

Summary of Network Advisory Council Discussion Thursday, August 13, 2020

Notes from discussion

What else have we learned as the challenges with COVID19 continue?

- We don't have to do it all at once.
- We should look for low hanging fruit. What can we do to continue to move forward - even if it is small?
- We need to build on our strengths – how can we build on the things that are valuable to our patrons and our libraries?
 - Strength – librarians passion for their communities and for serving their communities.
- We need to acknowledge that we feel the stress of the pandemic. We are suffering and struggling with anxiety as well. We need to recognize the importance of self-care. We may not be able to be at the same level of productivity and innovation.
- How is the world changing? What behavior changes are we seeing with our patrons, our community members, and our stakeholders? What is their level of comfort with using library materials or visiting our libraries during this time? What about our funders and key stakeholders? What are they saying? What are they concerned about during this time?
 - Patrons and others might start using virtual options more often – more Zoom or more telemedicine.
 - Pandemic is heightening some of the lack of civil discourse that we have begun to see in our communities.
 - There is level of exhaustion amongst staff at having to talk about masks. Relationships with patrons are more difficult.
 - People have a lot of anxiety that is leading to mental health issues.
 - We need to be flexible in our resources. Some schools are online; hybrid; or f2f. What will student access look like for our library space and for library resources? How do we make it as easy as possible for students to access our e-books or our e-resources? How do we give them access to the books?
 - Many elementary librarians will be going to the classrooms.
 - Not all libraries have seen patrons asking for more stuff. At the beginning there was a lot of demand for books and dvds.

- People seem to be experiencing digital burnout.
- What are our concerns? What opportunities do we see?
 - We see a bunch of needs in our community. There is the issue of staffing and resources. The biggest challenge is we can't figure out how to safely offer these services.
 - People are dealing with severe poverty issues. There is also civil unrest.
 - Solution: look at the data. What subjects/questions are we seeing? How can we serve those needs?
 - People need help with telemedicine. Solution: we offer telemedicine through our office. People can check out hotspots and go somewhere private to have that talk.
 - Opportunity to try and see if we can create opportunities for civic/civil engagement.
 - Solution: how do we de-escalate situations?
 - Question: what is the relationship between libraries and the police? How do we do this with transformative justice in mind?
 - Worry about the mental health of our staff. See a lot of anxiety.
 - Suicide will probably rise. Solution: referral to mental health specialists.
 - Real problem with information literacy. Solution: people need to know where they can get authoritative information. We need to curate collections/information.
 - We need to provide digital literacy. How do we fit into the needs of teachers and what they are doing?
 - Solution: provide support to teachers by being an embedded librarian within classrooms.
 - Public libraries are thinking about how to support schools. We need to build that relationship with schools.
 - Concern about lack of resources.
 - Libraries aren't more devalued. The pie is getting smaller so libraries receive less.
 - School libraries are concerned about being so devalued that they won't be continued.
 - Political divide created by masks requirement.
 - Our front line staff aren't being paid enough and fit the essential worker persona. They work with 300 people a day and yet aren't being paid for that work.

- Solution: library leaders need to also work the front desk during this time.
 - Opportunity to project a positive attitude during this time of uncertainty
 - Access to the Internet is a challenge
 - Lack of staff due to child care issues and other issues have created an inability to provide all of the services.
 - Opportunity: are there others who have moved to online that give us an opportunity to work together?
 - Concern: lack of staff to partner with others and provide all services.
 - Concern: homeless people have nowhere to go when places close
 - Solution: people may start to notice these problems and do something about it.
- What are the barriers that keep us from doing things – like information literacy?
 - What does that look like? What does success look like? We've done this in the past. Is that effective?
 - What are the best practices? What are our measures of success?
 - Is there interest from patrons? Do we recognize that those who need it most are least likely to want it or seek it?

Library Services – Considering our Services in Analog and Digital Form – NAC

- Programming
 - What does success look like?
 - How do we connect people – even it is online?
 - Building community. Ex. Partnering with a sign language group to teach sign language.
 - We have to focus on the value add and special strengths we offer. We must look at it from a different angle.
 - We also need to make sure that our staff are the ones performing as patrons need to see us.
 - Book discussion groups create opportunities for people to connect with each other.
 - Can we make house calls to help kids along? Provide early literacy and other support services?
 - Children's programming in the park will continue after the pandemic.
 - Virtual story hour will continue.
 - READSquared

