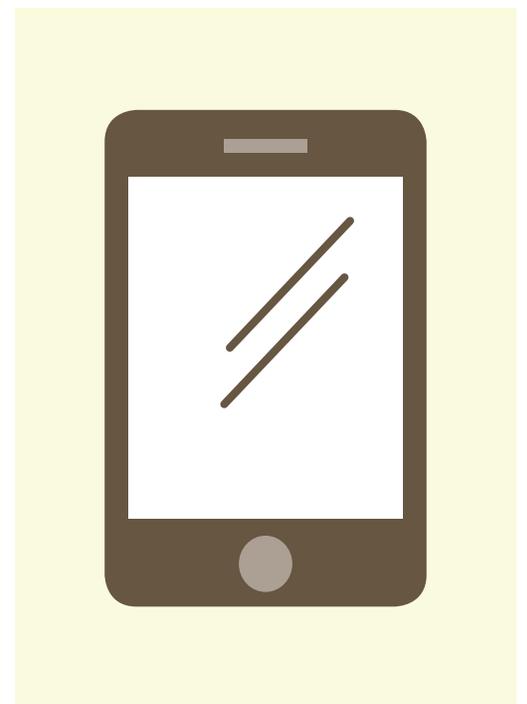
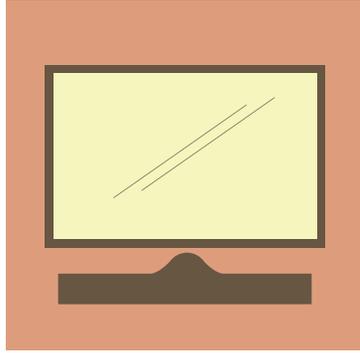


ENGAGING COMMUNITIES



IMLS FOCUS

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Los Angeles Public Library : Los Angeles, California

Compiled and edited by Chrystie Hill, Sharon Streams, Jackie Dooley and Liz Morris, OCLC

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A MESSAGE FROM MAURA MARX, ACTING DIRECTOR

As we prepared for our third and final IMLS focus meeting of 2015, I couldn't have been more pleased that our host, Los Angeles Public Library, was selected to receive the 2015 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. Chosen for their success in meeting the needs of Angelenos by providing a high level of social, educational and cultural services, LAPL was specifically recognized for its programs that help people on their path to citizenship, earn their high school diploma, manage their personal finances, and access health and well-being services and resources. The power of these library services is illustrated by the story of Sergio and Francisca Sanchez:

After moving to the U.S. from Veracruz, Mexico, Sergio and Francisca brought their toddler son to the Los Angeles Public Library for storytime, and continued to bring him for many years. Sergio studied English and history and read the news at the library during his free time. While waiting for his son, Sergio discovered that library staff and services could help him study for and pass the U.S. citizenship test, which he did, while Francisca got library support pursuing her GED. Five months later, Francisca passed the U.S. citizenship test, and Sergio is now pursuing his GED with help from the library. Their son, who is in college, volunteers at the library when he returns home. Sergio says, "When a new family moves into the neighborhood, I tell them the most important place is the library. A place where everyone belongs and is welcome, and where your dream can come true."

As powerful as it is, the Sanchez's story is but one example of the vital role of the library in connecting people to their communities and to essential services. We organized this convening to shine a spotlight on the public and state libraries that, together with their non-library partners and allies, identify the diverse needs of our communities and provide innovative solutions to meet them. IMLS has funded a number of projects related to cross-sector and federal level partnerships; we've worked closely with state libraries that provide much of the infrastructure to make this work possible. We wanted to hear from libraries on the front lines of community service and learn: what are your strategies for assessing and responding to needs? How do you cultivate and strengthen partnerships? How can local projects and programs help inform the rest of the profession? We wanted to hold up and highlight the difference these libraries and their partners make in the lives of users across the country, every day.

It was fitting that John Szabo, City Librarian, welcomed us with a reminder that community engagement is a critical part of any local service offering. This convening gave us the opportunity to showcase inspiring work, engage in focused conversation around community needs, and learn from outstanding practitioners in the field.

