Engaged Planning: Ask What You Can Do for Your Rural Community

Cindy Fesemyer, Director – Columbus Public Library, Wisconsin

WebJunction/ARSL Webinar
December 1, 2016
“ALA started the Libraries Transforming Communities initiative because we believe that *librarians’ role as core community leaders and change agents* is vital to the success of libraries and the communities that support them.”

Barbara Stripling, Past ALA President, in letter to Libraries Transforming Communities Public Innovators Cohort – May 2014
“The time has come for a new vision of public libraries in the United States. Communities need public libraries—more people are visiting them and using their services, materials and programs than ever before—but communities’ needs continue to change.”

Forward from “Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries”, The Aspen Institute
Start with an Internal Assessment

From Fred David’s *Strategic Management: Concepts & Cases*, 13th ed. 2011
What communities do you serve?
Overview of planning process

• By the numbers
  • User data
  • Demographics
  • Surveys
• Turn outward
  • Assess community aspirations
  • Assess library assets
• Write it
  • Mission statement
  • Values
  • Core strategic directions
By the numbers

- Community surveys
  - Users
    - Pop-up survey from home page
    - Papers surveys at desks
  - Non-users
    - Columbus Water and Light bill insert
    - Municipal surveys
- Space Needs Calculations
  - Varies by state
    - Wisconsin space needs calculations are currently under review
By the numbers

- **Edge Assessment** and Edge Action Plan
  - INTERNAL TOOL
  - Created for public libraries
  - Based on national benchmarks
  - Evaluate tech services
  - You get resource recommendations

- **Impact Survey**
  - EXTERNAL ONLINE SURVEY
  - Focus on user tech needs

- **Gale Analytics**
  - Rich demographic data
  - ILS analysis

**NOTE:**
These cost money, but fees are fairly modest.
turn outward {verb}

1. The act of seeing and hearing those in the community and acting with intentionality to create change;
2. A reorientation toward the public; a posture;
3. A framework for making choices about public life.
Can you stand on the table . . .

- . . . and tell people in your community what they want?
- . . . with authority?
- . . . with authenticity?
- . . . with accountability?

Community Aspirations

ALA Libraries Transforming Communities & the Harwood Institute

- ASK Exercise
- Aspirations Exercise
- Turn Outward Quiz
- Community Conversations
- Something Special for YOUR Community

FREE DOWNLOAD: "A Step-by-Step Guide to 'Turning Outward' to Your Community"
This free 88-page workbook contains 15 tools broken into four easy-to-follow steps:
First 30 Days: Getting Started
30 - 60 Days: Going into the Community
60 - 90 Days: Sharing What You Learn
90 Days and Beyond: Taking Action
ASK Exercise

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?

2. Why is that important to you?

3. How is that different from how you see things now?

4. What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?
Community Conversation

• What kind of community do you want?
• Given what we just said, what are two or three important challenges in the community?
• What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want as a community?
• When you think about what we’ve talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?
• Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?
• Think about the library now. What are some areas we discussed that the library can help with?
• If we came back in a year, what might you see that would indicate the library is engaging its services and resources to help the community reach its aspirations and address its challenges?
“Root for Columbus” campaign
REPORT BACK!

Columbus Community Calendar
# Where is the community at?

## Community Rhythms Implications for Change Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Coordination (See Collective impact notes)</th>
<th>Pockets of Change</th>
<th>Actions for Changed Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Waiting Place</strong></td>
<td>Slowly</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>No, people can’t name the problem</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Help people name the aspirations, concerns, issues and changed conditions. Demonstrate small signs of progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impasse</td>
<td>Slowly</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>No, people may be angry, but don’t agree what’s an issue</td>
<td>No, these will fail</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Discover shared aspirations. Identify taboo issues. Help people imagine alternate future. Create organized spaces for people to convene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalytic</td>
<td>Quicker, particularly in pockets</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Yes, but it’s not widespread</td>
<td>No, but you can form informal networks</td>
<td>Create and Loosely Connect</td>
<td>Try lots of small things in pockets. Encourage informal networks and new leaders. Help share the emerging narrative. Model desired community norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Quickly</td>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, particularly to address systemic issues</td>
<td>Connect and Coordinate</td>
<td>Work community wide. Coordinate and accelerate collective action. Highlight new narrative. Bring in new leaders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sustain and Renew** (5th stage) — is rare and not included in this tool.
The Sweet Spot of Public Life

SWEET SPOT

Main Concerns & Specific Issues

Public Capital (Community Conditions)
Assess Library Assets

• What are biggest challenges for the library?
• What are biggest challenges for the community?
• What’s the health of the library board, friends group, foundation and local government?
• Do you gather customer feedback? What are you hearing?
• Which national or local library innovations or trends do you want to implement?
• Who are your community partners? How strong are those partnerships?
• Does the library have capacity (staff, funds, space) to grow?
The Planning Sweet Spot

COMMUNITY SWEET SPOT

Main Concerns & Specific Issues

Public Capital (Community Conditions)

Library Capabilities

LIBRARY SWEET SPOT
Write it!

- Mission statement
- Values
- Core strategic directions
- Work plan
Mission & Values

• MISSION STATEMENT
  • The Columbus Public Library promotes a vibrant and welcoming community by connecting people, information and ideas to enhance the regional quality of life.

• We accomplish our mission by holding onto these VALUES
  • We strive to be a civic and cultural center at the heart of our community, responsive to ongoing and immediate needs. We are a safe, non-judgmental, friendly destination for individual pursuits and an active gathering place for all.
  • We support traditional readers and information-seekers of all kinds. We are the go-to place for free access to resources that support collaboration, knowledge, exploration, and fun.
Core Strategic Directions

• Welcoming Environment
• Programming
• Communication
• Space Needs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June/July 2015</td>
<td>Investigate fundraising potential</td>
<td>Cindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June/July 2015</td>
<td>Meet with City Departments, Administrator, Mayor to pitch idea</td>
<td>Cindy and Pete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>Present Strategic Plan and Annual Report data to City Council</td>
<td>Cindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
<td>Follow up with interested players from City</td>
<td>Cindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2015</td>
<td>Inform staff of strategic priorities</td>
<td>Cindy and Katrina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept/Oct 2015</td>
<td>Share Planning Brochure with community: civic clubs, etc.</td>
<td>Cindy and Katrina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources

• ALA’s Libraries Transforming Communities

• View a free, 60-minute webinar about how three libraries are using the "turning outward" approach: "Go Out & Play: Community Engagement through Turning Outward"

• "A Step-by-Step Guide to 'Turning Outward' to Your Community"

THANK YOU!
Cindy Fesemyer
CindyLFes@gmail.com
Columbus Public Library: 920-623-5910