailey-White noted that the children in Donnelly's afterschool and summer programs have sessions outside in a tepee because the library doesn't have enough space.

Wittman said she and Lewiston Library Director Lynn Johnson had a three-hour

discussion with one legislator and provided her with material. Wittman has also been doing public education with community members and community organizations. She said her community is on board with letting people know how important libraries are and how inappropriate it is to ban books. She will continue those discussions as the year goes on.

Mecham said he is noticing a lot of issues with selection policies. He is concerned because there is not enough time in the day to do all the things some policies require. He talked with a book dealer in Utah who said some schools have stopped buying books because they can't meet the stringent requirements of selection imposed by their state. Mecham has looked at a suggested policy from the Idaho School Board Association. He said though it is not as onerous as the one in Utah, it is moving toward requirements that would be hard for librarians, assistant librarians, and paraprofessionals running school libraries to implement with what they are getting paid. He said they don't have the time in the day to do it.

Wittman asked to see the suggested policy, and Mecham said he will share the one his district has been given.

Strickland said he has reached out to various community members, and the response has been depressing. He said many professionals have left the state over these issues. One community leader in a high-level municipal position left due to harassment from extremist groups. He said that is just one documented incident, with other anecdotal cases. He said Idaho is losing families, losing professionals, and losing teachers due to harassment.

Mecham said he is worried about the loss of creativity the state will go through. He said if the state continues to trend toward extreme views, people will lose the ability to work in an area where mistakes can be made and not be career-destroying. He is concerned that people will leave because they can't pursue their careers in the way they feel they should.

Strickland said it is alarming that certain places need to have uniformed police officers at library board meetings.

Bailey-White said she will continue building relationships and reaching out to people. It is a challenging time to get responses because of the elections, the holidays, and orientation with new legislators. She said providing basic information about the role of libraries and the ICfL is all within the agency's educational role. Bailey-White said she will share the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee hearing dates when she has that information.

Strickland asked if Bailey-White had heard anything about House Bill 666 and whether it would be coming back. Bailey-White said she anticipates a different form of the bill will

be introduced, based on what she and others have been hearing. She anticipates challenges in some committees that may not be as favorable to libraries.

Mecham said his concern is that legislation will end school libraries. He said districts won't carry that kind of liability, and it will be easier to shut libraries down.

Wittman said one legislator she visited with suggested a separate collection. She said they discussed how it would be almost impossible to do that, as well as it being inappropriate for libraries to implement. She said there are a lot of ideas from legislators who don't know about the mission of libraries, which is another education point for them.

Strickland said there is also considerable confusion about the role of the ICfL, and the fact that the Commission is simply support for libraries in the state, along with the oversight and administration of state and federal funding. He reiterated that independent library boards and directors make decisions about materials available at their libraries. Anyone can challenge a book at any time at any library. The community, along with the library director and the board, can choose to exclude material, put it in a different place, or make another decision. That can also be done at any time at any school – any parent can challenge a piece of material and have it addressed by the local school board, principal, and media specialist. If it's not addressed to their satisfaction, he said, that's part of the democratic process. Strickland said it's sad that a contrived problem has essentially been created – a battle that doesn't exist.

Mecham said he is hoping some of the hysteria dies down since it's not an election year. He said he hopes the legislature can make decisions based on what's important and echoed Strickland's statements about this being a contrived problem. He said Idaho doesn't need to pass a law that makes things harder for libraries.

Bailey-White thanked the board for the discussion and efforts to reach out to legislators to provide information about the role of the Commission. She said they will keep this topic as part of the board discussions. She hopes it is easier to get in touch with lawmakers once the session starts. Bailey-White said it is unclear where some new legislators stand on library issues, and this is an opportunity to answer their questions.

B. Topic(s) for next meeting Baker asked for input on dates for the board's library tour in the spring. The commissioners will be visiting libraries in the Magic Valley area.

Mecham, Strickland, and Wittman identified Thursday, April 20, and Friday, April 21, as potential dates for the tour. Bailey-White said staff will check with Commissioners John Held and Janet Franklin to see if those dates work for them. If so, staff will start contacting libraries to finalize plans.

For the upcoming February meeting, Bailey-White suggested providing a deeper dive on



telehealth projects.

Mecham said he would like updates on the Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan and everything the ICfL is working on right now.

XI. Meeting Evaluation/Adjournment: Wittman moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m. MST.

Next meeting: Friday, February 10, 2023, at 10 a.m. MST at the Idaho Commission for Libraries office in Boise.