

Increasing Public Library Compensation: a How-to Guide for Vermont Libraries

Prepared by the
Personnel Committee
of the Vermont Library Association
2003

Salary is a perennial concern for Vermont library trustees. In 2001 the Personnel Committee of the Vermont Library Association began working on salary and benefit issues, resulting in the documents here. In 2002, the American Library Association kicked off its Campaign for America's Librarians, an effort to examine salary and pay equity issues nationwide. If your library is undertaking a similar effort, we hope this Action Plan will add some Vermont perspective to your study.

The Action Plan offers specific methods to gather and analyze community and Vermont information to determine fair remuneration for library staff. Libraries also need to spread the word about how libraries and librarians enhance the quality of life in Vermont. The communications strategy on page 8 gives supporting quotes, statistics, and ideas ready to be used in talks and news articles.

Get Ready

Staff and trustees should convene a 5 to 7 member committee to discuss the following issues:

- How broad should the investigation into current remuneration be? Inequitable salaries may be limited to one area of the library or be spread evenly from director to lowest paid employee.
- Are other groups in town working on the same issues, such as municipal departments?
- Is the library's budget growth in the past ten years the same as other town agencies or does it lag behind?

- Is there a town-wide situation that could be better addressed by a wage and classification study, including salaries of the public library? Human resource coordinators collect, analyze and make recommendations for such a study.

In many towns, a committee focused solely on library employees will do the work. The committee which takes on the task of determining fair salaries should include library staff, trustees, and community members who have some expertise in salary issues or benefits.

Plan for a sensible timeline

Results need to be presented in plenty of time for the budget committee to absorb implications and translate them into the budget for the next year. Funding authorities should be notified several months before they begin work on the budget. They will need time to review committee recommendations and understand the implications for their work. Depending on the scope of the task, libraries may want to schedule a two to six month study period with a clear objective for the task force undertaking the salary study. While it is relatively easy to factor in a cost-of-living salary increase, real changes in library salary structure require a study period and time for decision makers to absorb the material.

Trustees who are faced with the need for quick action at budget time can consult the attached budget memo on page 7 for immediate suggestions.

Find Statistics and Data on the Subject

Whether you hire a human resources coordinator or use committee members to collect data, you will need to find out what similar positions in Vermont offer for salaries and benefits. Remember that part time employees should not be penalized for offering their services to small libraries; use full time salaries and calculate the comparable hourly rate.

In many communities, local salary information is the key to finding the fair compensation for the library staff. According to the Vermont Public Records law (1 V.S.A. section 317B), the salaries and benefits relating to elected or appointed officials and employees of public agencies are available for public inspection and copying. Some sources of comparable data are listed on the next page.

- ◇ The **Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)** salary survey is sent to every town. Towns which complete and return the survey receive the new volume of annual data; towns may also purchase the annual survey results for \$20.00 Check with your town clerk or town manager for the annual volume. The survey provides salary and benefit information by the individual town for positions such as library director, town clerk or town recreation manager. Look for towns which are similar in population, income, and character to yours. One benefit of using the VLCT data is that most town officials are familiar with it and may use it already when setting salaries in town. Larger towns are better represented in the annual report than are smaller towns.
- ◇ The **American Library Association** annually surveys librarians with the MLS degree in larger libraries and publishes the results. Use interlibrary loan to request the most recent *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries* from the Vermont Department of Libraries. The 2001 survey gives the mean salary for American library managers and those who supervise support staff in 2000 as \$20.49/hour, \$42,629 annually.
- ◇ Some Vermont communities and businesses use the **Vermont Livable Wage** as a guideline. The figures, based on legislative studies of Vermont food, housing, and living costs, suggest a reasonable standard. Employees who make at least the Livable Wage shall be able to afford coverage for their basic needs in Vermont. Current figures are available at <http://www.vtlivablewage.org/factsfigures.html>
- ◇ **Teachers and school librarians** (media specialists) in your community may offer some

comparable data. Be sure to consider the responsibilities of the job and the actual hours worked when you compare salaries. Data by supervisory union is available on the web at <http://www.vtnea.org/Salaries.htm>. The average starting salary for a Vermont teacher with a BA is \$15.18 per hour or \$23,920 annually, plus benefits.

