

Mid-Michigan Library League

Director's Report

January 2016

Administrative:

- The annual audit was performed on Monday, November 9th by Ryan Howell, certified public accountant from Baird, Cotter & Bishop. He will present the audit at the January 21st Board meeting.
- Bookkeeper Lisa Eash and I created a financial procedures document that has been reviewed by our auditing firm and the Finance Committee. Proper checks and balances are tricky for a small organization, but we feel confident in our ability to catch mistakes and prevent fraud.
- The large print books are now finally out of the office and onto the shelves at member libraries that decided to buy their collections for a very reasonable price. They will serve the public better this way, as they will be searchable and available for interlibrary loan.
- We have new office mates – a business called “haggle me dot com” that deals in collector car sales. Since we have been lessening our footprint, we will be looking for a much smaller office space to rent in the coming year (lease expires at the end of May).
- End of year activities included filing the State Aid annual report and scanning the horizon to find ways to progress cooperative services in order to provide the support that members need for maximum benefit and efficiency, and to free them up to concentrate on specific local needs. The first half of the Cooperative direct State Aid arrived and has been deposited.

Trainings:

- The Human Resources workshop, part I “hard skills,” was attended by 20 individuals, nearly half of whom came from other cooperatives. Some attendees drove as far as 275 miles one way to attend this training, and the workshop received excellent feedback. We have the part II “soft skills” scheduled for March 31st in Cadillac. Registration will be announced soon.
- Future trainings “in the hopper” include book repair, dealing with “problem” patrons (active shooter/black belt librarian), what makes a good library website, and district library formation.
- The MMLL Plan of Service states that “training on specific topics will be offered, approved by the MMLL Board on an annual basis” and the Director’s job description lists one of the duties as “advises the Continuing Education Committee in developing and implementing workshops for the membership.” So, I am hopeful that we can set up a Continuing Education Committee with representation from the Board and the Advisory Council. It is important to garner input and feedback on training needs/desires of the member libraries. I have sent out a quick training survey in the meantime.

Technology:

- I have applied for E-rate for funding year 2016 and will follow through with the next steps once the online forms are available. I attended the E-rate training offered by the “TRIG” group and have spoken to one of the local consultants who serves MMLL libraries to introduce myself and open a communication path. I will closely follow the State plans for FY17, as there is hope for a coordinated effort and a statewide “470” form.
- There is a current effort to share library technology information and support called “LibraryUpload,” with the vision of having quarterly gatherings in different parts of the state to share best practices and connect anyone with a library technology role to a community in which they can learn, share, and potentially collaborate on projects. The first confab will be at the Kalamazoo Public Library on January 29th and I will attend. The Michigan Cooperative Directors Association (MCDA) has committed to support this effort and help with upcoming dates and locations. I am the selected liaison.

New Initiatives:

- Mini-Grant Program – An Ad Hoc group, Heather Bassett (Reed City), Bradley Chaplin (Kalkaska), Kim Frazho (Houghton Lake), and Eric Smith (Mason County/Ludington) developed guidelines for this “Library Service Expansion & Mini-Grant Program” which was approved at the November MMLL Board meeting. The program was open from November 25th to January 11th, with all applications submitted during that period considered equally. We received nine submissions, 3 for one-time event costs (\$250) and the other 6 for service expansion projects (up to \$1,000) for a total amount requested of \$5,700. I will request that the Board fund the extra \$700 so that we may fund all projects in their entirety.
- Rotating Maker Kits – Tracy Logan-Walker, youth librarian at the Cadillac Wexford Public Library, put together the initial project proposal, and I added to the project the idea of also purchasing 3D printers. The Board approved \$5,000 for this project, and the “Maker Team” consisting of Tracy Logan-Walker (Cadillac), Sarah Maddox (Houghton Lake), Michelle Moore (Missaukee/Lake City), and Stacy Pasche (Benzie Shores/Frankfort), met on January 5th to begin to determine the kit themes and divide up the research, selection, kit specification and program generation work. We discussed how timely the U-M School of Information IMLS grant is for this project, as they will be doing two summers of statewide training and activity, and will provide lots of good resources. We hope to have a couple sites selected within MMLL for their project. The group meets next over the phone on Friday, February 12th at 2 p.m. Any ideas may be sent to team members for consideration.