Maura Marx
Acting Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services



UNDERSTANDING DIVERSE NEEDS

In June 2015, IMLS convened public, academic and state library innovators, government agency representatives, library associations, social service and allied organizations at Los Angeles Public Library for a day-long forum on engaging communities. Representatives of recent IMLS investments in workforce services and financial literacy, civic engagement and citizenship, needs assessment, early literacy, education, and STEM learning gathered to share their success stories, lessons learned, and suggestions for how to continue to strengthen library-community partnerships. This document summarizes the highlights of the day's conversations and distills promising practices from the discussions that took place. It ends with high-level takeaways around community needs, partnerships, and the profession. A full agenda and participant list from the gathering are included as appendices to this report.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSE NEEDS

The first panel of the day set the stage by underscoring the importance of assessing community needs. The library that is embedded in its community can better connect the dots about what's happening and discern what is needed. The panelists offered examples of



Above: Marlene Zents, University of Montana

matching resources to the greatest local needs and of looking not only outside the library, but also to staff development needs.

What you're doing has incredible importance to the individuals that you're working with every day and to the community that you serve, and to the leaders that you serve...who are working on some of the most important, critical issues for our nation: education, employment, workforce development, health, financial security, quality of life. —Susan Benton, Urban Libraries Council

FINANCIAL LITERACY



Resistance, reluctance, fear...transformed by partnerships + volunteers -- great story from @nypl Money Matters program #imlsfocus
—via Twitter by M.A. Figueroa

The New York Public Library's Science, Industry and Business Library addressed both staff and community needs through its Money Matters program, which provides



Above: Marcia Mardis, School of Information, Florida State University

training to branch library staff and community members on a wide range of financial topics, such as banking, credit and savings, insurance, identity theft, and taxes. Kristin McDonough, director of the library, described how the success of the program hinged on

- training employees to confront their own fears and resistance
- forming strong partnerships with organizations that bring essential knowledge of both the subject matter and the community
- making use of well-qualified and engaged volunteers
- collecting candid assessments about the service and its impact, and making adjustments where needed.

“HYPERLOCAL” DATA

We don't have to do so much with managing the things; we actually get to do the very, very exciting work of building our community.
—Danielle Milam, Las Vegas-Clark County Public Library

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District responded to economic downturn and significant population fluctuation by doing a deep dive into demographic analysis and needs assessment. By layering U.S. Census, market segment, and library cardholder data, a detailed, “hyperlocal” picture of the dynamics of the county emerged. This hyperlocal view allowed the 25-branch system to tailor and prioritize services to meet the greatest needs of each branch’s service area. The library’s data map helped the county system locate hot spots of adult literacy needs, identify the digital divide more clearly, and bring to the forefront those community members who may have been overlooked. The library district also learned that branch



Above: Jennifer Peters, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Right: Susan McVey, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, with Rivkah Sass, Sacramento Public Library

managers address incredible demographic diversity, some with more than 20 different kinds of households. Among other project outcomes, the library was able to

- connect branches with similar segments into a shared community of practice
- reposition the library to get a seat at tables across multiple sectors and become the go-to organization for local data.

VETERANS SERVICES

Libraries don’t always have to conduct their own needs assessments. Jacquie Brinkley of Infopeople described a statewide initiative in California called Veterans Connect @ the Library that responded to a needs assessment conducted by a non-library partner. The important step was recognizing the role of the library in addressing those needs. With California receiving more than 10 percent of the 160,000 newly discharged military service members each year, the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) realized that a significant communication gap existed. In response, the library used its trusted relationship with the community to help get essential financial, health, education and other information and support to veterans. The program positions libraries as safe, confidential spaces with professional staff who are empathetic listeners for male and female veterans of all ages. With guidance from CalVet, the project has also

- developed a suite of resources and programs to support a wide range of veterans’ needs
- established a corps of volunteers (including veterans themselves)
- provided access to computers
- designated a staff point of contact in each library to field questions

Whether studying a specific population, geographic region, or subject area, incorporating a needs assessment can deepen our understanding of communities and strengthen our ability to match the assets or capacities of library organizations to meet those needs. Needs-driven data can also enable sharing and scaling best practices beyond their original settings.



BUILDING CAPACITY WITH PARTNERSHIPS

When a community is characterized by ongoing changes in its demographic profile, the needs that libraries seek to address also change. This makes partnerships essential to delivering the solutions. A thread that was carried throughout the day was: We will not be successful if we hold onto a narrow view of the library's role or how the library can work with others to achieve desired outcomes.



