

Library Advisory Board Minutes July 10, 2012
For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB)

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met on Tuesday, July 10, at Central Library in the U.S. Bank Meeting Room. Chair Katie Lane called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m.

Board members present were: David Blount, Marian Creamer, George Feldman, Katie Lane, John Potter, Mardy Stevens, Danika Stochosky, Carlene Weldon and Sola Whitehead. Board member Lori Irish Bauman was excused. Board members Heidi Beebe, Mark Garber, Mark Jackson and Henise Telles-Ferreira were absent.

Staff members present were: Vailey Oehlke, Director of Libraries, Becky Cobb, Deputy Director; Rita Jimenez, Neighborhood Libraries Director; Sue Banks, Central Library Director; Cindy Gibbon, Access & IT Services Manager; Katie O'Dell, Youth Services Director; Jeremy Graybill, Marketing & Communications Director; Pat French, Collections Services Manager; Shawn Cunningham, Policy Advisor; Terrilyn Chun, Public Programming & Community Outreach Manager; May Dea, Gregory Heights Administrator; Carol Rogers, Central Access Services Supervisor; Diane McKeel, County Commissioner, District 4; Corie Wiren, Chief of Staff, Commissioner McKeel's Office; and Ellen Mueller, Administrative Specialist, Central Library Director's Office.

Also in attendance was Craig Cedros, Friends of the Library.

The June 12, 2012 minutes were approved with three changes.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Vailey reported on the community conversations being held at several different libraries. The first session took place at Central on July 2. Approximately 40 people attended, including library staff and friends. An informative Q&A session was led by County Chair Jeff Cogen. The next session is scheduled for July 10, 6:00 p.m., at the Gresham Library. Three other sessions are planned during July.

Vailey encouraged everyone to take the online survey, available on the library's website. The survey is also being sent out to many cardholders with the hope of gathering as much feedback from the public as possible. Marian Creamer inquired about the feedback sheet. Vailey indicated Shawn Cunningham is overseeing that

effort; the feedback sheets are being distributed at the community conversations. Marian commented that there was a respectable turnout at the July 2 meeting. The last broad survey MCL did, about two years ago, yielded 26,000 responses.

John Potter inquired about the possibility of putting the link to the survey on materials checkout receipts. Cindy Gibbon replied that she would look into the possibility.

MCL's Summer Reading Program turns 100 years old this year. So far, 90,000 children are signed up, and Katie O'Dell is confident the program will reach its goal of 100,000 sign-ups. Vailey acknowledged that this meeting is the first for Katie, in her new role as Youth Services Director, succeeding Ellen Fader.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Katie Lane stated that the Board of County Commissioners is carefully weighing whether to place the Library District on the November ballot. The community conversations are a part of the process they're undertaking, as is the survey, and the July 31 public hearing. That said, Katie feels that it's very important to find a stable funding source sooner rather than later. She asked everyone to participate and to encourage others to participate. Katie will keep the board apprised of dates and times.

George said he thought the Board of County Commissioners committed to putting the library levy on the May ballot, with the understanding that, if successful, it would be followed up with the library district on the November ballot. Commissioner McKeel replied that the BCC is taking a hard look to make sure a library district referral is the correct course of action. Marian asked about the best way to give input to the BCC, the feedback form or a letter. Diane responded that input can be given in whatever form(s) one thinks best.

Katie reminded the LAB that, since the Library District is not yet on the ballot, restrictions on political activity for public officials do not yet apply. If this issue goes onto the ballot, members are not allowed to advocate as LAB members because they fall under the definition of "public official."

Commissioner McKeel said the business community may be a heavy lift. It's important to get feedback and to make the case. Vailey stated that it takes time to educate people. Marian shared an experience about encountering a young family at the market and turning it into a teachable moment. Katie said that businesses rely on the libraries being open on Mondays.

BOARD NOMINATIONS

Sola Whitehead reported on behalf of the Nominating Committee. They recommend reappointing Sola Whitehead, John Potter and David Blount to a second term. Katie

Lane moved, and George Feldman seconded to accept the committee's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

The Nominating Committee also recommended that Katie Lane be reappointed as Board Chair, and John Potter be reappointed as Vice Chair for another year. George Feldman moved, and David Blount seconded, to accept the committee's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Sola reported that she has had conversations with potential youth members. She needs to follow up with the rest of the committee before bringing it to the full board.

