



Vermont Library Association

Vermont Library Association Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024

I. VLA MISSION

The Vermont Library Association provides leadership and educational opportunities for its members and advocates for Vermont libraries and librarians.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Library Association and its current executive board began the process of creating a new strategic plan that would guide it through the next five years. The plan takes into account current issues that the association and its members face, goals to address these issues, and action plans to resolve the issues. The executive board considered the information gathered through the VLA Summit in April 2018, the annual VLA Conference in May 2018, individual work group meetings throughout the year, two VLA board retreats in June 2018 and February 2019, past strategic plans, and other various discussions, to create a well-articulated and achievable plan. It is the hope of this current executive board that the structure of the plan will result in commitment by subsequent boards and successful achievement of the goals.

The previous VLA Strategic Plan was a three-year plan that expired in 2017. The four strategic areas highlighted in that plan were Advocacy, Education, Intellectual Freedom, and Membership. The goals and action plans were lofty and difficult to implement but the issues that were highlighted are still current. The following “actionable items” were part of this plan:

- Revive and establish an active Government Relations Committee.
- Revive the mentorship program and promote educational opportunities.
- Provide John Swan lectures and intellectual freedom resources.
- Explore membership management software and engage via social media.

The Vermont Library Association with funding from the Vermont Department of Libraries hosted a VLA Library Summit held on April 23, 2018 at the Vermont Public Radio Studio One. The Summit was organized by the VLA executive board, was overseen by a library consultant, and was attended by representatives from the major stakeholders within the Vermont library community including the Vermont Library Association, the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont School Library Association, the Green Mountain Library Consortium, the Vermont

Consortium of Academic Libraries, the Vermont Board of Libraries, and the Vermont Humanities Council.

The discussions held at the Summit led to the identification of common interests and concerns. It was suggested that some work groups be formed to delve deeper into the issues. Most of these work groups conducted item specific discussions focusing on:

- Access – Universal, barrier-free access for everyone to all the riches of our libraries.
- The library message – Telling our story – Advocacy, Marketing, and Communication.
- Working together – Statewide coordination.
- VLA infrastructure – How to ensure better continuity and organizational memory.
- Excellent, well-paid staff – Staffing and professional development.
- Improved buildings – Updating library facilities.

The Vermont Library Association’s Annual Conference held on May 18, 2018 at the Lake Morey Resort began with the guest speaker’s talk on library and community opportunities in “Better Together.” She then provided a “Get Engaged” workshop as part of the American Library Association’s Libraries Transform Communities initiative. The workshop ended with an Aspiration Exercise when five groups of Vermont librarians considered the Vermont Library Community’s aspirations, challenges, and what needs to change in order to arrive at a cohesive sentence about aspirations. The five groups summarized this exercise as:

- “We began by saying that we wanted a community where there is collaboration and communication, but we face a lack of a wider perspective. So if we want to reach our aspirations, we need to create community focus.”
- “We began by saying that we wanted a more collaborative community, but we face challenges of separation and scarcity. If we want to reach our aspirations, we need to cultivate networks.”
- “We want a community where we have adequate funding, statewide sharing, and professionalism to serve all populations, but we face isolation and communication issues. If we want to reach our aspirations, we need to change perceptions and attitudes towards library services both inside and outside the library.”
- “We began by saying we want collaboration and new ways of working together, but we face challenges of current culture around librarianship with time and money. So we need a strategic plan with a priority for advocacy in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Libraries.”
- “We began by saying that we wanted a connected community, but we face a lack of resources. So if we need to reach our aspirations, we need to create infrastructure.”

All five groups wanted a more collaborative library community but faced problems with scarce resources, isolation, and communication issues. They determined there is a need for a collaborative infrastructure that would enable better advocacy.

The current executive board of the Vermont Library Association considered all of the issues summarized in the VLA Strategic Plan 2014 -2017, the VLA Summit and retreats, and the VLC Get Engaged workshop into account when developing this new Vermont Library Association Strategic Plan. Although the following goals are identified as genuine library ideals, we believe that the actions provided in this strategic plan make them achievable.

III. THE PLAN

Goal 1: Ensure the Sustainability of the Vermont Library Association.