From these panels, I'm hearing partnerships are pivotal to engaging communities
—via Twitter by Madison B

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE ROLE OF STATE LIBRARIES

As immigration reform comes, people are going to come to the library for this information. We're trusted, valued institutions... this is rooted in who we are as libraries. Libraries have been about citizenship and helping people on their path to citizenship for decades. And so, it's totally appropriate for the public library mission...and strategically important, because as people come into our doors for this information, we're able to connect them with all of the other great services that we have. —John Szabo, Los Angeles Public Library

Homa Naficy, Multicultural Services Director at Hartford Public Library, described The American Place, a library program that provides resources on citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL) training and other classes,



Above: MaryKay Dahlgreen, Oregon State Library, with Greg Lucas, California State Library

immigration forms, community information and resource fairs. The library has prioritized civic engagement by focusing on outreach to local schools, faith-based organizations, ethnic organizations, media, restaurants, and other businesses, to reach targeted immigrant communities. The library strives to engage all residents in creating a welcoming environment and forging connections with new neighbors and immigrants.

It's great to host the naturalization ceremony... It's not just the person who is being naturalized, but they bring their entire family, and then they can see the library as a truly welcoming place.
—Rivkah Sass, Sacramento Public Library

In Oklahoma, the state library initiated partnerships with local libraries that planned and implemented their own citizenship programs. This evolved to partnering with literacy councils, which were already connected to the target audience through their ESL programs and could better inform libraries about the literacy and information needs of those seeking citizenship. The resulting library services included resources to help people prepare for the U.S. citizenship test, as well as provide related transportation. The program also included outreach efforts to reach the immigrant community and position the library as a safe, welcoming place that can provide assistance.

I do think that relationship is what it's all about, and having trusted intermediaries who...will speak on behalf of the library... There is a tipping point; once you reach that, and the library is accepted as a safe and supportive environment, then they come to you for practically everything. —Susan McVey, Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Janet McKenney, Director of Development, Maine State Library, also spoke to the eagerness of those not already affiliated with the library to become involved with key initiatives. In the state's work to help libraries serve as science centers by providing children access to science and technology in their own backyards, McKenney didn't expect that science and technology educators in the community would be willing and eager to provide support for the program. In contrast to her expectations, she

found that “Astronomy groups were just dying to present at the library!”

Jamie Markus, Library Development Manager at Wyoming State Library, spoke about the role that state libraries have as connectors for federal partnerships: they are key stakeholders and can serve as informed intermediaries. State libraries can effectively promote the way libraries already serve their communities as well as the work of the partner agencies through libraries. When the Affordable Care Act went into effect, for example, IMLS called on state libraries to support patrons in their health information needs; and state libraries helped local libraries become effective partners by training library staff, creating handouts to give to local patrons, and connecting them to health care navigators.

Remember libraries. We exist in nearly every location. We are everywhere. We have meeting rooms, Internet, and we're available to all ... we are excellent connectors for partnership opportunities.
—Jamie Markus, Wyoming State Library

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS AND EARLY LEARNING

Yolie Flores, Senior Fellow with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, shared one example of a need that cannot be met without the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders: ensuring that children can read by the third grade. Eighty percent of low-income children do not achieve this milestone, and the situation is even more devastating for African-American boys. Left unchecked, this urgent need will undermine our nation's commitment to end intergenerational poverty. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has galvanized 160 communities in 41 states, together with IMLS and many others, to take on this unacceptable reality. No one organization or even sector can solve this problem on its own.

Think about those most vulnerable families. They need you. They are hungry for reaching you.
—Yolie Flores, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Sherri Killins, Director of Systems Alignment and Integration, BUILD Initiative, shared her organization's work to connect librarians and museums to early literacy systems in five states. Libraries are often forgotten during planning and outreach around early learning initiatives, so although time-bound grant projects are useful for specific initiatives, it is more important to establish long-term relationships that will have an impact beyond the life of the project. All stakeholders should ask themselves, “What are our key needs and priorities? What should we work on together?”