DIGITAL CONTENT

Vailey noted that she had recently met with the Library Access Committee, and the committee recommended bringing the discussion of digital content to the full board. Vailey noted that Cindy Gibbon and Pat French are both well-steeped in this topic.

Digital content is evolving on a daily basis, and Vailey is engaged on this topic at a high level. She is a member of an ALA Task Force called the Digital Content Working Group. They've been charged with figuring out how libraries can provide patrons with improved access to digital content. Vailey is also a member of a subgroup looking at various business models, and OCLC's "Big Shift" advisory committee, funded through an IMLS grant.

A fundamental value of libraries is to provide free and open access to information. Digital content is bringing new challenges to that role. ALA is targeting the "Big Six" publishers who provide the vast majority of trade books. Publishers are deeply concerned about the new ebook landscape and how it will impact their business model. Libraries are receiving a lot of pushback from publishers about their role in providing content free of charge to their users.

Two publishers (HarperCollins and Random House) are selling ebooks to public libraries. Penguin is conducting a pilot with New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library, which includes a stipulation that best sellers are not available to the library until six months after publication. Vailey commented that Amazon could be a big winner in all of this.

Vailey's Digital Content Working Group committee is outlining potential business models which will be shared in the next couple of weeks. One of the big issues is the fact that libraries want to own content rather than lease it.

George asked if there are limitations if he would buy an ebook and share it. Vailey replied that there would be issues with different platforms.

Douglas County Library System (CO) has been negotiating directly with smaller publishers for DRM-free materials. Items cannot be shared.

Danika asked how urgent this is--are people pirating content? Vailey said that pirating was, initially, one of the biggest concerns for the publishers.

In 2011, approximately 10% of the US population owned e-readers. From December 2011-January 2012, that number doubled. Some estimate that by 2015, libraries will spend 50% of their collection budget on e-books.

Sacramento Public Library has a device that allows people to publish their own work. John commented that Powell's also has one of the machines, and he would like to see MCL get one. Vailey replied that they are very expensive and thinks we ought to wait to see how it fares in other systems.

Sola asked how Overdrive and similar services fit in. Vailey indicated that Overdrive works with publishers to provide access to books, then turns around and sells that access to libraries. Biblioteca and 3M are other intermediaries. Contracts with these vendors are not always in the best interest of libraries. New York Public Library negotiated with Overdrive, but negotiations broke down. Multnomah County Library and approximately 70 other libraries signed a statement of support, that hasn't appeared to gain traction.

Danika commented that this seems like the next big hurdle, after funding. Vailey agreed and replied that it's daunting, yet fascinating. Cindy announced that the Intellectual Freedom Committee will be doing a program during Banned Books Week. On September 30, a panel, including Molly Raphael, will discuss the ebooks issue.

END OF YEAR WRAP UP

Katie Lane noted that funding has been given constant attention since September, and will continue to be a focus. The Job Center, as well as classes on interviewing and resumes, are helping people looking for work. Katie expressed her gratitude to MCL for this work. MCL has played a role in the literacy crisis by encouraging reading from a very early age. A Black Storytime program has recently kicked off at Midland. Despite the funding problem, MCL is committed to offer technology and a number of ways for the public to access what they want.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Craig Cedros reported on behalf of the Friends. They have recently selected four new board members.

The Friends are looking at online sales as another source of revenue, where they hope to bring in four figures per month. Online sales would be managed by a part-time staff person with help from volunteers.

They are working hard on the library district effort and are keeping their members informed about sessions related to the district.

On September 19, the Friends will host an event with Willy Vlautin and Ursula LeGuin. 2012 marks the 40th anniversary for the Friends, and a birthday party is being planned for October 17.

GOOD & WELFARE

Marian stated that there are some challenging issues facing the library. She sees it as an opportunity to connect with the community and turn it into a positive experience.

John said he would like to have a report on the changes and crowding issues at the next meeting. Vailey indicated we will have anecdotes as well as overall feedback.

The next LAB meeting is September 11, 2012.

Katie Lane, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 8:39 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ellen Mueller

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