The sustainability of our association requires clear guidelines for board member responsibilities and expectations, recruitment of new individuals with fresh ideas and a penchant for commitment, and efficient procedures for management of membership and finances.

Action 1: Create a new Vermont Library Association Organizational Chart.

Action 2: Revise bylaws to reflect new organizational chart.

Action 3: Update the job descriptions, roles, responsibilities, expectations, and yearly project timelines for each board member. Provide this documentation on the web.

Action 4: Develop board orientation materials, including a binder for each board member that contains relevant documentation for their specific board position.

Action 5: Develop a system for board member recruitment that would formalize the process and allow for more diversity on the board.

Action 6: Develop a plan to attract and retain more members to the association.

Action 7: Research and implement membership software.

Action 8: Restructure membership fees.

Action 9: Update financial software.

Action 10: Create a financial auditing schedule.

Action 11: Consider acquiring a physical space for storage and meetings.

Goal 2: Improve Old Relationships and Explore New Relationships Throughout the State For the Purpose of Pursuing Common Interests and Goals.

Many library advocates believe that for positive change to happen within the state, collaboration between like-minded entities needs to take place. Before collaboration can be successful, trust must be developed. VLA will work on strengthening the relationships that have been previously established and reach out to other entities to find common interests and explore opportunities to collaborate. The focus of this goal is relationship building. *Communication, advocacy, access, and professional development will be addressed in subsequent goals of this plan.*

Action 1: Support each VLA board member role established on the new organizational chart and provide the opportunities to explore collaboration within the VLA leadership.

Action 2: Recruit liaisons from other organizations, i.e. the Vermont School Libraries Association, Vermont College and Academic Libraries, the Green Mountain Library Consortia, the Vermont Public Library Foundation, and the Vermont Board of Libraries, attend their meetings, and encourage discussions for future collaboration.

Action 3: Explore possibility of joint conferences with other entities.

Action 4: Reestablish quarterly meet-and-greets for VLA members throughout the state.

Action 5: Hold VLA bi-monthly meetings at non-VLA board member libraries and include the host library's staff for a round of discussion.

Action 6: Explore relationship building with local and state government representatives.

Goal 3: Promote the Library Message and Advocate for Libraries, Librarians, and the Vermont Library Association

Clarifying and promoting the "library message" is essential for the sustainability of libraries, librarians, and VLA. Each individual message, depending upon its purpose, should be directed towards its intended audience: government officials, VLA members, library patrons, and/or other interested parties. This goal focuses on the development of targeted messages and the means of communicating them.

Action 1: Define the benefits of being a VLA member and decide on how to promote the resulting message, i.e. new member letter, brochure, website, listserv, etc.

Action 2: Develop an active Government Relations and Advocacy Committee and define its priorities. (This committee will be created with the new organizational chart.)

Action 3: Plan to participate in state and national library legislative activities.

Action 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of VLA's current messaging vehicles (website, Facebook, twitter, newsletter, listserv, new membership software) and decide how to make improvements.

Action 5: Consider using Public Service Announcements to promote VLA's mission, goals, and effectiveness and/or other relevant messaging.

Action 6: Develop conference themes and promote the theme throughout the year.

Action 7: Develop ways to be more inclusive and communicative to potential members and individuals who are part of a VLA institutional membership.

Action 8: Research a possible branding exercise for VLA.

Action 9: Consider selling VLA promotional material and/or providing free promotional material to members.

Goal 4: Improve Accessibility Through Education and Training

Access to information can be hindered by many factors, i.e. library staff knowledge and skill level, service hours, building accessibility, internet connectivity, media type, level of technological literacy, cognitive skills, physical impairments, language barriers, etc. VLA can improve accessibility through the education and training of its members so that the members can educate and train their patrons.

Action 1: Create and administer an access assessment survey for libraries/communities/members to determine strengths and weaknesses regarding access to information.

Action 2: Accumulate survey findings, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

Action 3: Enlist skilled VLA members and collaborate with other library entities to provide an ongoing training schedule to address accessibility needs.