Kyle Zimmer, President, First Book, shared how her non-profit organization ensures that local schools and community programs have a steady supply of books for

low-income children up to 18 years of age. First, they aggregated the market of buyers serving low-income children—those most in need. Then they negotiated with the publishing industry to take excess inventory through the First Book network and get ten million “unwanted” books into the hands of people serving low-income kids. The “buyer” pays only shipping and handling costs, which total about 45 cents per book. Through its simple, free, online registration process, First Book guarantees to its publishing partners that they are serving children in need.

Zimmer noted that access to books doesn't solve the whole problem. These kids are hungry: they need access to healthy foods with long shelf life. They don't have appropriate clothing and shelter; they need things as simple as a winter coat. Zimmer shared how central partnerships have been to her organization's success in looking at the whole system of early literacy development for young children. In recent years they've

- joined forces with IMLS and the Obama Administration to get e-books to low-income children
- worked with publishers to establish and incentivize the development of diverse content so that low-income children can see themselves in the stories
- collaborated with early childhood researchers who can support professional development via “tip sheets” for teachers and others who are building literacy for children.

We want to be your lab retriever. “What do you need? We can broker the deal ... we are a millionfold more powerful together over putting detached rescue ropes into these populations. —Kyle Zimmer, First Book



Left: Norine Han, USCIS, with Susan McVey, Oklahoma Dept. of Libraries

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ADULT LEARNING

We cannot do this alone, so we highly rely on partners, especially libraries. Our partnership with libraries is really a requirement to our success.

—Norine Han, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

As the federal agency that oversees lawful immigration to the U.S., the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) raises awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and encourages civic integration and involvement with a person's new community. A partnership between USCIS and IMLS initiated in 2013 supports public libraries through public information and engagement activities. The agency provides library staff training, informational webinars, electronic and print resources, and expertise. In turn, libraries provide feedback to the agency about common questions that they receive from patrons; they also assist with ensuring that patron-facing material is as user-friendly as possible. Norine Han, Citizenship Outreach Specialist with USCIS, invited forum participants and the professional community at large to provide the agency with suggestions for what the USCIS-IMLS partnership should do next, and identify needed improvements in its outreach and educational partnerships with libraries.

Los Angeles was the first city to partner with USCIS, and all 73 branches of the public library have been engaged, initially with Citizenship Corners and USCIS materials. The program swiftly expanded to a variety of events, ceremonies, training and information sessions, and dissemination of materials, which has since led to library partnerships with 22 other local non-profit organizations to work on both citizenship and related issues such as public health.

Adult education needs encompass broader issues as well. Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, noted that even though the Department had reached nearly two million students, many of whom take English classes, the need is still great. A 2013 survey showed that 48 million adults in the U.S. still have low math skills, and 36 million have minimal literacy skills. Partnerships that seek to create collective impact are a key strategy to “stretch resources for reaching a busy adult” with learning opportunities.

In partnership, their work becomes the way you meet your mission. That's the goal. And vice versa. This is the only path to sustainability.

—Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, U.S. Department of Education

Steve Reder, Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University, shared his experiences working

with federal partners on digital literacy initiatives. Through a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant, he worked with a national network of partners in six states and their local partners. In conjunction with locally designed computers labs, his group provided content to develop digital literacy skills. Reder's partnership ultimately trained 800 volunteers and 13,000 adult learners. He noted that using standard metrics, while having the freedom to implement project details to suit local conditions, has been very important to the success of his partnerships.

Collaboration and partnership mean different things to different people. It's very important to know what they mean and to work with them. Position everyone, all the partners, as learners. It's not just the end user that needs to learn in order for this to be successful; especially with the new technologies that are being used. —Steve Reder, Portland State University

Denise Dombek, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, shared information about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act passed in July 2014, which focuses on the evolving nature of the workforce and economic needs in local areas. It aligns workforce, education, and economic development partners for increased, and more flexible, collaboration opportunities. Locally, the One-Stop Career Center (coordinated by the ETA) helps individuals connect to the local labor market. The library system is now an eligible provider for training and could also be a One-Stop partner.

Discussion surfaced the question of whether partnerships are getting easier or more complex as we look at them from the local level all the way up to national. Panelists agreed that it's important to choose partnerships wisely in order to be able to go the distance and meet long-term goals. In this context they advised libraries to limit the number of short-term projects that they take on.