- Limit the physical programming; going to have streaming access TV so people can watch at home and participate at the same time.
- Collection development
 - Curate content to highlight resources that are of value to patrons.
 - Digital content is important. Are other libraries transferring money from physical materials to digital materials? Should we shift our funding?
 - Adding Axis360 to collection to increase access to digital content.
- Outreach/community engagement
 - Embedded librarianship
 - Partnerships with schools
 - Attend meetings online which can create other opportunities to connect
 - Helped the fire department take online tests
- Reference/Public service
 - Providing information not advice.
 - Reaching out to stakeholders – like the Court – to talk about messaging and communicating what the law library can and cannot do.
 - Create a packet of information for people that can be sent to answer the question.
 - Gather information for FAQs.
 - We (staff) know how to respond to situations. We have confidence in our right to be seen as informational professionals.
 - Digital reference – some libraries are offering live chat and email with a reference librarian.
 - Old fashioned phone number – also works great.
 - Self-help law centers in public libraries have given people in smaller communities access to legal help.
 - Experimenting with a chat bot.
- Technology – computer/wifi usage, etc.
 - We will need to help teachers with this hybrid/virtual world. At first we will need to help with the technology; then access to resources; and then digital literacy training.
 - People may not have access to the information that we are sharing.
 - How do we get people long-term access to the Internet?
 - Could we go out to people's homes and help them set up devices to help them get access?

- Robust wifi networks are critical. Have to balance needs of neighbors with people being parked outside the library at all hours.
- People still need computers and devices.
- Need for authentication services for e-resources
- Interlibrary loan/sharing materials – how might the REALM study impact the sharing of physical materials?
 - We will continue curbside service after the pandemic.
 - Quarantining has been a real struggle. Just the process and structure of handling our own materials has been hard. We are offering this service, but it is hard.
 - Do we need to quarantine? How much of a vector is this? Is this where transmission happens?
 - How much risk is there? It is our responsibility to keep the public safe.
- Physical spaces
 - How much cleaning our people doing? What does this mean for staffing?
 - How many limit the number of people and the amount of time they can spend in the library?
- Information Literacy
 - We can do this jointly across the board to curate a collection for patrons to help them navigate the world's challenges.
 - How do we encourage national efforts to have information professionals step up and lead the charge?
 - How will libraries be used when physical spaces aren't available?
 - How do we have the confidence to claim our space and to stand up for facts and science?
 - Could we find short, informative, catchy ways to help Montanans fact check, get accurate information, and know who to turn to get answers?
 - Embedded librarianship
 - How can we make it a game? With badges?
 - School house rock example – connect with librarians they know and trust and who are able to connect with each other.
- Administration
 - Seeing the public at the board meetings because of the use of Zoom.
 - We need to help staff who have to work from home and who are caught having to provide childcare. How do we provide services with less staff?
 - Staffing ideas – pods and time in and time out of the building varies.

- How might these changes impact the public library standards?
 - Need to make sure small communities and small libraries aren't kept from being able to offer services because they have to shift to purchasing Zoom, etc. When they might not need it.
 - What is excellent in one library might not be excellent in all libraries.
 - The standards should serve all of the needs of the individuals in that community. There may need to be ladder levels of content or service.
 - We still need basic standards.
 - Standards should not prevent libraries from meeting the needs of their community members.
 - Who is not being served? Do we need to focus on them?

Virtual Librarianship – how can State Library staff support this work? What outcomes do we want from training and other support services?

- Staff have figured out how to do the virtual programming. They have enough experience. We also have bought licenses and taken care of the software piece.
 - Libraries who have smaller staff. Do they need that support?
 - There isn't a need for virtual bootcamp. People have figured this out. We've moved on.
 - Recommendation: check with non-NAC, small librarians to see if they need anything on this. Ask did libraries figure out what they needed to do, or did they know what they needed to do but couldn't?
- Curating content and rolling out programs/collections that promote information literacy and address misinformation.
 - Work at the national level – across all libraries – support this idea. We need to do this at a state level.
- Help those libraries who don't have access to the resources to serve their patrons – all types of libraries – school, public, etc.
 - Access to statewide databases. Schools really need this.
 - Need someone to take the lead and round up the funding for the vendors. This creates cost savings.
 - Recommendation: need the NAC or other's help prioritizing which e-resources we should purchase since money isn't unlimited.
 - Construct a lifelong learning model and look at each age group from birth to pre-k to school age to adult learning. What are their information needs? Consider educational resources, play, and entertainment.

