

NOBLE Executive Board Meeting via zoom

May 10, 2023

Present: Ron Gagnon, Amy Lannon, Brian Courtemanche, Allison Babin, Linda Gardener, Theresa Hurley, Tara Mansfield, Catherine McDonald, Cate Merlin, Catherine Robertson, and Myron Schirer-Suter.

1. Call to Order/Welcome

Amy Lannon called the Meeting to order at 2:04pm.

2. Approval of Minutes 2/8, 3/1, and 4/26

Brian made the motion to approve the minutes from 2/8/2023, seconded by Theresa. All in favor.

Linda made the motion to approve the minutes from 3/1/2023, seconded by Theresa. All in favor.

Amy made the motion to approve the minutes from 4/26/2023, seconded by Linda. Myron abstained. All in favor.

3. Treasurer's Report

Myron reported that there was nothing out of the ordinary and that things seemed to be going well. He noted that some money had come in and that had been moved from the normal account to the money market.

Amy noted that things seemed to be running under budget, and asked if that was due to a vacancy. Ron confirmed that NOBLE has one vacancy. Michele was promoted to System Support Specialist and Martha is waiting to fill the System Support Analyst position to see what they need.

4. Executive Director's Report

PC Support Specialist Position

Ron reported that NOBLE's PC Support Specialist, George Lally, submitted his notice of retirement effective June 30th, after over 22 years of service. The upcoming vacancy was posted on Indeed and the MBLC website and distributed by email to the networks, allregions, and noble-info, with the goal of having someone on-board for a seamless transition. Ron and Martha interviewed four candidates, all of whom had some library work on their resume. The position was offered to a candidate who has accepted, and is working out details with their current employer. Ron noted that they are hoping to have the person overlap with George during the last week of June to make introductions and tour the libraries using the PC Support service to become familiar with the unique setups at each location. Ron reported that the position was posted, offered, and accepted at the base salary. He noted that the lower salary will give NOBLE some slack in the personnel line that will allow both George and the new employee to work the same week.

Open Welcome Meeting

A general Welcome to NOBLE session was held on March 28th. Twenty-six people registered initially, with eight participating in person and remote participation in the teens. He noted that NOBLE is still willing to do individual Welcome to NOBLE sessions for new library employees.

Working Groups

Ron reported that the Electronic Resources and Database Working Group met in March and voted to recommend continuing the EBSCO Linked Data service for FY24. They also discussed upcoming catalog improvements, particularly "Did You Mean" and problems with Boolean search. They are scheduled to meet again next week.

The Resource Sharing Working Group also met in March primarily to discuss whether high demand items were overdue more frequently since libraries implemented fine-free policies. NOBLE staff mined data from 2019 to present, but there was no way to identify which books had a long hold list at a given time. The group's input was that overall they did not view it as a larger problem, despite some specific cases cited.

Directors Roundtable

Ron reported that the Directors Roundtable met on March 31st and the two big topics were challenges to books and programs, and the challenges presented by the winter holidays – decorate for none or all?

The May 5th roundtable discussed drag queen issues, trustee roles, diversity audits, and town support. The next roundtable is scheduled on June 2nd.

Ecard Project

Ron reported that the work continues on the eCard project, which will provide instant online borrowers card registration 24x7. NOBLE has been working with Quipu on the parameters and have developed a test registration page. Once that is completed, the language translations can begin.

Evergreen International Conference

Ron reported that the 2023 Evergreen International Conference was hosted by CW MARS in downtown Worcester from April 26 through 29th. Six NOBLE staff members attended and Elizabeth, Michele, and Ron presented programs. Ron noted that it was a great opportunity to get staff back networking after three years of online conferences and to renew ties with people in the Evergreen community.

Ron reported that there were three simultaneous tracks of nuts and bolts presentations and two keynote addresses. David Leonard, President of the Boston Public Library, spoke about their cybersecurity breach almost two years ago. Kathy Lussier, the former MassLNC Coordinator and NOBLE's next Executive Director, spoke about burnout in open source communities, which was also a call to action to reinvigorate efforts to improve Evergreen. Ron noted that it was a well-received speech.