Panelists also acknowledged the opportunities and the tensions that can be factors in partnerships at any level. Federal agency representatives urged libraries to actively partner to support federal initiatives, while library representatives urged federal agencies to “remember the library!” The will to partner was evident from all sides, but successful partnerships require understanding the landscape of available partners, getting to know them, choosing wisely, and being deliberate in how we will engage together.



Above: Miguel Figueroa, ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries

THE COMMUNICATIONS IMPERATIVE

While the centrality of partnerships was clear, communicating effectively to that end was discussed as a particular challenge.

I think sometimes we're our own worst enemies. Truly the number one barrier [to effective partnerships] is ourselves...We don't always think of ourselves as being relevant to solving a community problem or an issue.

—Rivkah Sass, Sacramento Public Library

Renee Hill, Assistant Professor of Practice at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, told a story from early in her professional career, of a school librarian who blocked a class of 15 students with disabilities from coming to the library. She held up this example to illustrate the importance of asking, "Who is using our library, and who wants to use the

library?" Becoming educated about those marginalized communities, and learning how to welcome them into the library is essential. Project ENABLE, which is designed to help educators and library staff connect with and meet the needs of patrons with disabilities, is an example of this mindset.

It's not an obligation to serve; it's our privilege. If we think about it this way, we'll be more innovative.

—Renee Hill, Syracuse University

Rivkah Sass, Director of the Sacramento Public Library, gave a rallying cry for library staff to confront their own mindset first, especially around the assumptions that libraries lack a connection to community issues. By becoming firm in our belief that libraries can be community leaders, we become primed to pay attention to community needs and talk about what the library can offer to address them. Sass attends Chamber

CELEBRATING THE ADA

July 26, 2015, marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. The ADA addresses the reasonable accommodations and accessibility requirements that employers and public entities must implement to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities, jobs, and services as everyone else does. The numbers speak to the need:

- an estimated 43 million people currently have a disability, and this figure is growing
- by 2030 there will be 75 million people over the age of 65 projected to have disabilities.

Lisa Wadors Verne, Educational Program Manager at Benetech, pointed out that 57 percent of accommodations can be made at no cost; institutions are not required to provide accommodations that are significantly expensive or difficult. But in addition to making physical spaces and structures ADA-compliant, changes in mindset and communication are still needed. Many devices now incorporate features—such as volume control, magnification, audio books—that all users can benefit from, not just people with disabilities. More information is



Above: Robert Karatsu, California Library Association; Marcia Mardis, Florida State University; Julie Walker, Georgia Public Library Service; Michelle Perera, Rancho Cucamonga Library

of Commerce civic engagement committee meetings every month; and while people at first asked why she was there, they now call on the library for various needs. Sass helps connect the business community with city and state initiatives, which reinforces the library's "brand" as being knowledgeable and informed.

Jennifer Peters, in her role as Community Engagement Administrator for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, also stressed that community engagement is less about what you do, and more about a mindset and intention. Having moved from the non-profit sector, Peters had observed that libraries were not at the table on critical issues such as education and workforce. She attends non-library literacy events, non-profit meetings, and workforce meetings to add a library presence. To aid communication, the state library has developed more heightened awareness of its use of library jargon and tries instead to adopt the vocabulary that other sectors use when doing outreach. She also cautioned libraries to think strategically and prioritize our messaging so that we do not overwhelm people with our "all things to all people" tendency. She suggested having a strategic communications plan to identify key stakeholders to really focus in on in Year 1, Year 2, etc., rather than "just throwing out everything and seeing what sticks." This focused communication strategy extends to all

their externally focused messaging, including the library website.

[P]art of what the community engagement initiatives can do is help raise our profile so that when these kind of groups are coming together, it's just automatically assumed that libraries should be at the table; and I think sometimes that's something that we struggle with as a profession.
—Jennifer Peters, Texas State Library and Archives Commission



QOTD @GregLucas20 "too many public library websites look like ransom notes" #imlsfocus
—via Twitter by Andrew Pace



Center: Sarah Rosenblum, Marshalltown Public Library, and Maria Carpenter, Santa Monica Public Library

Bottom: Renee Hill, Syracuse University, with Marcia Mardis, Florida State University

necessary to inform purchasing decisions, however; and it is important that it becomes easier and less expensive to offer accessible content. Through her work with publishers on the Born Accessible Initiative, Verne strives to build accessibility into published content at the outset.