Value of Cooperative Service:

- I had been thinking of writing an explanation of PA 89 of 1977 and how it was meant to serve the state and support quality public library service for all residents, when I received a request for this very thing from one of our member libraries at the request of her Board.
- The completed draft - the value of cooperative membership - will be in the January MMLL Board packet for consideration and discussion. It is important that the MMLL Board and Advisory Council be engaged in the articulation of value, as the director serves at the pleasure of the organization as directed by the Board.
- I have been informed by the state librarian that there are MMLL member libraries asking about the process of leaving the cooperative (presumably to join another). It is allowable for this to happen, and each cooperative has something in their plan of service regarding this issue. For MMLL, there is a requirement that the library notify the cooperative six months prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year in which they wish to leave (April 1st, no joke ☺).
- My concern, after serving as director of statewide library services at the Library of Michigan for thirteen years and having a fairly global view, is that this “co-op shopping” will lead to further inequity of public library service in the state. A cooperative whose membership is mostly small class size libraries, such as MMLL, has fewer resources with which to serve their membership. The legislation was intended to provide good regional support to all public libraries in the state, and it was intended to be funded at least at \$.50 per capita in 1978 dollars. Today we find there are eleven cooperatives in the state, and each is different, with no base level of service that every public library in the state shall receive. Because of this, many of the larger libraries are looking to “shop” if they are in a low-resourced cooperative.
- I have been discussing with the other cooperative directors the idea of specialization so we are not all doing the same thing repeatedly (such as negotiating discounts that are not always similar across the state). We have begun to do this, with TLN doing the group discount negotiation for those materials and services that are not on MeL and not negotiated by MCLS. We are hopeful that one value of this will be the reversal of the Recorded Books offer of a discount to any library in the state for Zinio (they said) which was not actually for existing customers. The net result has been that existing customers have seen “new adopters” get much better pricing, which is aggravating.

- So, there are ways for us all to work together toward a common goal without disadvantaging the "have not" libraries OR the "have" libraries. There are many great minds in the library world in Michigan, and I would hope we can solve this and any future issues that arise in a win-win fashion for the residents of Michigan.

ALA National Library Legislative Day (NLLD):

- The 2016 National Library Legislative Day will be May 2-3, 2016 in Washington, D.C.
- The national issues are compiled here: <http://www.ala.org/nlld>
- The Library of Michigan coordinates the Michigan contingent. In past years, Gale Cengage has given grants to individuals (library directors, trustees) to cover their travel to this event. Some of the library cooperatives in the state also give grants. Shall we offer assistance and put together a team from MMLL?

Travel:

12/3 Ludington – HR workshop, MCDL
12/4 Houghton Lake – visit with new director
12/7 Leland, Suttons Bay – library visits
12/18 Lansing – Cooperative Director's Association meeting
12/22 Northport, Beulah, Thompsonville – library visits
12/23 Central Lake, Bellaire – library visits

Member Library Visits:

I have visited these 35 of the 45 member libraries:

Group 1 – Alden, Bellaire, Central Lake, Elk Rapids, Mancelona, Kalkaska

Group 2 – Benzie Shores, Benzonia, Betsie Valley, Darcy/Beulah, Glen Lake, Leelanau, Leland, Suttons Bay

Group 3 – Fife Lake, Interlochen, Peninsula, Traverse Area (Woodmere and East Bay)

Group 4 – Manistee County

Group 5 – Cadillac Wexford (main only so far)

Group 6 – McBain, Missaukee District, Houghton Lake

Group 7 – Mason County (Ludington), Hart, Pentwater, Shelby, Walkerville

Group 8 – Chase, Pathfinder (Baldwin), LeRoy, M. Alice Chapin/Marion, Reed City

Group 9 – Morton Township, Big Rapids

If you would like me to plan a visit, please don't hesitate to ask!

Respectfully Submitted,

~Sheryl

Sheryl L. Mase