- ◇ **State employee** positions such as the regional librarian (Librarian B), assistant regional librarian (Librarian A), or clerk are listed at <http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/specs.cfm>. Listed are job requirements and salaries. Remember that state jobs use a step chart to determine exact wage, with steps for the increase in years worked.
- ◇ **Vermont Public Library Statistics**, collected from every library in the fall, are published each February in the Biennial Report Supplement, available in hard copy or online at http://dol.state.vt.us/GOPHER_ROOT5/LIBRARIES/MISC/PLSTATS.HTML. Statistics for each town library include number of librarians holding the ALA approved Masters of Library Science degree; total librarians; other staff; total FTE (full-time-equivalent); volunteer hours/week/ and figures for total library salaries and total benefits.
- ◇ **Vermont Department of Libraries Salary survey** from 1997 is available from the department (802-828-3261, or mail to Vermont Department of Libraries, 109 State St., Montpelier, VT 05609). The data is relatively old; better data is obtainable from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns survey, as above.

Compare Job Descriptions

Within the library and the town, positions should be compared to make sure all are rewarded equitably. If the library is part of a town-wide study, professional analysts will compile this data. If committee members take on the task they should proceed carefully and make sure that they consider job responsibilities rather than they perceive the characteristics of the job to be. Generally, jobs should be compared based on standard characteristics including:

- § Knowledge and skill required to do the job
- § Level of communication needed, for example does the person speak for the institution; work directly with decision makers in the community; or work with the public more generally
- § Importance of the decisions required by the job
- § Level of authority
- § Impact of the work accomplished
- § Level of physical demands
- § Type of working conditions
- § Supervisory scope
- § Budget responsibility

If the library has recently created accurate job descriptions, this information can generate the job comparison. Other sources for comparison may be found in neighboring libraries or at <http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/specs.cfm>. The state personnel site also provides a step chart that shows the wages (but not the benefits) with each position. The specifications for Librarian A, B, C and for Clerk A and B may be useful comparisons for local library positions. A study of wages and compensation may be undertaken with a peer library,; your regional librarian will be able to help you identify comparable libraries.

The United States Department of Labor provides detailed job descriptions, some salary data, and predicted demand by position in the Occupational Outlook Handbook, available as a reference book or online at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles, also published by the Department of Labor, lists tasks, level of education needed, and working conditions for numerous library positions.

Use a Step Chart for the Whole Library Organization

Constructing a table or chart with steps gives the board an overall tool to discuss how library staff will earn salaries based on longevity and education. Typically, new employees progress from one step to another more rapidly at the beginning of their careers. A library step chart might include salary increases of 2 % for each year on the job over the first six years, dropping to 1.5% increase per year for years 7-12. Education increases should be awarded for associates degree, Bachelors degree, DOL certification, and Masters degrees. Often new employees will be given the first raise after successful completion of a six-month probation period. A step chart based on the Vermont Library Association recommended minimum salary is on page 11.

School step charts are usually available as part of the school contract or on the web at www.vtnea.org/Salaries.htm. School contracts also contain the description of benefits offered to professional and nonprofessional staff. School contracts are public information, and should be made available at your request.

Consider Benefits

The Vermont Library Association Executive Board recommends a minimum starting salary of \$33,025 for public library directors and a full benefit package including health insurance, vacation and sick leave, and a retirement plan. Library directors should be offered a range of compensation depending on years of experience, with an annual cost of living adjustment.

If the library is unable to create complete benefit plans, a line item can begin the process. Budget an amount to reimburse staff for holidays, vacation, and sick time, and plan to continue building this line item over the next few years. For more information on common benefits see page 12.