It's about 800 times more expensive to convert digital file back into an accessible digital file. If you can create those things in advance, then we won't have to do any retrofitting. —Lisa Wadors Verne, Benetech

Participants agreed that the library community needs to bring its services to people with disabilities to the forefront, so that libraries can learn from each other and build a shared investment in the outcomes.

Now we realize it's everyone's responsibility and it's everyone's task to serve these patrons, and to serve them well, and to make sure they get to the services they need.
—Julie Walker, Georgia Public Library Service

I find that librarians who come to me do not have that working knowledge in their formal training. The 2010 Census says that one in five people have a disability, and that is a huge number of people who do not always have inclusive, equitable access to library information and activities...So there is a need to understand disabilities; there's a need to understand the ever-evolving assistive technologies.
—Marlene Zentz, Univ. of Montana

REASSESSING FOR SUCCESS

Robert Karatsu, President of the California Library Association, framed the discussion around evaluation and sustainability by describing a situation he often encountered with grant applicants. While many might have a firm grasp of needs, partnerships and even outcomes, sustainability would often trip them up.

A good evaluation and good ongoing dialogue with your evaluator is a way that you can keep the faith in your idea.

—Marcia Mardis, Florida State University

Marcia Mardis, a professor in the School of Information at Florida State University, discussed the evaluation and sustainability aspects of her Web2MARC project, which automates the creation of catalog records for web resources. The tool garnered an early fan base from around the world, which obligates her to find a sustainable path for it. Through participation in a funding incubator program, she's had the opportunity to truly grapple with market needs, and questions about whether or not to take the tool commercial.

We really need to prove to them that something is going to be effective before we ask every library in the state to participate ... —Julie Walker, Georgia Public Library Service

Julie Walker, State Librarian, Georgia Public Library Service, shared that her state library has a reputation for “leaping in,” but in reality they put a lot of thought into scale and sustainability at the outset of projects. In developing their statewide integrated library system (Georgia PINES), the state completed a thorough environmental scan on whether to “buy or build.” They couldn't identify any product that would work off the shelf, and so they embarked on an open-source development project. This required a huge amount of time to build the support to sustain the project, as their parent agency was skeptical of open-source at that time. The project managers had to be transparent, thorough and communicate frequently. To obtain buy-in, they had to show how the system would benefit constituents. They organized focus groups with member libraries and involved them in development of the specifications. Now Georgia PINES goes well beyond the library community

in Georgia, serving the U.S. through what is now known as Evergreen.

Walker also shared that it's important to know when to stop pursuing a project, as was the case for another Georgia endeavor. Attempting to obtain buy-in as the recession began to hit would not have been prudent, so they put it on hold until a later time.

Michelle Perera, Director of the Rancho Cucamonga Library, discussed the development of their “Play and Learn Islands,” which are now trademarked. Starting with a needs assessment, they planned to make the extra space on the second floor of their library a place for kids to interact and learn through play. Even though the economy crashed and the original plan was no longer feasible, they realized they could still do something with the assessment data. The result was the “Play and Learn Islands.” The concept was first piloted in local libraries and proved popular and intuitive to kids. Once the library realized that the concept was a hit, they wondered whether it might work in other environments. Several types of play islands were created and California libraries could check them out. Perera and her team learned quickly that the libraries didn't want to give them back, and finally created a plan to sell them.

Now they earn money, and this allows them to sustain the project. But money is not the hardest thing to find. They spend time training staff on how to pitch ideas and go after their own grant funding. Perera emphasized that staff development and engagement are key to the sustainability of library programs.

This is a tough period we're all living through. Major institutions that we thought were bullet proof, that we hoped were bullet proof, like the courts, and law enforcement, are showing vulnerabilities and failures. Our currency is controlled by six guys in a private chat room. With significant disillusionment going on, libraries are standing in complete, stark contrast to those failures.

—Kyle Zimmer, First Book

TAKEAWAYS

The day's rich discussion offered these high-level takeaways, which are framed as responses to the questions Acting Director Maura Marx posed at the outset of the convening:

What are your strategies for assessing and responding to needs?

