

Library Advisory Board Minutes: March 14, 2023For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. The meeting began at 5:02pm.

Board members present were: Cassie Duprey, Clare Wilkinson, David Jarvis, Hazel Burke, Kate Fleming, Lizzie Martinez, Mabel Reed, and Rob Edmiston. Megan Parrott was not available.

Staff members present were: Annie Lewis, community services director; Dave Ratliff, integrated services director; Johnette Easter, HR manager; Jon Worona, director of innovation & technology; Katie Shifley, finance & facilities director; Kirby McCurtis, location services director; Shawn Cunningham, director of communications & strategic initiatives; Sonja Ervin, equity & inclusion manager; Vailey Oehlke, library director; and Elizabeth O'Neill, OPME manager. Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4, Multnomah County was also in attendance.

WELCOME & CHECK-IN

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video or phone and participated in a warm-up exercise in Google Meet breakout rooms. Meeting minutes for the February 14, 2023 meeting were approved, with one correction of a misspelling.

OFFICE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT & EVALUATION

Office of Project Management & Evaluation (OPME) Manager Elizabeth O'Neill joined, shared briefly about her background in evaluation, and about her team at MCL — a relatively new work team. O'Neil shared that OPME's focus is on the library's impact and outcomes by guiding projects aligned with library values, centering racial equity, with tools process and evaluation, providing accurate data, and ensuring accountability. OPME staff do this through project management; data services, training, and consultation; evaluation services; sharing tools and project management products; and more. OPME staff also guide library leadership in using consistent, equity-based criteria to determine what projects and initiatives are priority to help manage staff capacity.

O'Neill shared that OPME's work is relevant for LAB in that it is value-led, systemwide, and focused on racial equity, connecting services to outcomes, and on accountability and effectiveness.

O'Neill and Equity & Inclusion Manager Sonja Ervin shared an example of a current project with the [Coalition of Communities of Color](#) (CCC) on data equity — an examination of where power and privilege lie with data creators and data users. MCL is working with CCC to examine decision points for data and where bias lies. O'Neill offered to return to LAB at a later date to share the result of the library's work with CCC and to talk about ethical research guidelines and a RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed) model.

Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke added that some of the practices O'Neill described are new disciplines for the library, shared appreciation for O'Neill's values alignment and expertise in terms of where the library is wanting to go, and expressed excitement about OPME's approach.

Co-Chair Clare Wilkinson noted that it could be useful for LAB to engage OPME in the future to help evaluate its own work as an advisory body. O'Neill agreed, noting that LAB will first want to better define its work, how its work happens, and how that work relates to other library work and key stakeholders — noting that LAB's involvement in strategic planning is an excellent first step.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Following up on an overview of the library's new strategic planning effort she shared in February, Deputy Director Annie Lewis summarized the framework for this plan, noting that the strategic plan for 2023-2025 is a capacity-building phase using existing [library pillars and priorities](#) to lay the groundwork for deeper performance management and a fuller strategic planning effort for 2026-2028. The 2023-2025 plan will be broken down into goals, strategies, and action plans, using a framework that connects to Fiscal Year 2024 budget program offers.

O'Neill reminded that a strategic plan is an operational road map, and reviewed seven draft plan goals with LAB (1-4 based on existing priorities, and 5-7 new goals), with a shout out to Ervin for leading this foundational piece.

Oehlke asked for LAB feedback on draft goal five, focused on technology access and digital equity, and folks shared input and suggestions to simplify language. Oehlke and O'Neill agreed to bring this goal back to the library's strategic planning team for refinement.

O'Neill led an exercise with LAB to see which draft goal (1-7) the board feels its work mostly closely aligns. Several LAB members expressed momentum around alignment with goals two and six, and possibly also number seven.

O'Neill asked for LAB member volunteers to take this work forward to develop strategies and/or action plans aligned with specific goals, and to bring that information back to the full board at its April meeting.

Oehlke thanked O'Neill for working with LAB, and Wilkinson echoed this, sharing that this kind of engagement is a good motivator to support recruitment of new members.

UPDATES FROM LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

Library Director Vailey Oehlke shared a few systemwide updates and highlights from the Director's Report, with a focus on bond-related happenings. A groundbreaking to kick off construction was held at Midland Library on February 17, and the design teams for the last two major bond projects (Belmont and St. John's libraries) are currently being determined, after which all firms will have been selected. Demolition at Holgate Library is also almost complete.

Oehlke noted that the bond refresh work at Central Library, a very large and complex space, is garnering some attention. MCL's overall collection size is not changing and the library is creating

greater efficiencies in terms of how patrons access materials, with some items from the collection moving to the new operations center. New bookshelves at Central Library will be lower for important safety reasons, which means there will be less shelving capacity. Which materials stay in which buildings is determined with a lot of intentionality based on circulation data and other community information. Oehlke praised Central Library staff who are doing deliberate work here, and encouraged LAB members to direct folks with questions about this to her office.

More information is available at:

<https://multcolib.org/blog/20230223/central-library-collection-relocation/>.

Oehlke also reminded that the culmination of the library's Everybody Reads program (the author lecture) is Thursday. Oehlke thanked The Library Foundation and Literary Arts for their ongoing support of this community-wide reading program.

WORKGROUP UPDATES

LAB workgroup members gave progress updates. For the membership workgroup, Martinez and LAB liaison Maddelyn High shared various outreach efforts and that 7 applications have been received so far. Martinez challenged LAB members to personally reach out to at least one person they think might be interested in LAB.

High reminded that CBAC leads have one meeting remaining to draft this year's budget memo, for review and input from the full board at its April meeting. Oehlke thanked folks for their continued participation in this important work on behalf of the library.

ACTION ITEMS + CLOSING

Martinez shared [a link](#) for a free event called "Libraries at the End of the World" about progressive organizing to support libraries and encouraged folks to check it out if interested.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maddelyn High, director's assistant
Multnomah County Library, Oregon