

Valley City Barnes County Public Library Notes

March 30, 2017 by Steve Hammel

Hello Barnes County, I try not to get too political in this column since I represent the library and it tends to get me in trouble. However, in this instance, as a library professional I feel it is my duty to speak out. I cannot remain quiet since this will have a very negative effect on our library and libraries across the country. I am speaking of the proposal to eliminate funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Whether you realize it or not, your library and consequently our community has received direct and indirect benefits from each of the above-named institutions.

I'll start with the big one, the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our library has received over \$70,000 in IMLS funds, through the North Dakota Library Visions grants program. That money paid for the complete upgrade of our computer network in 2014, making it one of the best in any public library in the state, and for the 11 patron workstations which are averaging over 8000 logins per year over the past three years. That was the "small" grant, only about \$12,000. The big one is the Worldcat grant, about \$60,000, which will make our library's collection available across the county through cooperative sharing or as most people know it, Interlibrary Loan. This has been a two-year project and we are finally almost done. The major benefit for our community, we just completed having the library's catalog database upgraded to 2017 standards. 77% of the library's records have received a complete upgrade and the remaining 23% received partial corrections and updating. An updated catalog is a huge improvement to library services for our community. Indirectly, many of the products and services our library receives from the North Dakota State Library come from IMLS funds. In addition to Library Vision grants; most of the continuing education and professional development opportunities provided by the state library, are using IMLS funds. Most of our electronic database access coming through the state library, come from IMLS money. I recently talked with our library development person from the state library and he was very concerned to say the least. Between mandatory budget reductions from the state and the possibility of the elimination of the IMLS, things could get very bad for library services at every library across the state.

The loss of the other three institutions would not have as big an impact on the library but would be an incalculable loss to our country. There would still be impacts on our community. The display and programs both the library and museum offered this winter on the Bill of Rights came from a small grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH regularly offers similar smaller scale exhibits, perfect for our library and which I hope we can regularly bring to our community in the future. An exciting project I am presently working on is setting up streaming music, dance, and theater performances from Lincoln Center. It is exclusively available to libraries and is free, thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It is an amazing opportunity for our community to see the best of the best in classical music, jazz,

Broadway, and dance perform on a big screen with near concert quality sound reproduction. Some of you may remember when the children's book and TV character Arthur visited the library last year. I know the children who were here will never forget it. Our local PBS station, Prairie Public, covered the cost of Arthur's visit. No PBS, no Arthur, and an opportunity lost to get kids excited about the library and reading. Another federal resource I should mention that is facing funding cuts which would negatively impact our historic library is the National Park Service. Half the cost of the masonry repair work done on the library a couple years ago was covered by a preservation grant through the North Dakota Historical Society, using Park Service funding. Speaking of the ND Historical Society and State Archives, if the federal funding goes away, they get hit hard as well.

So, what can you do? Please, please, please, contact Senator Heitkamp's, Senator Hoven's, and Representative Kramer's offices and let them know you support libraries and museums in your community. Tell them that eliminating funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) will hurt local communities. Tell them that libraries, museums, and the arts are essential services and define who we are and what we value as a society.

Libraries transform, come and see how the library can transform your life.

Big announcement:

Our new and improved website is scheduled to go live Monday April 3rd. The biggest advance is library supporters will be able to make both one time and recurring online donations to the library. Donations are secure and encrypted and you never leave our website. You can also donate online to the Friends of the Library. This project has been six months in the making and worth all the effort. It's a much cleaner layout and will be much easier for staff to regularly update content. There is a library newsfeed and a non-profit newsfeed with new articles available every day. Take a look at www.vcbclibrary.org

The library board meets the second Tuesday of every month. The board's next meeting is Tuesday April 11th at 5:05 pm.

Please stop in and pick up a calendar of events. We have jam packed calendar of programs in April and you don't want to miss any of them.