

KNIŽNICE SÚ POISTNÉ VENTILY

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Jedným zo zahraničných hostí tohtoročnej konferencie Knihovny súčasnosti bola i Tammy Westergard. Táto americká odborníčka, ako členka viacerých profesijných združení venuje pozornosť úlohe knižníc vo vzťahu k inovatívnemu vzdelávaniu a uplatneniu sa na trhu práce. Na podujatí predstavila projekt SANDI. Jeho podstatou je práve ten fakt, že knižnice môžu a majú pomáhať ku kvalitnému vzdelaniu a rovnako výhodným pracovným príležitostiam.

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You come from the promised land of libraries and librarians. Could you briefly introduce us to the world of libraries in the state of Nevada? Types of libraries, networks, hierarchies and rates and ways of their integration and/or collaboration. What forms of professional and/or institutional domestic and foreign cooperation enrich the development of librarianship in Nevada?

According to professor emeritus of history at the University of Nevada, Reno from his 2003 Oases of Culture, A history of Public and Academic Libraries in Nevada: “for book lovers and computer addicts alike, building a good library is an exhilarating, even exotic experience.” This has proven itself to be true from the mid – 1860s when Nevada reading clubs started book collections. It was 1895 when the Nevada Legislature authorized tax payer funding of public libraries, and since that time many thousands of dedicated library professionals, library trustees, advocates and most importantly Nevadans themselves have worked to advance “good libraries.” Today Nevada is proud to provide 10 academic libraries, 16 special libraries and 22 public library jurisdictions (with a combined 93 branches) to just over 3M residents. Library services are available from regions across Nevada’s 110,752 square miles. Some of Nevada’s 17 counties have all types of libraries, some have only one. Nevada is the seventh largest state of the fifty United States by land area but 35th by population – making public libraries especially important in both urban and rural areas. The Nevada Library Association is the professional membership organization for librarians and information professionals and for the last 75 years has convened an annual meeting. An affiliate of

the American Library Association the Nevada Library Association enriches our profession and connects Nevada librarians statewide by institutional type and to national and foreign libraries.

How your society perceives the role of libraries, what do you consider to be crucial indicators of the practical functioning of libraries in the current world/in your environment? What are the new societal expectations and assignments?

According to a 2021 report from the Brookings Institute “the demand for public library services is quite resilient – even in today’s internet age, where access to information has become readily available electronically to many families. Contrary to predictions that widespread internet use could make libraries obsolete, researchers studying U. S. communities during the 2000s estimate that circulation of adult and children’s physical books increased by 4.5 % and 8.2 %, respectively, when individuals gained access to high-speed residential internet. Further, library use has remained robust. In 2018, patrons checked out over 2 billion items, including 750 million library items for children, and 80 million of them attended children’s programs. Based on a 2019 Gallup survey, visiting the public library is the most common cultural activity in America.”

The library role of technology innovator being both a consumer and creator has become a staple in library practice. In the National Digital Infrastructure and Initiatives: A Report on the 2017 National Digital Platform at Three Forum, June 2018, Kevin Watson “aims to...have user experiences comparable or



Tammy Westergard
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exceeding corporate offerings – in essence libraries must also provide user experiences that surpass current experiences with vendor technology.” The 4th Industrial Revolution’s biggest trends like smart systems connecting an Internet of Things (IoT) to automate production with precision and control; on-demand 3D printing with sustainable materials to reduce warehousing costs; predictive maintenance through smart sensors increasing mechanical life spans and non-degree workforce training leveraged with virtual reality ‘second teachers’ to upskill people in weeks not years – combine to signal 21st century work life. Harnessing technology is no silver bullet, but these library leveraged programs could be an essential building block in the ability to achieve the Frontier 2030 goals of the United Nation’s World Economic Forum which requires all nations to take climate action, reduce unemployment, strengthen gender equality and promote peaceful societies.

The main topic of your participation in the „Libraries of Today“ conference is the presentation of the SANDI (Supporting and Advancing Nevada’s Dislocated Individuals) project. Could you briefly describe the genesis, outline and main goals of the project? Who are the main partners of the project?

