

NETWORK ADVISORY COUNCIL

COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBER BRUCE NEWELL FOR THE COUNCIL'S MARCH 23, 2010 MEETING

This document contains the text of a March 22, 2010, E-mail message from Bruce Newell.

"Bob, Sarah, and all:

I am sorry not to be able to attend this week's NAC meeting. I am out of town, in Oregon, on family business.

Here's my quick take on the items represented by this very full agenda. It has always difficult for me to imagine (at least initially) the whole horse from the listing of myriad atomic-scale component parts. I can better judge a single year's planned expenditures if I have a clear picture of where we're going. So I looked at MSL's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan. It seems to me that everything we recommend for LSCA spending should be represented in some form by the five goals in this plan, goals dealing with:

Content
Access
Consultation and Leadership
Collaboration
Sustainable Success

http://msl.mt.gov/About_MSL/strategic_plan/StrategicPlan0611.pdf

So, to answer some of Sarah's question: Do we maintain the current database package and deal with identifying funds to cover the gap once again?

My response is a question: Does the current db pkg meet our users needs? If so, then let's continue on down this current path. Perhaps un-obligated funds could be repurposed to cover the gap. If not, then let's step back and reevaluate (altho, we have to do this quickly, and perhaps we should just renew for a year, then spend a year coming to consensus about what needs changing, what it needs changing to, and how we intend to get from where we are now, to where we need to be. It seems late in the academic year (as well as the fiscal year) to make big

changes, and if big changes are needed, it seems that the process should go well beyond the std RFP process, and that the needs assessment include the widest possible MT library participation.

I urge the NAC to consider the effect upon end-user (always end-user) outcomes, the convenience of our offerings, whether we've improved access to relevant content, whether our strategy builds our collective and cooperative ability to extend services beyond our communities, and so forth -- aligned with MSL's strategic plan.

Having written this, it does seem to me that the key strategic components for an increasingly cooperative and networked future are:

A. Shared Catalog -- How about a goal of quadrupling participation and quartering annual costs in the next five years? With this charge, MSL would have very clear marching orders.

B. Delivery -- E-delivery needs authentication and federated search, P-delivery needs couriers. Both are necessary; if we users find something, we almost always want it as well.

If A. and B. (above) are our desired outcomes, I'd explore options for repurposing staff positions at MSL. Support, training, and logistics coordination will become increasingly costly activities. What can be farmed out (not from local libraries, but now, from Montana or within Montana) what would free up staff time for high-touch activities?

Who's getting left out of this move to the network? The blind? The poor? The relatively uneducated? Rural libraries? 'Urban' libraries"? First Nation's residents? It seems to me that, while we hurtle forward, if there are those who'd like to be caught-up with the rest of the state, now might be a good time to do so. I think it ironic and sad that, while connectedness improves so many of our lives, for those who are not connected (but who wish to be) the gap, between those with access to progressive library services and those without, continues to grow.

I like Sarah's emphasis on projects and so forth, I just need to understand, better, how fundamental fairness and

Montana libraries' end-users fit, more specifically, into the projects. If this means that I can sit, in Helena, and find, request, and have delivered a wider range of materials, from all over Montana (and the world), then count me in. If this means us library users get an easier to use gateway into the world's library goodies, then, again, yippie! If all this good stuff starts showing up where it's needed, but not yet present, then, good deal. If what we're spending money on de-Balkenizes Montana libraries, and connects Montana library users with the world's libraries' riches, then I think this is exactly what we need to be doing.

Sorry, again, I can't be part of this conversation in person. If NAC meetings continue to be scheduled for times I am away, then perhaps I should step aside for those able to attend.

Regards,

Bruce"