- Identify how much it would cost to serve each of these people and then educate our funders about how much funding we need.
 - Need to include marketing and outreach funding to promote the databases. We need to make sure these services are being used.
 - Recommendation: need to convince OPI to help with this challenge.
- Training, resources, and support for de-escalating situations and gaining confidence in our right to be seen as information professionals.
- Need a map of all of the mental health resources around the state and give it to librarians in order to be able to deal with crisis intervention training.
- How do we help people connect? How can we invite members of the community to come together and meet with each other online? Book discussion groups? Cooking classes?
- How do we provide embedded librarianship to help people navigate the world of information? How can we make this happen? What would that look like?
 - What groups might welcome us or be a natural fit or easier to slip into as an embedded librarian?
- Help identifying the unique and valuable ways that libraries can offer virtual programming.
- Encourage more libraries to sign up for READsquared.
- Need more money for digital content. Would people donate money for this? Maybe we could supplement our budgets with small donations for digital content.
- Need to look at collection budgets and see them holistically. How can we base our budgets on the circulation numbers? Allocating the budget based on digital content and physical content usage.
- Need to figure out the licensing models for digital books.
- Statewide virtual reference? Is it time for this service to return?
- Robust wifi networks – we need to make sure every library has great wifi.
- How can we support Internet connectivity? How can we support statewide efforts to fix this problem? How can we convince funders to support fixing this problem?
 - Need to find and hire a state broadband coordinator.
 - Need to ask telecommunication providers to identify where fiber is located.
 - This is an economic development issue. We want high paying jobs to come to Montana. This is a no brainer.
 - Possible partners: local economic development; USDA; ISPs; medicine; academic; schools; business community; labor department

- Can we find a way for groups/others to pay for or provide internet service in libraries for free?
- How can we locally make changes? Municipal broadband has been successful in other areas. Providers can make a huge difference in their communities.
- Need to have concrete ideas about what we are asking for and need. We need a state broadband plan.
- There is funding for this. We need a plan to address the problem in order to get that funding.

Courier Study – what do we need to know to make wise decisions about this service?

- Questions Cara has – what's working; what's not working; where do we want to expand; what would ideal statewide service look like and how much would that cost; how could we expand; what are our success measures?
- Talk to other statewide couriers
- How can we link up with postal program to reach hard to reach communities?
- Which libraries are interested in joining the courier?
- Who wants the service but can't get the service?
- What about Minitex or other services that more closely mimic our more rural services?
- Let's build this around an ideal model. We could make assumptions about ILL volume. What would it cost to provide this everywhere? What is the gold standard?
 - Needs to be a reliable system.
 - Libraries need to have staff to sort or the courier needs to do this.
- How much would it cost to have our own trucks versus using a commercial option?
- How can we build this in a way that is effective and reduces the friction for patrons and libraries?
- One person needs to manage and find the connections that could allow them to participate.
 - Sorting needs to be part of this solution. The contractor needs to do that.
- How could we partner with other state agencies? Other departments send stuff to every county.
- Consider the entire process – from discovery to return – and look at the entire process to build the gold standard.
- Want to be able to collect item level data – statistics, possible bottlenecks, tracking system, etc.
- Should include all libraries

Fair Library Access Resolution – as communities around the nation grapple with equity and services to minorities, those with different abilities, and others who are underserved, what outcomes do we want to see in Montana? What would equity look like in our organizations and in our services?

- Need to pay our front line workers fairly.
- We need to keep pushing on our stakeholders/funders to support libraries.
- Need funding for courier service. Need to subsidize and need to have different options – recognizing difference between Missoula and Hi-Line
- City of Bozeman is providing training for all staff on this issue. Looking at library specific issues.
- City of Great Falls – talking about EDI; don't have concrete things that we are doing. Are trying to have the staff reflect the community. Intentionally tried to send these out to our partners. Trying to figure out how to have conversations around diversity and inclusion. Offered to be a resource for this.
- Missoula – working together to do police reform and training amongst all employees. From that we are going to plan some changes in library services. Need to know the nitty, gritty of how to reach those groups and make changes. Also heard the theme of hiring a more diverse team.
- Not just how do we better serve; what are we doing about anti-racism? Do we need to have a conversation about this?
- Would the state library spend money differently if we were worried about serving people more equitably?
- There's no middle ground. It's either our staff or patrons with guns. We struggle with transformative justice piece.
- As we deal with patron behavior – how do we contribute to that?
- How do we bring more people of color into the field and MLA?
- MSU – had discussions about it. Have had anti-racist training. TRAILS is looking at some programming. Would be interested in coordinating with MLA or anyone else.
- Should we commit to being anti-racist? We could set up some time to listen and maybe do some outreach to communities of color. How well do your libraries serve you? What are the barriers to serving you? We need to learn more and listen and see what they think.
- How do we effectively engage communities of color? We need to be culturally sensitive.
- Most important skill is listening and patience. Must be willing to live with the discomfort. We must be courageous.

- How would you go about doing that? Meet with Tribal councils and build relationships.
- We should be offering diverse programming in all libraries, inclusive of all cultural backgrounds.
- People need to feel "safe" before they will talk.
- How can we be more kind? And encourage kindness between others?
- Need to understand that there are systemic things that have existed that are keeping POC from using and being a part of libraries.
- Need to help people understand when they are not doing the right thing.
- Create institutions and practices that promote positive change
- We need to help people get out of the place of being judged. We can all do better. We need to not beat ourselves up about getting things wrong. We need to acknowledge and apologize.
- How do we develop partnerships with groups who can help serve the underserved?