- Conduct needs assessments that look both within and outside the library, to identify the needs of both your community and your staff members.
- Identify and convene a variety of stakeholders and regular users from whom to collect candid assessments and feedback about library services and impacts, and to learn how you can work together toward common goals.
- To learn more about your local population, do environmental scans and demographic analyses; or make use of pre-existing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, market-based studies, and other sources.
- Partner with literacy councils to become better informed about literacy and information needs in your community.
- Collaborate with federal agencies, state organizations, professional associations, and non-library partners who can help you identify the needs of different groups and develop strategies for addressing those needs.
- Familiarize yourself with the landscape of available partners so you can be deliberate about how you engage with them to strategize around assessing and responding to needs.
- Become educated about marginalized communities in particular, and understand your staff's pre-existing mindsets and assumptions about those communities.
- Don't just gather assessment data, do something with it!

How do you cultivate and strengthen partnerships?

- Keep a broad view of your library's scope and what kind of changes in the community demographic will shape their needs.
- Do research: get advice and information about prospective partners to assure you have similar or complementary long-term goals.
- Cultivate long-term relationships that will have an

impact beyond the life of one specific project.

- Look to local organizations that are already trusted and used by your target communities.
- Turn to federal agencies as a helpful source of information about important laws and regulations.
- State libraries can play a key role as connectors and intermediaries to partners.
- Be aware of capacity: limit the number of short-term projects you pursue.
- Consistently monitor the health and success of a partnership by using standard metrics.
- Having the freedom to implement changes to project details to suit local conditions is important to success.

How can local projects and programs help inform the rest of the profession?

- The most pressing community needs often point to library professional development needs.
- A deep understanding of community needs can reposition the library and open new doors.
- Needs-driven data can help to scale best practices beyond their original settings.
- Libraries have a reputation as trusted institutions and should choose their partnerships with care.
- Long-term, systems-based approaches are often the most appropriate for deep-seated needs.
- An internal mindset that limits the library's perceived role in the community may be its biggest barrier.
- Messaging that offers the library to be all things to all people can actually overwhelm our users.
- True market needs are complex, but understanding them better would benefit libraries greatly.
- It's crucial to address project sustainability at the outset, but also to know when to let a project go.
- Not money, but staff development and engagement are the key to library program sustainability.

Readers can view each panel and discussion session of the IMLS focus meeting on engaging communities at www.imls.gov/news/imls_focus.aspx; you can also follow or join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #IMLSfocus.

APPENDIX A

Tuesday June 2, 2015

Forum Agenda

9:00 – 9:30

Welcome and Framing the Day

- Speaker: John Szabo, City Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library @LAPublicLibrary
- Introduced by: Maura Marx, Acting Director, IMLS @mauramarx / @US_IMLS

9:30 – 10:30

Assessing the Needs of Our Communities

- Moderator: Susan Benton, President and CEO, Urban Libraries Council @ULCSusanBenton / @UrbanLibCouncil
- Panelists:
 - Jacque Brinkley, Library Consultant, Infopeople @infotweets
 - Danielle Milam, Development Director, Las Vegas-Clark County Library District and Foundation @talismwoman7
 - Kristin McDonough, Director, Science, Industry, and Business Library, The New York Public Library @NYPL_SIBL

10:30 – 10:45

Break

10:45 – 11:30

Building Capacity with Programs and Partnerships

- Moderator: Norine Han, Citizenship Outreach Specialist, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services @USCIS
- Panelists:
 - John Szabo, City Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library @LAPublicLibrary
 - Susan McVey, Director, Oklahoma Department of Libraries @ODLtweet
 - Homa Naficy, Multicultural Services Director, Hartford Public Library @HPLCT

11:30 – 12:00

Celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Speakers: Michele Farrell, Senior Program Officer, IMLS @US_IMLS
Lisa Wadors Verne, Educational Program Manager, Benetech @Benetech

12:00 – 1:00

Working Lunch

1:00 – 1:45

Leveraging Partnerships, Part 1: Cross Sector

- Moderator: Yolie Flores, Senior Fellow, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading @itsyolie / @readingby3rd
- Panelists:
 - Sherri Killins, Director of Systems Alignment and Integration, BUILD Initiative @BUILDInitiative
 - Janet McKenney, Director of Development, Maine State Library @MaineStLibrary
 - Kyle Zimmer, President, First Book @KyleFirstBook / @FirstBook

