

## Notes from the Broad Valleys Federation Meeting

### September 2022 – Virtual (plus two emailed responses)

1. What is the greatest benefit of the federation to you and your library? To your library patrons?
  - a. Networking for feedback, ideas, and comradery was mentioned multiple times.
  - b. Training is regionally specific and self-designed by Federation libraries.
  - c. Passing on what we learn to other staff and customers.
  - d. Directors gain from professional knowledge of others and hearing what's going on around the region.
  - e. The little bit of financial help is a plus.
  - f. "The greatest impact for this Library is the chance for networking at meetings and during conferences. The budgetary implications are minimal for this system, but the chance to hear new ideas and hear from other Federation libraries and the MSL are quite useful."
  - g. "To me, my library, my trustees: Networking and quality time with people near/local to me to share ideas, problems, get to know interests/strengths/specialties/experience to know who to call for help. This is the best and most convenient time to meet with our partner group--to connect, plan, compare notes, and troubleshoot. Trustees coming is VITAL--it is wonderful to meet and talk to them (and I think it benefits them significantly as well). To my patrons: Aside from the funding and the partner group--the projects, service and program ideas (shortcuts that allow us to borrow the wheel rather than invent it), and the deep collaborations (like reciprocal patron agreements and courier project) that move library services to the next level."
2. What is missing for your patrons and/or your library when it comes to the structure of the federation or the services it provides?
  - a. Courier services could be improved - more coordination among sharing groups to maximize use of this service for patrons.
  - b. "The Federation is pretty invisible to our patrons. It may get mentioned during presentations about Library Services, but that is probably rare. I would look forward to tools that would help the Fed be more visible."
  - c. "The ability to be more proactive about sharing and advocating for all Montana libraries--maybe some kind of alliance among the federations so that we shared information, stayed on the same page, and could move more powerfully and effectively together to get things done. I'd also like an easier way to share good stories and pictures as they happen. I've begun an archive that I plan to whip out next year for things like this--it is so hard to make the case when you're on a deadline, sitting in front of a screen, with a word limit, in the middle of summer reading--I'm trying to do better!"
3. What would you change about the current structure or funding of the federation?
  - a. Multiple libraries agreed that they were happy with the existing structure and didn't see a need for change.
  - b. There was a follow-up question about how other Federations operate in Montana and other states and a request for more information on the history of Federations (Vimeo link shared from Commission presentation).

- c. "It works. I wish reporting was less cumbersome, or that reminders were timelier. I always feel behind the eight ball for reporting."
      - d. "I'd like it to be less burdensome for the coordinators (don't know how to do that)."
- 4. The legislative intent listed in the Montana Code Annotated is "It is the policy of the legislature to encourage the most efficient delivery of library services to the people of Montana. To that end the state should be divided into regions within which libraries desiring to participate in the distribution of such state funding to libraries as may be available from time to time shall organize into library federations to pool resources and information and avoid duplication of effort."
  - a. Is this still relevant? Why or why not?
    - i. Still relevant, but as populations grow, Montana may need more Federations to continue to provide exemplary service. It could be useful to divide up the territories further.
    - ii. "Yes--for all the reasons outlined. The trustee factor is unique and though it doesn't always work out that way--trustees have told me that this is much more doable for them (distance, time commitment, program offerings, etc.). On a more general note, I think the more you can build community (especially local community) among directors/trustees the more all Montana libraries benefit. Trust, comradery, generosity, and shared knowledge the stronger foundation you have to create real solutions. We do have annual conferences/events, professional organization, etc. but the federations are unique because they are more intimate and consistent. I find that people tend to have time/space to have real conversations and connect with the larger library community in a more effective way."
  - b. Does the current structure/funding of federations support this intent? Why or why not?
    - i. It would be more effective if more money was involved.
    - ii. Funding from a different source than Coal Severance could help.
    - iii. There was a discussion about increasing State Aid and how that might be a better focus.
    - iv. "I feel like the Federations would be more impactful if there were more dollars at play. The grants are very useful to smaller libraries, but they would be much more valuable if they were larger and more visible."
    - v. "Yes. Not perfectly. I've wondered how to get the trustees more involved (so they can connect with each other, receive good training, especially now with all the upheaval going on across our state and nation). I am alarmed by what is going on and think we need to do everything in our power to shore up our libraries and strengthen our organizations. I guess I'm not sure what the ideas/proposals are for changing them or removing/replacing them so can't comment or compare."