Make changes

- Start early to advocate for change
- Look locally, but also consider state and national figures. Study the information.
- Ask for help from a peer library (one about the same size that has done a similar job) and from the VLA Personnel Committee
- Introduce the topic with the PowerPoint slide show available from the Personnel Committee and handouts. Make as many copies as you need.
- Congratulate your committee! Looking seriously at these issues will benefit your library!

How to communicate the value of your work

We live in a political world, and libraries are as vulnerable to shifting political priorities as any other public institution. A critical component in the effort to improve librarians' salaries is to market what we do. Since many of our patrons, funders, and even board members don't fully recognize or understand how libraries function, librarians must take advantage of every opportunity to articulate the nature of our work. As the Internet becomes more dominant in people's lives, this message needs to be consistent and repeated often. For example:

- ⇒ Libraries are 21st century centers for information, for education, for literacy and culture. And librarians are the ultimate search engines. They save time and money by helping to find the best, most accurate and complete information, whether it's online or in a book or video.
- ⇒ Today's librarian is a well-trained, technology-savvy, information expert who can

enrich the learning process of any library user—from early reader to graduate student to young Web surfer to retiring senior citizen.

Share the following quotable facts at any available opportunity, such as your next board meeting, in a press release, website, or newsletter, or during a conversation with a patron.

Once your constituency is behind your library 100%, start putting your salary and operating budget into perspective for the decision-makers and voters in your municipality.

Public library managers in the US, defined as those who supervise support staff, make an average of \$44,549 annually (and this doesn't even include Department Heads or Directors who make \$54,260 to \$75,714).³ The Library Manager salary is equivalent to \$21.42/hr based on a 40-hour work week. Library administrators in Vermont made an average of \$19.08 per hour in 2001. Library assistants made \$8.84 per hour. These figures include librarians in school, public, academic, and special libraries.⁵

While your board may groan during budget season, the truth is that libraries in this state are run on a shoestring. Vermont's libraries cost roughly \$12 million to operate in 2001, of which 99% was provided by local sources.⁶ Compared to the cost of running public schools in this state -- over \$1 billion -- libraries are a bargain.

For this small sum, Vermont's libraries offer 2.6 million books, 132,000 audio books and videos, and almost 8,000 magazines. Over 400 computers are available for public use, and 75% of Vermont's libraries offer Internet access. ⁶ Isn't it time to pay library staff a fair wage for the level of services that they provide?

Here are some additional statements to convince people that we're worth more than we're paid.

- ⇒ Librarians must be paid 21st century salaries if Vermonters are to enjoy 21st century library and information services.
- ⇒ Libraries shouldn't have to choose between paying their staffs equitable salaries and buying books, adding hours, or updating their technology.
- ⇒ Everyone loves libraries, but library workers can't live on love alone. Just ask our landlords, doctors, and families.
- ⇒ Libraries work because library workers make them work.
- ⇒ You can't have good education without good libraries, and you can't have good libraries without good staff.

HOW DO PUBLIC LIBRARIES ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN VERMONT? HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE WAYS THAT LIBRARIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLES' LIVES:

Please reprint any portion of this document to make the case for better library salaries.

Sources:

1. ALA Better Salaries Toolkit
http://www.ala.org/pio/advocacy/better_salariestoolkit.pdf
2. ALA Quotable Facts About Libraries
<http://www.ala.org/pio/quotablefact.pdf>
3. Librarian Salaries: Annual Increase above National Average, *American Libraries*, September 2002, p. 93.
4. Vermont Department of Education School Report <http://maps.vcgi.org/schlrpt/cfusion/schlrpt02/vermont.cfm>
5. State of Vermont Department of Employment and Training, www.det.state.us/lmi/occupation.cfm
6. Vermont Public Library Statistics 2002 Biennial Report Supplement, State of Vermont Department of Libraries, February 2002.

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In order to attract and retain qualified employees it is essential that library boards offer a benefits package that is funded and reviewed annually. As the cost of benefits, like health insurance soars it is important to find creative solutions for funding. Join group plans whenever possible, share the cost of benefits between the employer and employee, offer options appropriate to your employee needs. If you have not previously offered benefits you may plan to phase the cost in over a number of years, and immediately offer benefits, such as time off, or flex time, that don't raise the budget. Many small libraries start by offering an annual cash benefit that the employee may use for health, dental, retirement, or other benefit payment.