1:45 – 2:30

Leveraging Partnerships, Part 2: Federal

- Moderator: Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Team Leader, Applied Innovation and Improvement, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education @LINCS_ED
- Panelists:
 - Steve Reder, Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University @Portland_State
 - Jamie Markus, Library Development Manager, Wyoming State Library @WyoLibraries

Denise Dombek, Division Chief, Division of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration,
Region 6 – San Francisco, U.S. Department of Labor @USDOL

2:30 – 2:45

Break

2:45 – 3:30

Communicating With and Beyond Our Communities

- Moderator: Greg Lucas, State Librarian, California State Library @CAStateLibrary
- Panelists
 - Renee F. Hill, Assistant Professor of Practice, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University @iSchoolSU
 - Rivkah Sass, Director, Sacramento Public Library @Rivkah / @saclib
 - Jennifer Peters, Community Engagement Administrator, Texas State Library and Archives Commission @JenniferBPeters / @TSLAC

3:30 – 4:15

Reassessing for Success: Evaluation and Sustainability

- Moderator: Robert Karatsu, President, California Library Association @RKaratsu / @CalLibAssoc
- Panelists
 - Marcia Mardis, Associate Professor, School of Information, Florida State University @FSUlibIT
 - Michelle Perera, Director, Rancho Cucamonga Library @CityOfRC
 - Julie Walker, State Librarian, Georgia Public Library Service @georgialibs

4:15 – 4:45

Closing Remarks

- Speaker: Robin Dale, Associate Deputy Director, IMLS @rldale / @US_IMLS

APPENDIX B

Attendee List IMLS Focus Forum on Engaging Communities

BRIAN ALBRITON, Braille Institute Library Services
SUSAN BENTON, Urban Libraries Council
MADISON BOLLS, Institute of Museum and Library Services
JACQUIE BRINKLEY, Infopeople
MARIA CARPENTER, Santa Monica Public Library
JOAN CLARK, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records
DUBIS CORREAL, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
MARYKAY DAHLGREEN, Oregon State Library
ROBIN DALE, Institute of Museum and Library Services
DAPHNE DELEON, Nevada State Library and Archives
TERI DEVOE, Institute of Museum and Library Services
DENISE DOMBEK, U.S. Department of Labor
MICHELE FARRELL, Institute of Museum and Library Services
MIGUEL FIGUEROA, Center for the Future of Libraries, ALA
YOLIE FLORES, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
EDITH GAVINO, Braille Institute Library Services
NORINE HAN, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
KATHY HARRIS, Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University
CHRYSTIE HILL, OCLC
RENEE HILL, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
LEANNE JENKINS, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Library
IVAN JOHNSON, Braille Institute Library Services
ROBERT KARATSU, California Library Association
SHERRI KILLINS, BUILD Initiative
MICHELLE LIGHT, UNLV University Libraries
JAMES LONERGAN, Institute of Museum and Library Services
GREG LUCAS, California State Library
PAULA MACKINNON, Califa Group
MARCIA MARDIS, School of Information, Florida State University
JAMIE MARKUS, Wyoming State Library
MAURA MARX, Institute of Museum and Library Services
KRISTIN MCDONOUGH, Science, Industry, and Business Library, New York Public Library
JANET MCKENNEY, Maine State Library
SUSAN MCVEY, Oklahoma Department of Libraries
DANIELLE MILAM, Las Vegas-Clark County Public Library
KATIE MURRAY, Institute of Museum and Library Services

HOMA NACIFY, Hartford Public Library
ANDREW PACE, OCLC
MICHELLE PERERA, Rancho Cucamonga Library
JENNIFER PETERS, Texas State Library and Archives Commission
STEVE REDER, Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University
JUDY RENO, College Depot at Phoenix Public Library
KATHY ROBINS, Billings Public Library
SARAH ROSENBLUM, Marshalltown Public Library
RIVKAH SASS, Sacramento Public Library
HEIDI SILVER-PACUILLA, U.S. Department of Education
SHARON STREAMS, OCLC
MAUREEN SULLIVAN, Maureen Sullivan Associates
JOHN SZABO, Los Angeles Public Library
SANDRA TORO, Institute of Museum and Library Services
LISA WADORS VERNE, Benetech
JULIE WALKER, Georgia Public Library Service
MARLENE ZENTZ, University of Montana
KYLE ZIMMER, First Book



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