As part of the U.S. Department of Education’s Education Stabilization Fund-Reimagine Workforce Preparation

(ESF-RWP) Discretionary Grants Program, the Nevada Governor’s Office of Workforce Innovation, OWINN, in partnership with the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records (NSLAPR), the Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED), the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and other stakeholders are leveraging \$13.8M to reimagine a more efficient and effective way to get Nevadans back to work in meaningful middle class careers. The Supporting and Advancing Nevada’s Dislocated Individuals/SANDI project using virtual reality and 3D digital content teaches labor market literacy and provides online training using class materials formatted into virtual reality. The career navigation system decodes prior work experience to assign college credit and/or competency badges. Virtual reality content enables individuals to “see” into tasks and key skills and abilities of in-demand STEM careers to evaluate job interest and aptitude, then if the individual feels well suited to begin a program of study, the training leads to stackable, nationally recognized STEM credentials of value in months not years. Digital tools are for broad use by multiple levels – high school, college, adult – that include many topics or disciplines relative to middle and higher-level STEM and are accessible through Nevada’s public libraries in partnership with Nevada community college and partners within the workforce ecosystem. Project SANDI’s career pathways through specialized 360 video and virtual reality experience will enhance understanding of the

program requirements, competencies, professional behavior, and recruit program – ready students and increase proficiency with basic STEM concepts and principles. A fun-fact about the virtual reality content is that it's from Brno, Czech Republic. Corinth and Lifeliqe are our partners for this part of SANDI. They are creating instructional content that supports nationally recognized industry credential training programs including:

- Certified Clinical Hemodialysis Technician Credential
- Manufacturing Technician 1
- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Refrigerant Handling
- Computational Thinking

You come as the front representative of Nevada Governors Office of Economic Development. But, what is the role and position of the Nevada State Library in the functioning of your libraries, what are the ways and experiences in the field of cooperation and possible division of responsibilities and competencies?

I represented the Governor's Office of Economic Development. But as a Nevada librarian and former State Librarian I am aware of the relationship of the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records to the different types of libraries in Nevada, which is through the Nevada State Council on Libraries and Literacy whose 16-member council advises and assists the State Library, Archives and Public Records with its statewide library and literacy responsibilities. The Council is a blend of members appointed by the Governor reflecting the diversity of the State as well as ex-officio representatives of state government agencies that share in the advancement of library and literacy goals.

What was and what is your personal involvement in the SANDI project starting with the formulation to implementation phase? What is the role of the particular library involved in the project, what are its responsibilities, what is expected of the library? How is the project supported by NSLA structures?

I was involved with other leaders, in particular Karsten Heise the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development Strategic Programs Director and member of the State Council on Libraries and Literacy representing the Governors Office of Economic Development in developing the framework of the SANDI project. Currently I

oversee all aspects of the grant related to libraries. A key deliverable for the public libraries is to help Nevadans reduce the time it takes to explore career pathways and prepare for these careers. This directly supports the work community colleges are already doing in the development of short-term and accelerated education/training programs. Through this grant, the library will have the resources and expertise needed to support community colleges to develop/use virtual reality tools to augment or replace in-person labs and clinicals; provide a network of career navigators to support educational success; raise awareness of programs, career opportunities and personal skills through an easily accessible, comprehensive digital platform that connects directly to Nevada career pathways and job opportunities; and offer decentralized learning options to a geographically dispersed workforce, thereby expanding access to Nevada's most vulnerable workers.

You discovered the library gate at the beginning of your professional journey. You have sensed the tremendous potential of libraries that you have relied on your work and endeavors for. Could you tell us where the roots of future successes are hidden?

Libraries are safety valves that more than ever need to be expanded, loved and funded because our world is chaotic and we must have places where everyone can go to get their feet on the floor. Libraries can provide a launch point for workforce development partners to build and sustain a workforce supply chain to meet business and industry needs by nurturing individualized career planning and development. With purposeful, defined digital tools and content workforce recovery training programs will advance to support and influence workforce recovery in STEM fields. This will lead to living wage employment and help solve many struggles.