Legally required benefits

Social Security—paid 50/50 by the employer and employee

Unemployment Compensation—paid by the employer

Worker's Compensation—paid by the employer, check to see if the library can join the town's plan.

Payment for time not worked—time off for part-time employees should be offered on a pro-rated basis.

Vacations-Commonly vacations range from two to five weeks. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics (www.bls.gov) on average American employers give their employees 15 paid vacation days a year. Usually vacation earned increases with years of service. For example an employee with one to three years of service may earn two weeks of vacation, an employee with four to seven years of service may earn three weeks of

vacation, etc.

Holidays—Employees should always be paid for holidays that fall on days they are scheduled to work. The State of Vermont pays employees for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Town Meeting Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Bennington Battle Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day.

Sick Days—One day of sick leave per month of service is a common benefit. Organizations will want to determine how much sick leave may be accumulated.

Bereavement— Three days of paid leave is commonly given for the death of an immediate family member. Immediate family may include spouse, great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren of the employee and the employee's spouse.

Lunch and Breaks—it is common for shorter lunch breaks, of 20-30 minutes, to be paid.

It is also standard practice to allow employees a 15-minute break after each four hours worked.

Retirement

VMERS—the Office of the State Treasurer, 802-828-2305, manages the Vermont Municipal Retirement System. If a municipality participates in the program the library board may decide to include the library, even if the town does not pay the library staff.

Simple 401(k) Employees may contribute pretax salary to a 401(k) plan and the employer may match part or that entire amount. Any size employer may adopt a 401(k) plan and governmental and tax-exempt employers are allowed. Certified financial advisors can provide these plans.

SEP-IRA (Simplified Employee Pension) The employer contributes funds to this plan for the employee's benefit. Any size employer may adopt a SEP-IRA including governmental, tax-exempt and for-profit employers. The employer may contribute the lesser of 15% of compensation or \$30,000 for the employee. For example, if you are earning \$40,000 a year, your employer could contribute \$6,000. Financial advisors can provide these plans.

Tax deferred annuity (or TSA)— are long-term investments designed for retirement purposes. A provision in the Internal Revenue Code (Section 403(b)) allows employees to defer from their taxable income, the portion of their salary that is contributed to purchase a 403(b) contract. Under a salary reduction agreement with their qualified employer, the employee's pay will be reduced by the amount of his or her contribution. Tax deferred annuities are often sold by insurance companies or financial advisors.

(TIAA-CREF)— <http://www.tiaa-cref.org/ras/index.html> is a provider of retirement savings plans to colleges, universities, schools, research centers, medical organizations and other nonprofit institutions, including libraries. Their website offers information about various retirement savings options. There is considerable flexibility in setting retirement schedules.

Insurance Related Benefits

Life Insurance—Any insurance company can provide life insurance policies. A common benefit is a plan that pays one year of the insured’s salary to his or her beneficiaries.

Medical or Health Insurance—If the town offers an insurance policy the library board may want to see if they can buy into the plan. Even if the library staff is not paid by the town the library or staff can pay the town for the premium cost and join the group. According to the Department of Banking and Insurance the top five small group health care providers in Vermont are:

- MVP Health Plan. Inc 1-800-TALK-MVP
<http://www.mvphealthcare.com/>
- Vermont Health Plan 1-800-250-8427
<http://www.dsw.state.vt.us/districts/ovha/ovha10.htm>
- John Alden Life Insurance Co. 1-800 234-6762
<http://www.nstarmc.com/fh/northstar/health.htm>
- Blue Cross, Blue Shield 1-800-255-4550
<http://www.bcbsvt.com/>
- Connecticut General Life Insurance Co. 1-508-798-8667
<http://www.cigna.com/consumer/services/healthcare/openenrollment.htm>

Disability Insurance—Long and short-term disability insurance is available through most insurance companies.

