

Report to the State Library Board

January 24, 2022

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This report is prepared bi-monthly in conjunction with the regular meetings of the Connecticut State Library Board. The report, which will be included in the minutes of the January 24, 2022 meeting of the Board, covers the period of November 23, 2021 through January 14, 2022.

Office of the State Librarian

It is January, so I have, of course, been reflecting upon both the last year and to consider this new year and what I hope to accomplish. Briefly, my key goals for 2022 are:

- Develop and improve communications between the State Library and the legislature, agencies, and other governmental organizations;
- See opportunity in upcoming retirements to assess and adjust unit/division and library-wide operations as needed;
- Implement Leadership Team meetings to regularly bring together all unit/division heads;
- Engage in a strategic planning process with the Board, staff, and other stakeholders;
- Assess space usage and needs of our facilities and develop a plan to address;
- Refresh the Museum of Connecticut History

These goals grew organically out of meetings, conversations, visits, and more throughout 2021. There will be more work too, but these are the matters that rose most prominently to the top to address.

When I started this job last January, State Historian Walt Woodward told me “You have the coolest job in the state,” and I can’t disagree. It is an exceptionally cool job. It is not hyperbole to say there are daily opportunities and challenges, but that’s the way I like it. And I am fortunate to face it all alongside the excellent staff of the State Library. Their most recent achievements are, as always, chronicled below.

Unit Activities

Partnerships and Community Engagement

Lizette Pelletier and Damon Munz conducted a **site assessment** on November 15 for the Cheshire Congregational Church to determine appropriate space within its facilities to house their growing archival collections. Damon provided them with several resources on environmental controls and storage and handling methods and practices.

All CT Reads has officially launched. It is a year-long initiative to promote lifelong reading, learning, and connection that uses a rotating community committee structure to select three

main book titles and 3 shortlist book titles, each calendar year for three age groups: children (ages 8-12), teens (ages 13-18), and adults. In addition to the books, All CT Reads provides a supported programmatic structure built around the titles with room for individuality and creativity. All CT Reads partners with the Connecticut Center for the Book at Connecticut Humanities, the Connecticut Association for School Librarians (CASL), and the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) and is supported by a generous grant from EBSCO Information Services to the Connecticut Heritage Foundation.

Throughout 2021, the Division of Library Development (DLD) continued to push forward to support libraries in **closing the digital divide**. ARPA(American Rescue Plan Act) funding allowed us to award \$100,000 grants to 4 libraries willing to launch digital navigator pilot projects. Together with DLD, these libraries began work with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance to demonstrate that hiring digital navigators sensitive to community needs could raise broadband adoption rates and meaningfully assist individuals to better meet their needs for telehealth, education, community services, and employment. Building on this work is the creation of the **CT Libraries and Partners for Digital Equity**. This alliance, launched in January of 2022 with the ACLPD (Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development) Digital Inclusion Task Force, will be devoted to public education and the elevation of community voices for digital inclusion planning including device access, affordable broadband, and one-on-one skills training for all those who remain under-connected in our state.

In his first month and half, Matt Geeza, new unit head for the Middletown Library Service Center and the **Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped** (LBPH), has immersed himself in the operations of LBPH and relaunched the LBPH email newsletter with the winter 2021/2022 issue. LBPH is already a successful state-federal partnership, and Matt will lead LBPH in developing outreach programming, identifying, and fostering new strategic partnerships, and creating services all with the goal of providing deeper, localized access to the print disabled community.

The **State Fiber to the Library grant program** wrapped up a successful 5-year run from 2016 through 2021, allowing 70 libraries to upgrade and provide their users with a more robust internet experience with the construction of high-speed fiber broadband. In 2022, program funds will pivot to leverage high-speed CEN (Connecticut Education Network) fiber for even better connectivity via the **Fiber to the Library-Internal Connections grant** for network infrastructure assessments, equipment, and configuration upgrade, growing to meet the increased expectations of our communities.

Building on 2020 changes, DLD turned fully to an **outcome-based summer reading program** for 2021. One hundred and twenty-five libraries participated in the CT State Library Summer Reading Program with 109 of those including the new patron survey. In just a few summer months, 3,277 programs and activities were held with 170,249 participants. With over 4,100 patron surveys, we begin to understand the impact of libraries and summer reading:

- 54% strongly agree they felt welcome
- 45% strongly agree they learned something

- 50% strongly agree they got help

The **Historic Documents Preservation Program** supports records preservation and management in the municipalities and at the State Library. The State Library awarded a total of \$947,500 in grants to 151 municipalities in FY22, most recently awarding its Cycle 2 grants on December 28, 2021. These grants provide significant support for municipal records management and preservation programs, including the expansion of public access to electronic records. In addition, each town clerk office directly retains a portion of the program's land recording fee, providing an important additional source of funding for municipal records management.

Patrick Smith **visited schools** in New Hartford and Madison in December, presenting programs related to the Charter Oak legend and general early Connecticut history. 60 third grade students in Madison and twenty 7th and 8th grade students in New Hartford took part.

Planning is underway for an **expansion of the popular "Hiking Through History" programs** that were launched in 2021. Programs will start up again once the weather warms up a bit in the Spring.

Programs & Trainings

The Office of the Public Records Administrator continued the new **State Records Management webinar series** for Records Management Liaison Officers (RMLOs) in November. Elise Marzik presented to approximately 150 state employees representing a majority of the executive branch state agencies. *Session 2: Records Disposition: Retention Schedules & Forms* provided an in-depth review of procedures and requirements for disposition of state records, including use of retention schedules, and the process for obtaining disposition authorization. Elise Marzik is developing the ongoing training series, with each session covering a different state records management topic.

Also in November, Public Records staff conducted an **in-service training presentation** for Connecticut police officers hosted by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC). LeAnn Burbank, Kathy Makover, and Elise Marzik presented **records management training** with staff from the Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC) and the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. The webinar was attended by approximately 70 municipal and state agency employees.

Kris Aberly and Debra Pond created a **Native American Heritage Month display**, which was available in the Law reading room throughout November.

In December, Mel Smith presented a "What's New at the Connecticut State Library!" report to the **Connecticut Professional Genealogist Council** via Zoom.

Nicole Besseghir has re-joined the **Connecticut Digital Newspaper Project (CDNP)** as the Project Coordinator for the 2021-2023 grant cycle. Nicole served as Project Coordinator for our

2019-2021 grant, skillfully managing the day-to-day operations of the project despite the many obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. On December 9, 2021, Nicole Besseghir gave a presentation to the Connecticut Society of Genealogists on the CT Digital Newspaper Project. During her talk, Nicole gave a detailed overview of CDNP, highlighting the various phases of work completed in each grant cycle in order to digitize 100,000 pages of newspapers and reviewed the historic Connecticut newspapers that have been digitized to date. She also did a live demonstration of Chronicling America, the Library of Congress database where CDNP newspapers are made accessible, showing attendees the various ways to browse and search the Connecticut newspapers (and others) that are available there.

Kymerlee Powe has been virtually traveling around the national library network sharing her workshop “**From Diversity to Inclusion: How to Audit Your Collection and Why**,” originally presented with DLD in April 2021. The program dives into the makeup of the publishing industry, identifies the difference between a diverse collection and an inclusive one, and discusses the logistics of performing a diversity audit of your collection. From CT, Kym virtually made her way to New Hampshire, Vermont, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, the 2021 New England Library Association Conference, and numerous school districts and library roundtables. Her [Inclusive Collection Resource Guide](#) is also available online.

In January 2021, DLD conducted a statewide survey to assess the **types of training** desired by libraries and which then deeply informed the Division’s work throughout the year. In 2021, DLD offered 121 virtual workshops and 1 in-person session on a breadth of topics with approximately 3,300 registrants. Self-paced tutorials for all library staff continued to be offered through Niche Academy seeing over 7,000 views of 211 different tutorials by approximately 500 individual users.

Resource Updates

As noted in a recent State Librarian’s Report, the 231 Capital Avenue facility continues to be impacted by **water leaks and damage to materials**. Damon Munz has created a shared electronic folder for staff to collect both historical and current information related to leak locations, items damaged, and more, which will prove useful in incident response and planning.

231 Capitol Avenue and our two facilities in Rocky Hill were recently transitioned to a new phone system. On the agency side, the process was very capably led by Jane Beaudoin, with assistance from Shelley Delisle, Doraliz Hernaiz, Kevin Johnson, Matt Geeza, and the whole staff.

Glenn Sherman, with assistance from Jackie Bagwell, completed work on an updated search tool for finding Connecticut newspapers in the library’s collections. The search tool, which can be found on the “[Newspapers for Historical & Genealogical Research](#)” [LibGuide](#), allows users to search for Connecticut newspapers by town and/or date range. Search results are sorted geospatially and filtered by date range, with links to the library’s catalog to access holdings and collection location details.

The Cataloging Unit continued working on its project to replace 27,000 hyperlinks for **electronic state documents**, exporting revised bibliographic records from the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) database into both the State Library's library management software, Alma, and its associated online catalog and discovery platform, Primo. As of December 31, 14,500 revised records have been exported.