Mass. Library Association

Ron reported that he attended the Mass. Library Association conference in Falmouth on May 8-9th. He noted that there seemed to be a good turnout, and a wealth of good program choices. Michelle Filleul of Reading is starting her term as president of MLA, and Noelle Boc of Danvers will be the next president. Ron noted that Elizabeth was unable to attend due to being away on an overseas trip that was postponed due to the pandemic and rescheduled for this spring.

MBLC Connectivity Survey

Ron reported that the MBLC is surveying public libraries in Massachusetts about their non-network internet connectivity, if any, to provide information for available Federal grants. Some other networks require their libraries to get a second line for public access, limiting the network line to staff access, which is not required by NOBLE. The MBLC knows what the network provides through the subsidy program annual reporting so the NOBLE line should not be reported.

MBLC Budget

Ron reported that the House has approved a FY24 budget for the MBLC that includes increases in all line items, including a requested 30% increase in line 7000-9506 that funds the library networks. He noted that the Senate Ways and Means budget that was released yesterday was more generous, and included all the MBLC's Legislative Agenda requests except for the Mass. Center for the Book, which was increased by a lesser amount. There had been concerns about the Senate budget at MLA, given the significant decrease in state income seen in April.

Ron noted that with both Houses recommending the 30% Library Technology increase, it should be a lock for FY24. Some of the other lines including the Mass Center of the Book, regional library systems, and aid to public libraries will require a conference committee to work out differences between the House and Senate recommendations.

Firewalls Updated

Ron reported that NOBLE library firewall firmware was updated overnight March 31st, without disruption. The main switch at the NOBLE office was replaced on May 3rd due to a faulty port.

ECCF Report

Ron reported that he filed the final report with the Essex County Community Foundation on our Gateway Cities gigabit Internet upgrade implemented last spring in Lynn, Peabody (downtown), and Salem. The grant provided new networking equipment and a year of gigabit Comcast service.

Ron noted that he had one more report to complete for the cybersecurity grant that included consulting and library equipment.

5. Nahant Subcommittee Report

Ron reported that he had sent out some information on Nahant and that an Executive Board subcommittee was formed to look into it. To recap, the MLS approached NOBLE about possible membership for Nahant, which is in the geographic area. Nahant currently pays \$1,400 to be part of MassCat which receives membership subsidies from MLS. Ron noted that MassCat does not have much in the way of resource sharing because of the small library and school library membership. The MBLC and MLS are trying to move them to a network to improve network sharing. The MLS is willing to offer transition funding to help the MassCat libraries pay network membership fees: 50% the first year, 33% the second year, and 25% of the third year. The libraries will be responsible for the full membership cost on year four.

A subcommittee including Myron, Theresa, and Linda met on March 8th to consider membership options. Currently there are three levels of membership: full membership, small library membership, and associate membership. The subcommittee recommended offering Nahant associate membership, which is the same level as Montserrat. The associate member current rate is \$11,669.

The current associate membership caps the collection size at 15,000 items, and Nahant has 18,270 items. The subcommittee recommends increasing the collection size to 20,000. Ron noted that this change would not impact any other members.

Catherine Robertson suggested making one more amendment to the associate membership: giving associate member libraries a vote on committees. She noted that she is currently on a committee.

Ron reported that he ran the subcommittee recommendations by MLS and they noted that the MLS contribution at that level would not be a problem.

Myron asked if EBSCO would extend to new members. Ron noted that they expect that will not be the case. He noted that Nahant was not particularly interested in paying for the database packages.

6. Vote to Approve Nahant Membership Proposal

Motion: Move to direct the Executive Director to extend an offer of NOBLE membership to the Nahant Public Library at the Associate Member level, plus OverDrive costs as determined by formula, with subsidies expected from the Mass. Library System and the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners. This offer is valid for three years.

Discussion:

Amy asked if there should be an expiration on the offer. Ron said that makes sense. Myron agreed. Amy noted that the offer could stand for a couple of years, in case there is a pricing increase.

Catherine Robertson noted that for Montserrat, that pricing would be fine for several years, even going up the 2%. She noted that Montserrat is not a public library, so funding may be different. Catherine noted that the resource sharing was vital and that she would encourage Nahant to join NOBLE.

Discussion of the timeframe followed. Ron noted that with budgeting timelines, the offer should be longer than a year. He noted that the draft motion language tries to tie the pricing to the current associate membership costs.

Myron noted the membership level is offered, so it would be the amount that it costs at that time. He suggested taking the dollar amount out of the motion. Amy agreed.

Allison noted that having a timeframe on the offer may help Nahant negotiate with the town, as this is a limited time opportunity. Myron asked if the MLS subsidy has a deadline, and Ron noted that MLS expects this process to be lengthy.

Brian suggested leaving the draft motion language to simply “at the associate member level,” and leaving out the dollar amount and connection to Montserrat. Myron agreed. Catherine noted that if we are extended the offer for more than a year, the simpler language allows the pricing to change.

Ron noted that Executive Board could recommend changes to collection size and ability to serve and vote on committees for the Associate Membership at the Members Meeting next week.

Action: Brian made the motion, seconded by Allison. All in favor.

6a. Vote to make changes to the Associate Member policy

Motion: Move to change the Associate Member policy collection size to 20,000 or less, change language to “May participate as a voting member on a committee, but will not have a vote at the Members Meeting, but may attend as a non-voting member,” and remove language from pre-Evergreen systems about simultaneous use.

Discussion:

Amy said that she felt that Associate Members would be a helpful addition to committees and noted that it invites them into conversations, even if they cannot vote. Brian agreed. Catherine noted that it seems to be working that way currently with Catherine Robertson from Montserrat.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Brian. All in favor.

7. Vote to Approve Linked Data/Bibliograph Renewal and Discontinue Kovels Service in OverDrive

Motion: Move to authorize renewal of the EBSCO Linked Data/Bibliograph service for FY24, and to discontinue the Kovels database service from OverDrive in FY24.

Discussion:

Ron reported that ERDWG recommended renewing the EBSCO linked data service in FY24 and to discontinue Kovels at the March meeting. Ron noted that these services were subscribed to as a pilot project in FY23, and that one was more successful than the other.

Ron noted that EBSCO’s Linked Data service exposes NOBLE’s physical book holdings from the catalog to indexing by Google, publicizing the fact that borrowing the book from a nearby NOBLE library is an option along with purchasing the title. The FY23 cost of \$10,975 was covered by capital. Funding for FY24 is included in the budget passed last fall.

Ron reported that over the past seven months, the average number of click throughs per month was approximately 900; a year at that rate would result in 10,800 engagements, roughly one dollar per engagement. Ron noted that most importantly, the service fills a gap in NOBLE’s holdings in Google results. NOBLE’s OverDrive holdings are exposed to Google, but not the print book. Ron noted that before the service, if you were in Danvers or Beverly and searched Google for a title, the results would show that NOBLE has the ebook but only Hamilton-Wenham or Middleton have the print book because MVLC subscribes to the service.

Kovels

ERDWG is recommending not renewing the consortium subscription to Kovels antiques and collectibles database, which was offered through OverDrive as a Libby Extra. Since starting last summer, the service has received 67 uses as of March 23rd. A “use” allows access for a month, not just a single search or connection, so the real usage may be a little better than that number suggests, but still not worth the cost of \$2,500 per year. Projecting out a year’s use, it would come to about \$25 per 30-day use.

Linda asked if an individual library could continue with Kovels, and Ron confirmed that was possible at individual pricing. Linda asked if it was possible to get statistics about which libraries were using the service. Ron reported that 4 of the 67 uses were from Melrose. Ron noted there were a fair number of uses from Beverly, Lynn, and Winthrop. Allison asked what Beverly’s usage was, and Ron confirmed it was 8.

Action: Myron made the motion, seconded by Linda. All in favor.

8. Vote to Recommend Change in Borrowers Card Policy

Motion: Move to recommend to Members Meeting the update the Borrowers Card Policy as noted above to reflect changes required by the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners.

Discussion:

Ron reported that NOBLE’s Borrowers Card Policy was updated in the fall in anticipation of changes coming with the implementation of online card registration through Quipu. The understanding at that time was that the online cards would be limited to the applicant’s home network, plus the Boston Public Library for Library of the Commonwealth materials, covering everyone statewide since all the networks were participating.

Since that time, the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners staff has ruled that the online card system must be available to anyone in Massachusetts:

“...we confirm that the new eCard must be made available to anyone from a certified municipality. This keeps with the spirit of the long-standing regulation mandating the availability of physical library cards to all residents of certified municipalities.”

The cards for applicants residing outside of NOBLE will be automatically coded non-NOBLE Massachusetts and will not have access to individual NOBLE libraries’ resources but will have access to network and statewide resources. Ron noted that this includes services like Hoopla.

This will require some minor changes to the policy, as follows: (material to be deleted in brackets, added words in italics)

Borrowers cards will be automatically issued to verified [local] *Massachusetts users residing in a certified community* to provide access to electronic resources and for placing of holds.

After completing an online registration form, the address and last name of the applicant will be verified by the system. NOBLE’s database will also be checked for an existing registration to avoid duplicate accounts. When verified, the data is automatically entered into the NOBLE system and the borrower is issued a barcode corresponding with the library of their community, *or NOBLE if outside of NOBLE’s service area*. Borrowers [outside of NOBLE, or] whose data could not be verified, will not receive a barcode but will be directed to visit a NOBLE library.

The online cards will provide access to online resources of the community's library *for applicants residing within NOBLE* [NOBLE and the Commonwealth,] as well as PC reservation systems and other services that require authentication, *statewide and NOBLE electronic resources*.

The new policy language will be:

Borrowers cards will be automatically issued to verified Massachusetts users residing in a certified community to provide access to electronic resources and for placing of holds.

After completing an online registration form, the address and last name of the applicant will be verified by the system. NOBLE's database will also be checked for an existing registration to avoid duplicate accounts. When verified, the data is automatically entered into the NOBLE system and the borrower is issued a barcode corresponding with the library of their community, or NOBLE if outside of NOBLE's service area. Borrowers whose data could not be verified, will not receive a barcode but will be directed to visit a NOBLE library.

The online cards will provide access to online resources of the community's library for appropriate applicants residing within NOBLE as well as PC reservation systems and other services that require authentication, statewide and NOBLE electronic resources.

Myron asked if academics were included in the libraries issuing cards, and Ron said that the policy talks about certified communities so that would just be public libraries. He noted that the cards could potentially be used at the academic libraries.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Theresa. All in favor.

9. Executive Director Search Committee Update

Brian reported that Kathy Lussier's first day will be Monday, July 3rd. He thanked the Search Committee for their efforts and for moving things forward so expeditiously. He noted the subcommittee was disbanded after the Executive Board vote.

Linda thanked the Search Committee for their work. Ron noted that he thought it was a great resolution. He noted that Kathy would be coming out to work with him before he leaves.

10. Vote to Return Unexpended Move Funds to Capital Account

Motion: Move to return the unspent \$13,382 of the \$65,000 allocated for moving costs back to the Capital Fund.

Discussion:

Ron reported that NOBLE received and paid the final electrician's bill for costs related to the move to 5 Cherry Hill Drive in December.

Expenses:

Allocated -					65,000.00
12/7/2022	Gateway Realty Trust Ricktel	4644	68100	33,609.00	
12/20/2022	Communications	4659	68100	1,595.00	
1/5/2023	ProAv Systems	4673	68100	6,798.50	
1/5/2023	T.E. Andresen	4675	68100	6,435.00	
1/5/2023 (On American Express)	Wayne Alarm Systems	4664	68100	732.28	
1/5/2023	Wayne Alarm Systems	4676	68100	732.37	
1/17/2023	Staples Business Adv	4680	68100	801.51	

3/29/2023	High-Tech Electrical	4729	68100	347.20	
	High-Tech Electrical	4749	68100	567.14	
Total Moving Expenses				51,618.00	(51,618.00)
Balance to Return to Capital					13,382.00

Ron reported that there is \$13,382 unspent that can be returned to the Capital Fund. The current capital balance is \$805,211.07, and with the money returned the new capital total will be \$818,593.07.

Action: Catherine made the motion, seconded by Linda. All in favor.

11. Nominating Committee Report

Amy reported that this year Executive Board would be nominating a vice president, as Brian will be moving to president and the secretary. Amy thanked Myron for his input. Amy nominated Catherine as the new vice president and nominate Tara as clerk.

12. Vote to Authorize Ad Hoc Advocacy Group, and Working Groups for FY 24

Motion: Move to authorize four ad hoc groups for Fiscal Year 2024: Advocacy Committee, Electronic Resources and Database Working Group, Collection Management Working Group and Resource Sharing Working Group.

Discussion:

Ron recommended reauthorization of the usual working groups for FY24: Electronic Resources and Database, Collection Management, and Resource Sharing. Cate recommended establishing and authorizing an Advocacy Committee that would focus on Legislative Breakfasts and other issues. Ron noted that Kathy will work on populating the working groups during the summer.

Action: Brian made the motion, seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

13. Executive Director as Contract Signing Authority

Move to authorize the Executive Director to sign library member contracts, bids, and MBLC grant funding contracts on behalf of NOBLE.

Discussion:

Ron reported that Paula discovered that there are some instances in past Executive Board votes where his name is there in place of authorizing Executive Director in general. The two instances were from September 30, 2004 and August 11, 2021.

Amy asked if the Interim Executive Director could sign contracts. Ron noted that Executive Board Officers can sign contracts, and Paula was planning on having Officers sign the contracts this summer. He noted that Myron was the exception, since he would be potentially be signing both parts of Gordon's contract.

Linda asked if it should be changed to Executive Director or their designee. Amy noted that there may come a time when the position is not filled quickly, and that it would be important to note the Interim Executive Director. Ron noted that he would interpret it to mean that the Interim could act as the Executive Director. He noted that designee may not work because if the Executive Director is not in the position, they don't have the power to assign a designee. Amy noted that Acting Director has the same signing authority as the Director, so that makes sense.

Action: Allison made the motion, seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

14. Interim Executive Director

Motion: Move that Member Services Manager Elizabeth Thomsen be designated Interim Executive Director of NOBLE from June 3, 2023, through July 2, 2023, the transition period between Executive Directors, with no additional salary or benefits.

Discussion:

Ron noted this is just a piece of housekeeping and noted that the Member Services Manager's job description includes "serves as Acting Executive Director during absences of the Executive Director." Ron does not expect anything to come up, but thought the clarification was helpful in enforcing the authority of the Interim Executive Director.

Linda noted she understands the difference between Acting and Interim, but asked if there was a reason that there is no additional salary. Ron noted that it is a short window and does not anticipate much of a workload.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Allison. All in favor.

15. New Business

Linda reported that a Melrose patron was very upset recently to learn that he had an \$8 fine on his account due to not realizing that a DVD from another library was overdue and had fines. The patron suggested that Linda bring the idea to NOBLE that patrons should have the ability to opt out of borrowing from libraries that charge fines. She noted that she did not think it would be easy, but she knows that there would be patrons who would take advantage of it.

Theresa asked if this would be something for the Resource Sharing group to take up. Ron said they could, but noted he did not know if the system could do it.

Catherine asked if it would be easier to convince all libraries to go fine free. She noted that the other option sounded technically complicated. Linda noted that Melrose did not own the DVD in question and that she did not have the patron's name and did not think they were expecting her to get back to them.

Amy noted that the logistics seem difficult and interlibrary loan involves costs and patrons are getting the items for free. She noted that she understands the ask, but the proposed change may deplete resources. Linda noted that of the thousands of interlibrary loans Melrose does, this was just one request. Myron noted it would be interested to know how much it would cost to configure the software and ask for a donation. Myron noted that a patron recently paid a fine that could have been waived because they knew that the library could keep the money.

16. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:35pm.