Dental Insurance and /or eye care insurance—Dental and eye-care services may be provided as part of a health care policy or may be provided by independent companies.

Continuing Education

Education Costs—The cost of attending workshops and conferences as well as the cost of membership in professional organizations should be budgeted for each year.

Mileage Reimbursement—mileage costs for attendance at approved professional workshops should be provided.

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Think you're worth more than you make? than you make?

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- ◇ Vermonters check out an average of six books a year. They spend \$21.02 a year for the public library -- much less than the average cost of one hardcover book. 6
- ◇ Americans go to school, public, and academic libraries more than twice as often as they go to the movies. 2
- ◇ Federal spending on libraries annually is only 54 cents per person. 2
- ◇ A 2002 poll conducted for the American Library Association found that 91% of respondents expect libraries to be needed in the future, despite the increased availability of information on the Internet. 2
- ◇ Americans spend more than three times as much on salty snacks as they do on public libraries. 2
- ◇ Public libraries are the number one point of online access for people without Internet connections at home, school or work. 2
- ◇
- ◇ Instill a love of reading in children through story hours , summer reading programs, and special events.
- ◇ Provide homework help to students including instruction on Internet research and using online databases.
- ◇ Train Vermont citizens to effectively search the Internet through one on one training and group classes.
- ◇ Offer free community meeting and social space for seniors, stay-at-home parents, homeschoolers, and local organizations.
- ◇ Reduce the stress of working adults through recreational reading, audiobooks, and videos, thus lowering health care costs.
- ◇ Help people to find jobs, start small-businesses, and launch new careers. Drew Carey was inspired to become a comedian after reading a joke book at his local library.
- ◇ Refer people to appropriate state and federal agencies, including consumer and legal services.
- ◇ Provide free tax forms (including all of the attachments and instructions, not just the 1040!).
- ◇ Enrich the lives of people in underserved communities, through bookmobile visits in rural areas, and outreach programs in day-care centers and retirement communities.
- ◇ Provide volunteer outlets for hundreds of Vermont citizens.
- ◇ Spark interest in new ideas and maintain a healthy democracy.
- ◇ Offer cultural programming through book discussion groups, lectures, and other events.
- ◇ Libraries housed in historical buildings lend architectural value to the town's landscape.

Benefits for Public Library Employees

Most employers spend between 14 and 25 percent of an employees total compensation package on benefits...this does not include legally required benefits

US News and World Report, February 23, 2003

Combined Vermont library budgets add up to only 1% of what schools spend in this state.

Budget time often brings up questions about Vermont library salaries. Want some help deciding what a fair raise is for your employees? Use this list as a quick reference tool at budget time.

- Ø **COLA, or Cost of Living Adjustment**, should be considered annually. You can see what the Social Security Administration has calculated by checking their web site at <http://www.ssa.gov/>. The COLA for December 2001 to December 2002 is calculated at 1.4%. Library staff should receive a 1.4% increase over what they were paid the previous year in order to keep up with the cost of living. If staff has missed COLA increases for several years, the raise should be higher.
- Ø **Continuing education** is an ongoing factor for librarians who need to stay on top of new online tools; trends in the community, the state, the country, and the profession. If your librarian has recently completed the Certification of Public Librarians in Vermont or a Master's degree, you need to recognize this important benchmark with a significant raise.
- Ø **Changes in job description** occur incrementally. Bit by bit, the staff may increase the number of library programs, the number of volunteers supervised, the number of services for the community, or grants written. Library staff should track these changes throughout the year. Annually, trustees should scrutinize changes in the scope and responsibility of the job to see if an additional raise is warranted.
- Ø **A fair benefit package** should be considered part of staff compensation. If the library does not offer full benefits to its staff, trustees may want to include a line item in the library budget to offer payment in lieu of benefits. Naming the benefit line allows trustees to move towards appropriate benefits for staff, for health insurance, vacation and sick leave, and a retirement plan.
- Ø **Bonuses** reward staff for exceptional performance. Bonuses are appropriate when staff have risen to meet major challenges. Finding new money to

replace an unexpected shortfall, continuing to deliver excellent service while writing and administering a grant, or completing a long range plan might all be occasions when trustees would choose to reward the staff with a one-time bonus.