Bill Anderson completed **original cataloging records for town line surveys** of Newington, Wethersfield, and Rocky Hill. These surveys were prepared in 1970 by the MDC (Metropolitan District Commission). The MDC is our regional non-profit municipal corporation which provides potable water and sewerage services. Bill also cataloged a 1919 **catalog of Chas. Q. Eldridge's private museum** in Mystic, Connecticut.

In 2021, the **eGO CT program** grew from 72 libraries to 91 libraries live and 155 out of 191 public libraries in the state configured and ready to launch in the new Palace app in early 2022. In preparation of the launch, DLD has purchased **nearly 1,500 new eBook and eAudio titles** for our shared collection including children and young adult, DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion), professional development, self-improvement, biographies, Spanish language, CT authors, and more.

History and Genealogy staff have developed a [Revolutionary War Pension Applications Index](#). There are about 500 entries in this index, which covers pension applications made from 1820 to the 1850s.

In December 2021, the State Library renewed its annual agreements with **West Group and LexisNexis** to provide both print and digital resources for the law library collection.

Patrick Smith, Christine Pittsley, and Deborah Schander wrote and submitted a successful proposal to the Connecticut Humanities Council for a **general museum operating support grant**. The funding can support a wide range of museum operating needs, and the group will finalize plans for their use in early 2022.

One of the "**Senate Chairs**" that is on long term loan from the Museum of Connecticut History to the Old State House has been damaged by a visitor. Patrick Smith has been working with staff at the Old State House to review what happened, the condition of the chair, and implement steps for its repair. Fortunately, the damage was not too severe, and the Old State House swiftly implemented changes to ensure an incident like this will not happen again.

The Preservation Office continues to scan new content from the library collection and preserve digitized materials in the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA). The following **prison newspaper titles**, digitized with support from Reveal Digital for their American Prison Newspaper Collection, are now available in the CTDA:

- [The New View \(1979-1981\)](#)
- [The Scroll \(1979-1982\)](#)
- [The Tier Tribune \(1979\)](#)

LeAnn Burbank and Cherie Miles processed 294 municipal and 115 state agency **authorization forms** for records disposals.

LeAnn Burbank, Elise Marzik, and Kathy Makover conducted a virtual inspection of the FileBank **records storage facility** in Oakland, New Jersey on December 13 to approve the facility as a Public Records Storage Facility for State of Connecticut municipal records. Staff are reviewing the facility qualifications to allow out of state storage of municipal non-permanent records.

The **State Records Center** provides off-site inactive records storage for state agencies free of charge. Doug Yaeger and Mike Soltesz accessioned 534 cubic feet of agency records; deaccessioned 563 cubic feet; processed 286 reference requests; and processed 129 re-files and inter-files.

Sarah Morin, Lisa Lew, Todd Gabriel, and student volunteer Wes Venables have processed 42.5 cubic feet (85 boxes) of the **New Haven County, County Court files from 1700-1779**. New student volunteer Cade Marosz recently joined the project staff. In addition, Todd has scanned 211 court cases (approximately 1,106 pages) for the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA). These cases involve African American, Black, and Indigenous persons, as well as other selected topics of research interest. Barbara Austen continues to upload cases from 1700-1759 to CTDA as they are discovered and scanned. As of December 31, [20 blog posts](#) have been published on the State Library website and promoted on Facebook and Twitter. One blog post is in the pipeline to be published in January. Also starting in January, staff will add an Instagram component to the publicity for the project. There are 2 Instagram posts in the pipeline to be published this month.

Editor Douglas Arnold submitted the completed manuscript of **Public Records of the State of Connecticut – Vol. XXIII** on November 29. Lizette Pelletier is working with the printer concerning printing specifications and costs. As in the past, a copy of the volume will be offered to all public, law, and academic libraries in the state free of charge. The volume will be available for sale at a price to be determined. Lizette, Allen Ramsey, and Damon Munz met with the State Librarian and State Historian Walt Woodward on December 13 to discuss the future of the series considering the upcoming change of editor, funding issues, statutory responsibilities assigned to the State Library and the Office of the State Historian (UConn), and the viability of the printed format.

Barbara Austen has now added **6,433 aerial photographs from 1934** and all but one internal hard drive containing an **email archive from Governor Malloy's office** into the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA).

Deborah Schander and Lizette Pelletier met with Eric Sonneberg of the Supreme Court Historical Society on December 9 to discuss the Society's records already transferred to the State Archives as well as future donations.