Goal 5: Elevate the Library Profession Within Vermont

Adequate staffing, fair compensation, professional development and continuing educational opportunities, and a valid set of professional standards are all ongoing concerns for Vermont librarians. VLA can provide research, resources, and training to our members regarding the library profession and can participate in the statewide narrative.

Action 1: Review and update the "Increasing Public Library Compensation: A How-to Guide for Vermont Libraries; Prepared by the Personnel Committee of the Vermont Library Association, 2003; Revised 2009."

Action 2: Post and promote the above resource.

Action 3: Consider creating and administering an updated salary survey to the VLA members.

Action 4: Request a chance to provide input to the Vermont Department of Libraries regarding an update to the state's Library Standards.

Action 5: Provide an opportunity to gather names and areas of expertise from prospective mentors; provide a speed-mentoring event; provide a "skills fair."

Action 6: Provide short, well-defined opportunities for members to "micro-volunteer" within the association.

Action 7: Evaluate/update the volunteer list.

Goal 6: Advocate for Well Maintained Library Facilities

Action 1: Create a survey to determine what building concerns our members are facing.

Action 2: Administer survey; accumulate and report findings.

Action 3: Create a committee to develop ways to support and advocate for well maintained facilities.

IV. SUMMARY

The Vermont Library Association engaged in planning activities throughout the year and established a focus for the upcoming five years. This strategic plan includes ensuring VLA's sustainability, improving relationships in the Vermont library community, clarifying and promoting the value of libraries and library services, assisting in equitable information access, elevating the library profession within Vermont, and supporting well-maintained library facilities.

These six goals are further detailed through the 38 suggested action points provided. Although this is an extensive list, the intentions of this document are to establish a reporting of the issues that Vermont librarians are facing at this time and to provide a framework to alleviate the issues.

It is advised that VLA's activities focus on a smaller subset of the action points each year and that the focus should be determined at VLA's annual retreat in June when the current and newly appointed board members convene for the first time. A Yearly Action Plan Form is provided at the end of this document to assist in this process.

It is also suggested that sometime at the end of the year (possibly at the annual conference in May), a summary should be provided listing all the activities that have taken place within the year and what goals have been achieved. A Yearly Progress Report is provided at the end of this document to assist in this process.

As in most strategic plans, this document should be viewed as a living document and should be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Some actions may be altered or abandoned if the VLA board deems them unnecessary or superfluous, but it is the hope that all goals and actions be seriously considered and new processes, relationships, activities, and programming be the end result.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the following for their insight and support:

- The VLA Board, past and present
- The VLA Members
- The Vermont Department of Libraries
- The Vermont School Library Association
- The Vermont Consortium of Academic Libraries
- The Vermont Board of Libraries
- The Vermont Humanities Council
- The Green Mountain Library Consortium
- Lawrence Webster, Library Consultant
- Erica Freudenberger, VLC Presenter
- Summit Attendees: Joy Worland, Scott Murphy, Lars Torres, Toni Josey, Margaret Woodruff, Kelly McCagg, Emily Crist, Jennifer Murray, Debbie Landauer, Jami Yazdani, Marti Fiske, Jeannette Bair, Steve Picazio, Tom McMurdo, Jason Broughton, Bruce Post, Mary Danko, Sarah Costa, Kevin Unrath, Peter Langella, Jane Kearns, Charlotte Kastner, Cindy Weber, Paul Carnahan, Janet Clapp, Duncan Tingle, Darla Witmer, and Caitlin Corless.
- Work group leaders: Tom McMurdo, Jason Broughton, Kelly McCagg, and Sarah Costa.



**Vermont
Library
Association**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 – 2024
YEARLY ACTION PLAN**

Year:

Choose a focus for the coming year and supply the goals and actions in the spaces below. Add more spaces for goals and actions to be addressed as needed.

Focus:

Goal #

List of Actions:

Goal #

List of Actions:

Goal #

List of Actions:



Vermont Library Association

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2024 YEARLY PROGRESS REPORT

Date:

Progress: Report on the progress made regarding the strategic plan in the past year and/or all subsequent years. Add more spaces for goals and actions completed as needed.

Goal #

List of Actions Addressed/Completed:

Goal #

List of Actions Addressed/Completed:

Goal #

List of Actions Addressed/Completed: