

PLA REPORT

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I appreciated the opportunity to attend the Public Library Association (PLA) Conference from March 21-24 in Philadelphia. My time at the conference allowed me the opportunity to re-energize and re-establish my commitment to Kansas City, Kansas Public Library's vision, mission, patrons, and staff.

I attended several great sessions, met other professionals, and spoke with current and potential vendors while at the conference. The following are some of the top highlights and takeaways for me from this conference.

Vendor Meetings

I met with our vendor contacts at Baker+Taylor, Capira, Ebsco, Hoopla (Midwest Tapes), Kanopy, NewsBank and Tutor.com. This allowed me the opportunity to hear about updates and potential other services of interest for KCKPL. These are some of the highlights from the vendor meetings.

- NewsBank has made recent updates with its databases, which focus on archival and current newspapers and newspaper articles. We were able to discuss the concept of getting additional image editions of newspapers, which we currently get with the *Kansas City Star*. This is a popular service and we asked NewsBank to explore this option with newspapers from around the world for our immigrant and new citizens' population.
- Kanopy is rolling out a Kids edition of its streaming movie service. Additionally, I was able to find out the status of the service's ability to offer Criterion Collection movies. Kanopy and Janus Films (owner of the Criterion Collection) recently signed a five-year agreement.

Key-Note Speakers

I attended three keynote speakers and one special lunch while at PLA. Keynote speakers I attended included:

- **Sally Yates** who spoke about courage and her 10 days as Acting Attorney General before being dismissed for insubordination by President Trump.
- **Author Daniel Pink** who discussed his latest book *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*. Through this I solidified that I am a morning person.
- **Tim Wu** who is known for coining the phrase "net neutrality" and discussed web connectivity issues and the ramifications of the FCC's decision to pull the plug on net neutrality.
- **Comedian Hasan Minhaj** who spoke about race relations and immigration.

Sessions

I attended six sessions during my time at conference. I found takeaways from all of them. These are the sessions attended along with their descriptions.

- **Community as Collaborator** - Participatory experiences in the library – those that put the user in charge of their learning – are an exciting way to create meaningful connections for the community. Learn strategies to facilitate and scale programs and spaces for your patrons no matter your library's size by leveraging trends to inspire your community to take ownership of library experiences.
- **Public Libraries as Partners in the Open Data Movement** - Public libraries are natural partners for local governments looking to facilitate access to information and promote transparency. Chapel Hill (NC) Open Data, managed by CHPL, launched in 2016 and continues to grow. This lively panel includes Chapel Hill's Town Manager, Library Director, and the Project Manager. They will offer both high level perspectives on why libraries are well-suited for open data as well as practical guidance for libraries and localities considering this service.
- **Building Meaningful Relationships through Community Engagement** - Community engagement is the art of connecting local resources with the residents they serve. Librarians for community engagement are always on the move, working with local institutions and learning about the needs of their community members. In this interactive session, the presenters will share insights from their work developing successful partnerships outside the library. Participants will have the opportunity to share their own successes and brainstorm ways to do the same for their own communities.
- **Agile Goes to the Library** – Just days after attending their first Agile training session, management at the Whistler (BC) Public Library introduced some simple but game-changing concepts to staff: stop starting, start finishing; eliminate work in progress; make work visible. The results were remarkable, from saving time in every day processes, to managing projects such as website redesign, and ultimately, moving towards a flexible and accountable culture. Hear our story, learn the basics, begin your journey as an Agile library!
- **Transforming Digital Learning at Calgary Public Library** – Traditional computer classes are not designed to keep up with a world of constant technological change. Instead, libraries must help patrons develop the fundamental skills to successfully navigate a vast and changing array of devices and software. At Calgary Public Library, that means an ongoing transformation of our approach to technology programming, and ultimately answering one important question: can you teach adults a whole new way to think?
- **Developing a Data-Driven Staff Training Program** – Phoenix (AZ) Public Library has implemented a comprehensive training program to help staff develop the competence, confidence, and resilience needed to successfully assist customers with mobile devices and eMedia resources. Learn about the 5 step process we used to identify the necessary competencies, gather benchmark data, deliver training, and measure training outcomes to create a Digitally Fluent culture. You will leave with all the tools you need to enhance your library's level of Digital Fluency.
- **Hire for Fit: Best Practices for Hiring to Your Culture** – Does your library have a unique culture that attracts a certain kind of talent? Want to increase your success at hiring and keeping stars for your team? Want to know what rules to break, what data points to track, what question to always ask and what to do with red flags and green flags? Want to compare questions and techniques with libraries with 3 very different cultures? Join us!

Implementation of Takeaways

At this time, I have implemented elements I learned about from the **Agile Goes to the Library** with my team at KCKPL. We took a window in our office space and used it to establish a project board. We use post-it notes to track a project through stages:

- To Do
- In Process
- Completed
- Icebox (future project)
- Emergency (high priority and unscheduled)



It's a sorting system for us to help with balance and prioritizing our work to see projects through and get more work done. It eliminates multi-tasking, which usually does not work.

I also attended one evening of the Spark Talks, which are several five-minute long presentations. One of them focused on how to better acquaint staff with the various databases we have. This is seems like a doable project for us and I am working with our eContent Librarian Samantha DuPree to implement a similar program.

As we move forward, I am working to share information with my team and others from the conference by pulling together notes and materials and distributing them.

Enhancing Relationships

The conference allowed me the chance to spend time with colleagues from KCKPL in a different setting. I liked this opportunity. A few of them I did not know well and having a better sense of them helps build and improve working relationships. I enjoyed my opportunities to socialize with colleagues over a meal and/or through small sightseeing trips as well. While getting to the conference was tricky because of weather-related issues, we made it back home with a small team building activity made up of traversing trains and planes.

I enjoyed my time at the PLA Conference and took home a lot with me. I appreciated the opportunity.

PLA 2018 Report

Prepared by Meggan Shoberg

Submitted 03/29/2018

While travels and weather caused a ruckus on arriving to Philadelphia, the rest of the trip and conference were most pleasant. I kicked off by attending Imagine the Possibilities with Kari Chapin. It was an amazing way to start conference, discussing the proactive actions one can take to foster a productive day, week, or month. It set the precedent to plan, organize, and reflect on our time at Conference.

The outstanding Sally Yates followed. Her courage to do the right thing, and stand up to pressure on the Travel Bans was inspiring, to say the least. With so many of our patrons in the area fleeing from countries of heavy persecution, a topic hit close to home. Her speech led me to adjust my session schedule to include immigration topics. I am looking forward to increasing our efforts to reach the immigration population and learn how to better our services.

The Exhibit Hall opened shortly after. I ended up needing to visit over the stretch of the Conference in order to reach all the vendors I was interested in speaking with. I spoke with vendors regarding furniture, services, technology, and outreach ideas. There were some great booths that I gathered information from to send out to other staff in the system, including a product called The Magic Box!

Thursday was a jam-packed day of sessions, lunches, dinners and vendor events. I attended the following sessions:

- Big Ideas with Elizabeth Gilbert
- Providing Immigration Services in Public Libraries: Making it Possible is Not Impossible
- Thursday Author Lunch with Daniel Pink
- What Having a WIC Center in Your Library Brings (Besides Crying Babies)
- Building Meaningful Relationships Through Community Engagement

I grabbed amazing information on training staff to help start the immigration process at the library through DOJ resources. During lunch, I learned I am very much an Owl (and not a Lark), and how that can translate into peaks and flows of productivity. While our library is not likely to add a WIC center, there were great takeaways on how we can service this demographic. Partnering with community investors is always a high priority for libraries, so seeing how other libraries make these connections was extremely helpful.

Following sessions on Thursday, I attended an event with Hoopla and Midwest Tapes. It was great to meet our regional providers, and speak with other libraries about the great service Hoopla provides our patrons.

Friday was another full day, starting bright and early with a breakfast provided by Capira. It was nice to speak with other libraries utilizing Capira technologies, and sharing some of our innovative ideas. The sessions I attended on Friday were:

- Big Ideas with Steve Pemberton
- The Path to U.S. Citizenship Can Start at Public Libraries
- Exhibits Closing reception
- Turning Common Heritage into Common History: Preserving Local African American History
- Utilizing Project Outcome and Dashboard Software to Facilitate Data-Driven Programming
- Spark Talks II
- All Conference Reception

I was able to expand on the information from Thursday on providing services for immigrant populations in my first session. The project for collection local African American history was inspiring, and I will be passing this along to Anne Lacey in our Kansas Room. Using Project Outcome and dashboard software gave me a way to calculate the cost/benefit of library programs. The Spark Talks were easily the funniest session I attended. They were compiled of quick 5-minute rounds where librarians present on various topics they are passionate about. Topics ranged from Understanding Non-Binary, to medical websites, to how YS Librarians are the cockroaches of libraries.

Saturday, the last day of the conference, hosted a couple sessions (Creating a Continuum of Customer Experiences and Using Personae to Simplify Your Multicultural Outreach Strategies) and a fabulous closing event with Comedian Hasan Minhaj. The comedic twist to an otherwise serious week was the perfect ending we all needed to face our travel back home.

It was an amazing experience to share with my own staff member, as well as my peers. On top of the informative and inspiring sessions, I was able to have candid and enlightening conversations with my peers that I truly believe will lead to positive change throughout the entire library. The immersion in creativity, innovation and passion reinvigorated me to come back and prioritize my life at work. I will be taking the things I have learned at conference and applying them both immediately and in the future.

PLA Conference 2018

Rachel Miller

Take Summer Reading to the Streets: Partnering to Reach Children with Barriers to Library Access

What was shared: Staff from Cedar Rapids Public Library shared how they have increased outreach efforts within their community during their Summer Reading Program, which they call Summer Dare. They began by partnering with the YMCA who held summer camps at two locations within their community, and last year expanded to more sites in community centers within Section 8 housing. They utilized four volunteers, all of whom were retired teachers, to visit the centers once a week bringing books and crafts with them.

They would provide 50 books to each site per week. The books had bookmarks placed inside them and when a child would “check out” a book, they would write their name on the bookmark and place it in a basket. When the book was returned, the bookmark went back in. This allowed staff to keep track of how many times each book was read and informed them on what was popular so they could provide more of the same in the next set of books. They also left a sheet at each site where the children could ask directly for books on a certain subject.

The crafts were the same crafts that were being used in programs at the library. Library staff had considered cutting the crafts this coming summer, but feedback from the sites led them to change their minds. The sites said that the crafts were invaluable to them, and the kids needed that time to make something on their own.

They offered a few tips for how to find the kids who can't come to you, including looking into Section 8 housing, using community data and doing poverty mapping. They also suggested that before you take books to sites, everyone needs to be aware of how you will handle lost books. They decided that they did not care about lost items because “worst case they are going home with kids who need them.” In the end, they circulated 1,000 books and only lost three. They also surveyed the kids and saw that the kids were more likely to visit the library and use library services at the end of the program.

How I plan to apply it: At South, we currently do outreach to summer camps at our community centers during the summer. I have not been able to visit them weekly, however, and I'm going to look into finding volunteers as a possibility to help me scale my outreach efforts. I've also never taken a tub of books with me, but know that at least one of my sites has a “Reading Corner” that is frequently short on books, so it seems like a perfect solution! I'm also going to take their tips on finding more sites to locate more potential partners for this summer. I'll be presenting on what I've learned at an upcoming Summer Reading Committee meeting and hope to get all branches on board with doing more outreach this summer.

ECRR Taking Early Literacy Messages to WIC Centers

What was shared: Marisa Conner of Baltimore County Public Library spoke about how her staff visits all WIC centers in Baltimore County monthly to engage with families in the waiting areas before their appointments. They provide families with a bag of early literacy resources as well as a free book. They are also able to create a library card for the family on site. They also offer impromptu storytimes in the waiting area and are able to model the principles behind Every Child Ready to Read for the parents.

Staff initiate each interaction by offering the children a book, and each child is able to choose their own book. Through the partnership with WIC, they've seen a number of new families become library users and staff has found the personal interaction they have with the families very effective. They've also been able to put up posters advertising the library in the WIC waiting rooms, and have even installed a small early literacy center in one of the offices, with plans to expand.

Marisa did say that individual WIC directors were initially resistant to the idea, but she went up the chain of command to find someone who would say yes. The biggest roadblock was that the WIC offices wanted to make sure the visits would not be disruptive, meaning that when a family is called back for their appointment, library staff has to immediately cut off what they are doing. They found funding for the program through a state grant, their foundation, individual donors, and the Molina Foundation.

How I plan to apply it: The YS Supervisors had already been discussing ideas for a similar program. Wyandotte County only has one WIC office, which might make it easier to get started. We will be reaching out to them in the coming weeks to see if they would be open to a partnership and we will begin looking into funding sources. We've already discussed creating materials and printing in house, but will need bags and books.

Project Outcome in Practice: Using Outcome Data to Measure and Improve Impact

What was shared: The presenters spoke about how they have used Project Outcome, a free tool designed to help libraries measure performance, within their libraries. Some of the reasons shared for why the tool was valuable to them included: they've used it to provide quotes for reports, found out what patrons enjoyed about a program and what they felt wasn't working and they've used the data from their surveys in order to win grants. They offered a number of tips on how to get patrons to fill out the surveys, including marketing on social media, links on the summer reading page, and bribing participants with library dollars.

How I plan to apply it: I heard from a number of presenters throughout the conference about what a great resource Project Outcome was. I'm planning on using it to analyze our Summer Reading Program this year and will also be using it to analyze my regular storytimes. I also got some wonderful ideas for programs from the presentation that I will be looking into implementing.

How to Adult: Teaching Life Skills to Teens

What was shared: Librarians from the San Mateo County Libraries and the County of Los Angeles Public Library spoke about a series of programs they have started at their libraries based on preparing teens for adulthood. At the beginning of the project, they surveyed 200 teens and found that none of them felt ready for adulthood. Each of the libraries went about it differently, some wrote grants for funding while others got started with virtually no budget.

They have taught classes on a variety of topics including: career skills, money management, study skills and time management, public speaking, etiquette, media literacy and internet safety, healthy cooking on a budget, self-defense, first aid and mental health, stress management, basic car maintenance, moving out, college and college alternatives, and much more. They had participants complete pre and post program surveys and found that teens showed 100% growth towards feeling more prepared to tackle the subject at hand.

The presenters walked us through a few of the programs they were able to present with no budget then talked to us about how to get started. One of the most important tips they gave was to find partners to present on the topics like county and city government departments, local businesses, credit unions, etc. They also talked about common problems they ran into.

How I plan to apply it: I loved this idea. I've spoken many times about how many of our teen patrons seem to be lacking certain skills, it would be wonderful to try to guide them. I'm planning on finding partners to start my own series of programs this fall and will be speaking with the YS Supervisors at other branches to see if they are interested as well so that we can work together to develop a set of programs that will be valuable to our teen patrons.

Coach Your Team to Greatness

What was shared: Staff from the Anoka County Library shared how they use a coaching management style at their library and how it was a change from previously doing only annual reviews. They described their method: collaboration, asking open-ended questions, delving deeper into goals, and checking in regularly. Staff are encouraged to set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, and timely, and staff and managers discuss the goals using the GROW method of goals, realities, options and will. Managers have less formal check-ins with staff monthly and a longer sit-down once a quarter, but they also have meetings immediately if a problem arises. Managers write a paragraph after each session.

How I plan to apply it: I've always considered my style of management as a "coaching" method, so I was excited to see how this played out at other libraries. It has inspired me to have a more formal schedule of feedback with my staff and also to help them form more meaningful goals.

Using Fandom to Build STEAM, Summer Camps, and Youth and Community Engagement

What was shared: Staff from Salt Lake City libraries presented on how they've used Harry Potter to provide popular programming for teens. Their two large programs are an annual Yule Ball and O.W.L. Summer Day Camps which mimic the classes from the series. They recommended starting with a fandom popular amongst your patrons as a way to hook participants, then using that to build a program that includes social, emotional and educational learning. They like to use fandom to bring patrons into STEAM programs, since they think the term STEAM can be intimidating. They also include *varying levels* of self-directed learning based on age group. At the end they survey teen participants and also email surveys to parents, then use Project Outcome to analyze results.

How I plan to apply it: Many nationally popular fandoms are not as popular at my branch, but I'm planning to see what we can do with the fandoms that are popular. I am also considering rebranding our STEAM programs to make them more accessible to patrons and will be attempting to include more social/emotional learning as well as more self-directed learning.

ECRR New Books Recommended for ECRR's Five Practices

What was shared: The presentation included book recommendations focusing on the five practices used during Every Child Ready to Read for 0-3 year olds as well as 3-5 year olds. Although we do not follow the Every Child Ready to Read framework, the 6 by 6 program is very similar and the books will still apply. All of the books shared were published in 2016 or newer.

How I plan to apply it: I was not familiar with a number of the books and I'm excited to look at them more closely and share them with my staff!

PLA Conference Report
Krista Suter

Book Buzz

This was a great session for me to understanding what titles will be popular in the upcoming months. A series of publishers went over anticipated reads for the 2018. I received numerous handouts with the favorites of staff members as well as librarians. Many of the Library Reads notable titles were also mentioned, which was helpful in knowing what my peers were excited about, as well as books that would be great considerations for book groups. I was able to bring home recommendations, handouts, and booklets for the associate at West who runs many of our book clubs. Many of the publishers also included links to various e-newsletters subscriptions and e-galleys that are available online. I am excited to go back and sign up for these and to take advantage of the advanced copies of popular titles so that I can keep our reading lists current. I received a great amount of information and resources from this session and will keep returning to the materials I received.

Opening Session with Sally Yates

This was inspirational; it was amazing to see her speak and to remind us all of how important it is to stand up for what we believe in during these changing, challenging times.

ECRR Taking Early Literacy Messages to WIC Centers

This mini-session was packed with information about bringing story time services to WIC centers. The librarian presenting had implemented this program in Boston, setting up tiny library corners in WIC center waiting rooms during their busy hours. She said the challenges were getting the centers to agree to their presence but that it was a great success. The library staff would offer story time to those waiting and hand out free books to the children, inform parents of what the library had to offer, and used mobile services to sign them up for library cards. The presenter said that being able to share what the library has to offer to both child and parent increased patronage, especially to those new to the community or the country. I thought this seemed like such a wonderful way promote early literacy and summer reading.

Community as Collaborator

This session was not what I had expected. I was hoping to see how others libraries formed collaborations within their communities but instead it was a pretty basic programming session. They discussed different programs that would get patrons outside and around the community but failed to highlight any collaborations from outside their systems. It focused more on children and teens than on adult programming, which is why I did not gain much from this presentation.

Author Lunch with Daniel H. Pink

The author was there to represent his new book *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing* in which he breaks down the high and low points of the day. He mentioned what activities are best performed at what time, the peaks of days for larks and owls, and the times in our life when we are likely to see

changes. It was a lot of really interesting information that made me evaluate how I can better structure my own days to be the most successful.

Library Digital Literacy Training

This was a really helpful session on supporting the digital literacy needs of the community. The presenters discussed digitallearn.org and the various supportive materials provided for public librarians. These included educator support, Spanish language courses, and classroom materials for *instructional* librarians. The session also discussed collaborators within the community to spread information, such as the United Way and immigrant organizations, and promotional ideas. These included billboards and bus signs that would promote classes and resources provided by the library. There was a lot of support within the room. A few other details I made note of was the preference of older generations to use tablets and encouraging patrons to make resumes in Word so they can be edited. These are great tips that I will remember when helping patrons with their digital literacy skills. This is a big passion of mine so I was pleased with what I learned from the presentation.

Top 5 of 5: A Current Affair

This was a fun session where various librarians, including our own Louisa Whitfield-Smith, presented on five current reading trends. The panel was supposed to focus on non-fiction materials but there was mention of fiction and non-fiction materials to support the trends of science, politics, international, LGBTQ, and diversity in youth. It was great to see what reading trends are occurring across the country with recommended titles and themes within those categories. It was great hearing librarians speak passionately about their reading interests and I had numerous titles to read.

The Path to U.S. Citizenship Can Start at Public Libraries

This has been a topic of interest to me lately considering our diverse population. I wanted to learn more about assisting immigrants in becoming citizens. This presentation was amazing in what some libraries are doing in order to make this happen in their community. A librarian from Fresno talked about how they assist patrons with obtaining citizenship and throw them a party to celebrate. I thought this was such a beautiful idea and a great way to support new Americans. They use their mobile library services to promote these resources. I was really inspired by what this library was doing to assist immigrants to becoming American citizens. A Philadelphia librarian discussed their culinary literacy program in which patrons come together and cook meals, often using different recipes to highlight the various cultures of the patrons. I thought this was a wonderful way to bring everyone together and promote kinship within your community. I visited the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services booth in the exhibit hall after and gathered materials to display in our branch.

Making Digital Inclusion a Priority in Your Library

As I mentioned, this is a particularly important topic to me so I was really pleased with this session. The librarians were from San Antonio but their digital divide was very comparable to the Kansas City area. This is such an important topic because I see how it directly affects the lives of our patrons. This presentation highlighted the relevance of this issue and what they did to provide digital services to the community. They really talked about having partnerships within the community, such as getting refurbished computers from Good Will and connecting with google. They mentioned providing hot spots and strong wireless internet. They discussed how they created a Digital Inclusion Committee and

had a summit meeting. I know that Kansas City Public Library also runs our areas Digital Inclusion program so it was great to see this as a trend amongst cities to support digital inclusion.

Big Ideas with Tim Wu

As a huge Net Neutrality activist, I was thrilled to see Tim Wu speak. He discussed how he came to develop the Net Neutrality Theory and the relevance of this issue in our current state of affairs. It was wonderful to hear him relay this information and how important it is, especially in relation to how we as librarians support the informational freedom of the public. It was fascinating to gain a greater understand of what the recent changes in Net Neutrality mean for the public and corporations that want to monopolize the internet. It advanced my understanding of the current situation and reaffirmed why it is important to share this information with others. In relation to this subject, he also discussed his new book *The Attention Merchants: How Our Time and Attention Are Gathered and Sold*, which discusses the current state of advertisement by major internet companies. It was fascinating to see how tech startups have come to rely on advertisements for financial support, what that means for the public, and the challenges it will create as technology continues to evolve. Overall, this was my favorite speaker because his information was valuable, as not only someone concerned about the status of technology and its effect on the public at large, but also as a librarian who is dedicated to helping people navigate the technological landscape we cannot escape. Teaching people how to engage with technology and the internet is a large part of my job and I love learning how I can help patrons as it evolves.

Serving Low-Literacy and Multilingual Communities at Your Library

Considering that our community has a large Spanish and Burmese speaking population, this was a great session on free resources to translated materials. HealthReach was a group that came and promoted their website, which offers health information in various languages. It is a great site and I was so excited to be able to share this with others. The presenters also took the time to discuss what works best in reaching patrons who speak little to no English. They discussed various ways to translate materials, which included written handouts and audio recordings. I think what I found interesting was the importance of keeping the language at a lower reading level to have a greater success of communication. Not all patrons are going to have strong literacy skills and by keeping the language simple there will be a greater success in communicating such important information. The presenters mentioned how they accessed local churches and organizations to reach patrons that might not be aware of library services. I loved what the other libraries were doing to support our immigrant communities. One of the speakers was from the Kansa City Public Library RISE department and I am so glad to have such a close contact if we have any questions.

AAP Crossover Appeal: Books that Work for Teens and Adults

I was hoping this session would provide titles and ways to get adults more interested in YA literature. I know how much I have come to enjoy reading YA and wish more adults knew that many of the titles are really fun reads! I think many of our patrons would really enjoy many YA titles and I wanted to see if there were tools to promote this kind of reading in our library. It was more of a publisher event to allow four authors to promote their new books. It was interesting hearing the genres they write in, their experiences with writing, and what it means to be a female writer today. I took note of the titles and will try to use their books, along with my own knowledge of YA, to try to promote these reads to our patrons.

In Conclusion

This was my first PLA Conference and it was an honor to be able to join my colleagues in attendance. As a new librarian, this was a wonderful way for me to continue my education in the field and to stay aware of current trends. Being new to my position, the conference was wonderful to attend sessions that support my education in reader's services. I loved the various sessions I attended and feel there was a lot of relevant information I brought home with me to share with my peers. There is so much we can provide our patrons and PLA allowed me to find resources to help us do that! In addition to the sessions, it was also wonderful to meet other librarians from around the country and to see what they are doing in their communities. We have a really wonderful and important profession and the conference really helped further motivate my passion for the services we provide.

Louisa Whitfield-Smith - Turner

What Having a WIC Center in Your Library Brings (Besides Crying Babies)
Drew Alvey, Manager of Stimley-Blue Ridge Neighborhood Library, Texas.

Drew Alvey, known as the Loud Librarian at the Stimley-Blue Ridge Neighborhood Library of Houston Public Library system. He was so happy to be there. He was the only panelist that made the PLA event; the other members of his team could not get out of Houston in time to be part of the session. Drew spoke about something that was dear to his heart: the WIC program in his Library. He spelled out the investment of time, effort, funds and extraordinary patience that a WIC program requires. Alvey spoke long about the community involvement required, the staff commitment, the cost and the benefits.

Alvey's branch of the Houston Library system was damaged by Hurricane Harvey and in the rebuilding of that Branch, it was decided to create a space for the WIC program. His Library added a wing specifically for WIC. He instructed us to imagine a long hallway leading to a number of rooms: a large playroom, a living room area and a kitchen area, called the family place. The staff at his Branch had been working with WIC for quite some time. They had been conducting programs at the WIC center and sharing some outreach with WIC staff. The idea of opening a WIC center in their Library fit into their idea of what a Library is capable of and they were able to make it happen.

After much community outreach and local government involvement, Stimley-Blue Ridge Neighborhood Library opened their WIC center about a year and ½ ago. WIC is a government run organization, which means that the staff are government employees. They offer meals, parenting classes, open job labs, after school programs, senior exercise classes, food assistance and baby-centered programming. Staff at Stimley-Blue Ridge Branch help with story time and after school programs.

Alvey provided many good reasons to work with the WIC clinic:

- Provide access to service populations you might never see in your branch otherwise
- Offer opportunities for joint outreach ventures
- Bring in shared collaborations and partnerships
- Offer opportunities to partner in programming
- Add a valuable Health focus onto Library Programs and Services.

I am very glad I attended; otherwise, I would not have known the colossal investment of time that a WIC program requires. We do not have the room to offer a dedicated space to WIC but we can begin to develop partnerships and create outreach possibilities. It was a good thing.

Think Outside the Books: Building Innovative Programs and Services through Staff Empowerment
Brynna Tucker, Manager of Brooklyn Public Library, New York.

Brynna Tucker of Brooklyn New York gave a wonderful presentation on empowering staff with a varied process. She encouraged one to try a little bit of everything to gain staff's trust, empower them to make decisions and try new things. She had an in depth slide show that provided a great deal of information. All of her suggestions could be adapted to small groups as well as large. This really tied in well with program I was at the day before. Working with staff to grow from within was quite the theme.

Ms. Tucker began with instructions on beginning the process of Staff Empowerment. Online, she provided several worksheets to begin tackling the problem. One of the provided worksheets is for staff to fill out in a group effort: to look at the problem and try to come up with solutions together. Using this, I can see getting all the staff to together and working through an issue with every staff members input and involvement. I see how it could be used to get all the staff on the same page.

Ms. Tucker had recommendations of web tests that can be used (like the Meyers-Brigg test) to establish where each staff member stands before one begins a new project. She called it the Mindset Quiz. The goal is to determine which staff members have a Growth Mindset versus a Fixed Mindset. Not only did she have detailed explanations of Growth vs Fixed but she had several different slides showing how to work with the different levels of staff members, how they perceive the world and figuring out where some members are and how best to deal with them.

I really liked Ms. Tuckers' method of getting your group to think about the community in different ways. One of the examples was Neighborhood Mapping. Using colored markers and an area map, she showed how a group can figure out things that are needed in the community and the best way to serve the population, all with drawing in highlighters. Exceptional.

Another fine example was the Random Word Brainstorm. She suggested you have the group come up with three words and make them come up with a program using those three words. Her example was a group that came up with pineapple, taco, and charcoal grill. This naturally led to a program to teach patrons how to grill fruits and vegetable and make fruity dessert tacos. Wonderful idea.

I gained a great deal of perspective from Ms. Tucker. It will take some time to extrapolate ideas from her workshop and apply them to South Branch Library and KCKPL, as a whole. Luckily, I took photos of the slides and she has provided a great number of workshop crib sheets online.

Coach Your Team to Greatness

Maggie Snow, Director of Anoka County Library, Minnesota.

Stacey Hendren, Manager of Anoka County Library, Minnesota.

This was the least helpful workshop I attended. It wasn't the information as much as the way it was presented that rendered it rather useless. Maggie Snow and Stacey Hendren appeared to know their subject matter, they just didn't present it well. The slides were not very helpful and woefully inadequate in expressing the content that the presenters were attempting to convey.

The worksheets that are available online are equally unhelpful. There are several evaluative forms that KCKPL, of course, cannot use and would serve no meaningful purpose within our evaluator system.

