



Albert Lea
Public Library

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Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2024

5:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

Present: Annice Sevett, Anna Andersen, Jay Escobar, Andrew Gustafson, Becky Tennis Hanson, Cheryll Intihar, Vicky Robson, Robert Rasmussen (City Council Representative), Cindy Gilbert (ALPL SELCO Board Representative), Cathy Malakowsky, Matthew Tessmer

1. Introductions

New Advisory Board member Anna Andersen and new ALPL SELCO Board Representative Cindy Gilbert were welcomed. Gilbert is a non-voting member of the Library Advisory Board; her attendance at board meetings will inform her work as ALPL's representative to the SELCO Board. All members introduced themselves.

2. Elect Chair for 2024

Intihar moved to nominate Gustafson to serve as the board chair in 2024. Hanson seconded. The board voted unanimously for Andrew Gustafson to serve as the board chair for 2024.

3. Approve Minutes of the November 15, 2023 Meeting

Gustafson asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Hanson made the motion, Robson seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023 meeting as written.

4. Old Business

a. Director's Report

Sevett shared statistics from the 2023 annual report. Program and circulation numbers from 2023 were compared to those from 2022. The number of children's programs remained consistent, but 2023 attendance numbers were significantly greater than in 2022. There was a large increase in both the number of and attendance at adult programs. This reflects an increased effort from the library to increase and diversify offerings. Expanded marketing efforts for adult programs should lead to continued growth in this area. Circulation stayed relatively static from 2022 to 2023, but still much improved from 2021 numbers. Sevett provided a breakdown of current cardholders by category and defined each category. The total number of library cardholders remained static compared to 2022. This number is likely to decrease, as the elimination of fines will now allow for more non-active cardholders to be erased from the system. A clearer picture of active library users will emerge as these records are purged. The annual report is due in April; Sevett will share the full report at the May board meeting.

Sevett provided an update on the library's collection of items in Spanish and Karen. The existing collection of children's books in Spanish continues to expand, along with the addition of children's books in Karen. In January, a new collection of materials for adults and young adults in these collections was added. The materials have been circulating already. More promotion of these collections is planned for the library's outreach efforts to further increase their use. Board members were pleased with the development of these collections and excited to share them with the community.

Sevett provided an update on winter reading programs. Family Reads ended in January. Participation and minutes read were equivalent to last year's program, with 43 families (215 individuals) participating and 72,362 minutes read. The adult and young adult program Hot Reads for Cold Nights is ongoing and will conclude February 29. Participation is matching last year's program so far; this year the program will run for 2 weeks longer than the previous year. Both programs were sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Sevett shared details on future programming efforts. Planning for summer programming is almost complete, with most special performers booked and a full slate of programs for all ages planned. SELCO continues to plan the upcoming Minnesota Author Tour. One author presentation is planned for each public library in the spring.

5. New Business

a. 2024 Goals

Sevett provided a list of goals for library services in 2024. Completing a new strategic plan is on the horizon for the future; the goals for 2024 were based on goals from the previous strategic plan (disrupted by Covid closures), data taken from the 2022 SELCO Community Needs Assessment, and discussions with library staff. Goals include: (1) improve services and outreach efforts to non-native English speakers using the ALPL 2024-2026 Plan for Library Services to Immigrant and Refugee Communities, (2) continue to participate in outreach activities to bring the library out in the community, (3) increase the number of residents who have a library card, and (4) promote adult programs with targeted marketing efforts to increase attendance at programs.

i. Brainstorm Fifth Goal

In addition to the goals listed above, Sevett asked the board to brainstorm ideas to guide the formation of a fifth goal for library services in 2024. The board's ideas and discussions revolved around the following themes: (1) expanding targeted outreach efforts to connect the library with the community, (2) partnering with relevant community organizations to bring the library to the segments of the community they serve, (3) focusing on expanding collections, programs, and services for teens, and (4) raising awareness of non-traditional library offerings through targeted outreach events and marketing. Sevett will use these themes to complete the list of goals for library services in 2024.

b. SELCO Circulation Settings Changes

Sevett provided an update on SELCO's plans to simplify and standardize circulation settings in the library system software and database. At the November meeting, Sevett had shared that SELCO was working to create a slate of different circulation settings options from which member libraries could choose. Now, SELCO has changed plans and is moving forward on implementing one system-wide setting that all member libraries would follow,

as recommended by a task force of workers from member libraries. SELCO plans to implement this change by April 1, 2024. The board asked about the impact these changes would have on ALPL users and staff. Sevett explained that some of the standardization will not have a major impact and will streamline the maintenance of the library database. But the changes to the checkout period (from 14 to 21 days), and the timeline of the implementation of the changes will have a significant impact on patrons' experience using the library, on staff time and library budget to enact the changes, and on the library's ability to compare circulation statistics year to year moving forward. Because this came from a task force rather than the avenues typical to SELCO's operations, Sevett and other concerned stakeholders do not have a clear process to appeal this decision.

The board discussed issuing a recommendation that SELCO expand the timeline of implementation to give more opportunities for libraries to provide input and to ease the burden on library staff. Gustafson moved that the board issue such a recommendation, Hanson seconded. The board voted unanimously to recommend that SELCO expand the timeline for implementing any settings standardization to allow for more input from ALPL and other member libraries and give libraries more time in which to prepare for these changes.

Sevett plans to meet with SELCO's executive director to discuss the impacts of this change and share the board's recommendation.

6. Board Comments or Concerns

The board asked for an update on the use and language capabilities of the Ancestry database. Sevett shared usage statistics for 2023 and explained how documents in Ancestry are recorded in their original language, but that the search interface may allow for languages other than English.

The board asked about how program attendance is affected by space limitations and how this impacts program registration and wait lists. Sevett shared that children's programs are not heavily marketed to avoid overcrowding, and that some people were turned away at one 2023 summer children's program. Programs that often have wait lists include Book Pals for children and Craft Night for adults. Sevett provided more details on how program registration is planned and opened.

The board asked for more information about the library's digital lending programs. Sevett shared how Overdrive, accessed through the Libby app, and Hoopla are each funded and administered by the library. Additional details about the publishing and distribution of electronic books and audiobooks were shared as well.

The board asked for more information about the library's Adult Game Night program. Sevett provided details on how the program runs. The board recommended a Teen Game Night as a way to explore expanding programming options for teens.

7. Adjournment

Gustafson asked for a motion to end the meeting. Intihar made the motion, Escobar seconded. The February 21, 2024 meeting of the Library Advisory Board concluded at 6:02 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Matthew Tessmer