- Ø Make sure that library staff is paid for **every hour they work**—or paid for enough hours to get the work done. By law, staff should not volunteer hours to get their paid work completed.

Trustees may decide they need more time to understand the whole issue of staff salaries. The Personnel Committee of the Vermont Library Association will be happy to help review and study your library salaries and job descriptions. Call or e-mail committee chair Nancy Wilson at 802-453-2366 or nancy@middlebury.net for more information.

Action Plan for Better Library Salaries

The Vermont Library Association Executive Board recommends a minimum starting salary of \$33,025 for public library directors and a full benefit package including health insurance, vacation and sick leave, and a retirement plan.

If your director works part time, the comparable hourly wage without benefits is \$15.88.

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This salary chart is based on the Vermont Library Association recommended minimum starting salary of \$33,025.00. It is acknowledged that all library directors in Vermont do not have a Bachelor's degree, but it is hoped that this level of education will be sought after by people in the profession. Directors with less education should receive proportionally less compensation. Trustees should encourage their directors to seek a Bachelor's degree. This chart does not include benefits.

In 2001-2002, the Vermont Library Association (VLA) Personnel Committee began studying compensation for librarians in Vermont. The committee focused its work on the public library director. The VLA executive board, on the committee's recommendation, adopted a recommended minimum starting salary of \$33,025.00 for public library directors.

The committee devoted its 2002-2003 efforts to developing tools to guide public library staff, trustees, and community members in implementing strategies to improve library compensation. The components of this guide include a step-by-step action plan to put into practice locally, a marketing strategy to promote the library, and

resources on standard benefits offered at other institutions. This document is intended to facilitate discussion among interested parties about library compensation in their area, and to provide the necessary tools to actually begin working to improve the current status of library salaries.

This document's emphasis is on compensation for public library directors, although these tools could be applied across a range of library types and staff levels. The committee plans to devote future efforts to exploring compensation issues for library support staff.

Please contact one of the committee members listed below if you would like help implementing this plan, have success stories to share, feedback on this document, or suggestions for improvement.

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Success Story: Be Creative

13 years ago in Bristol there was no money to offer benefits. The director convinced the board to give time off instead, with the understanding that staff would cover for each other when possible. Every person, regardless of hours worked, gets paid holidays, sick, personal, and vacation time. Benefits have been added to the compensation package for full-time employees and the time off policy is still in effect.

*"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."
—Walter Cronkite*

Librarian & Trustees responsibilities:

_____ Promote— the library and services – How important is your town library?

_____ Prioritize— your needs and the benefits you want, it is not just about _____ money, be creative!

_____ Recruit— community involvement and solicit experts to assist in your effort.

_____ Listen—to community needs and desires.

_____ Research & Document—Find statistics and data to support your _____ position.

_____ Awareness— Share information with your staff, volunteers & community.

Public libraries are central to the community, keep up the momentum, and include the support staff too!

ACTION PLAN CHECK LIST -Getting Started!

Introduction

An annual budget memo for trustees

Success Story: Make your Case to Those that Matter

The director of the Jeudevine Memorial Library in Hardwick, VT used statistics indicating soaring use of the library to present to the town officials as part of a request for a salary increase. In addition, data on wages paid to town and private employees in the area were presented, showing discrepancies between her very low director's salary and those of other workers. Community involvement and connections helped to bolster her request, as library supporters contacted town and library officials. Initially, the library board was reluctant to ask for a higher salary, but when the majority of the town board agreed to the request, her board

also supported this. She received a 35.16 percent increase in the library budget, with the majority of it for her wages.

Success Story: Benefits Make the Difference

Trustees in Hartland found the new director they wanted, with the right experience and skills. When they offered her the job she told them that she could not take it unless they offered benefits. To keep the person they wanted they met her requirements.

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