I do understand the benefits of a Coaching style of dealing with staff but one of the presenters was bragging about checking in with her staff once a month? We do a much better job here at the South Branch. I meet with my Supervisors daily, if not a formal meeting, it is a meeting that informs all of us what needs to be done and also helps us determine the various hats we're going to wear that day.

Best thing from the PLA Conference:

Exhibits "Laptop computer checkout machine".

So very handy. Patrons can walk up and check out a laptop with a card: Would love to make this available to our patrons. It also has an automatic update and method of charging built right in.

I enjoyed my first workshop the most but was able to garnish some nugget of usefulness from each workshop I sat through.

The Marriott Hotel was fabulous, Convention center connected by glass hallway. One didn't even have to leave the facility.



Worst thing from the PLA Conference:

Homeless people living around the hotel and conference center.

The noisy band at the wrap up party.

The snow and bad weather that made me miss a whole day of conference time.

Dana Brown — Manager / South Library

Its Not about the Desk: Assessing and Aligning Service Philosophy, Service Delivery, and Service Points

Susan Brown, Director of Chapel Hill Public Library, North Carolina

Meeghan Rosen, Assistant Director of Chapel Hill Public Library, North Carolina

Susan Brown and Meeghan Rosen were entertaining and had some very useful information. They work together at the brand new Chapel Hill Public Library in North Carolina. Susan had become the Director a few days before the new Building ribbon cutting ceremony. They presented their information in an open, entertaining manner that made many in the audience laugh aloud. The primary goal of this presentation was to enable the audience to embrace change, consider the rules in one's own library, determine why they exist and perhaps change those rules for the betterment of the patron. In addition, we learned how to consider space and how to best utilize that space for staff and patron needs.

I found the discussion about the Circulation Desk interesting. The architects designed a large, circular desk that made the staff feel they were somewhat removed from the patron. Because of this, staff did not feel connected or even that they needed to connect. It was something they could hide behind and limited engagement on every level. Since the desk was new, management felt, they had to move carefully and involve everyone, before making changes. Many committees were formed and much discussion was had with staff, community leaders and the architect. Eventually, they had enough support to remove the desk entirely, install a much smaller, more welcoming station for patrons and staff to engage; as well as provide other stations throughout the Library where staff could meet and work with patrons on a personal level.

In performing the task of restructuring the desk, management began to realize that a number of their policies and procedures were just at archaic, as the Circulation Desk had been. Management decided to give their lengthy policies and procedures as much attention as they had given the Circulation Desk for an intensive overhaul. They once again, formed committees and involved staff from the very beginning. They began with a hallway and post it notes. They started by posting questions like, "What does the Library stand for?" and "Why is the Library here" and let the next session develop from those answers. From this management was able to create a new mission statement, new values and a wonderful service pledge:

"You are our top priority. Whenever, wherever, and whyever you choose to visit us, every moment should shine. We are friendly, helpful, responsive, and engaged. We are focused on meeting your needs and committed to making every visit delightful."

The most useful item from this workshop was embracing the concept of brevity. Allowing staff begin with the idea that less is more, rather than all-inclusive policies that are so long, no one reads them. Enabling each other to reate policies and procedures that are succinct and encompass all that is necessary within a few short paragraphs.

For example, their code of conduct (like ours) was a page long, fine print, no spaces. After much discussion and staff input, their code of conduct now looks like this:

Expectations for Behavior

The Chapel Hill Public Library is a place for everyone, shared by the community, and used by many different people for widely different reasons. Here's what we expect of all of our users:

- We expect users to respect the comfort and safety of fellow library users and library staff. If your behavior is making others unsafe or uncomfortable, we'll ask you to stop.
- We expect users to comply with requests from library staff. If you don't, we reserve the right to suspend privileges and/or access.
- We expect users to comply with local, state, and federal laws. If you break the law, we may prosecute.

They did the same thing with their Child Safety and Behavior Policy:

Safe Child Policy

For their safety, children 9 years of age and younger must remain in the company of a parent or caretaker while in the library. Those same kids are welcome to attend programs alone, but their parent/caretaker must remain in the library in case of emergency. Children 9 and under who are unattended will be monitored by a staff member until a parent/caretaker is located. If we can not locate a parent/caretaker, staff will contact the police.

I learned a great deal from this workshop. I intend to use what I learned to encourage reduction of the vast amounts of verbiage that exists in our current policies and procedures. I also learned to consider why we do the things we do, rather than just continue to accept the status quo.