

POS Focus Group
Ulster County Trustees
March 7, 2006

Issues/Challenges

- Funding
 - Concerns about cost increases (from MHLS, heating oil, books, staff, etc.)
 - County funding being slashed
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- Resource Sharing
 - Circulation is up – this is good, adds value to the local library; more patron education about service is needed
 - Concerns about charges for out of area ILL
 - Availability of titles to patrons of non-owning libraries
 - Accessibility of foreign language materials in other libraires
- Space
 - for technology
 - for books
 - for children's activities
- Staff Training
 - Basics
 - New technology
 - Managing patrons
- Need strong Friends Groups
 - Especially for fundraising
- Technology
 - Patrons are more “technology savvy”
 - Constant need for staff training
- Communications
 - Harder and harder to get people's attention
 - Need to raise awareness about libraries; How to get out the message?
 - Reaching out to realtors and other business people
 - “Just a newsletter doesn't cut it”; some still don't have a newsletter
 - Need to explore non-traditional communication methods (i.e. local cable channel)
 - Need constant communication with the public
- Advocacy
 - Need to build more “grassroots support” for libraries
 - Need to be better connected to legislators at local, county, state and federal levels
 - Professional lobbyist; could Friends Group pay for this?
 - Need to combat notion that libraries are an “extra”
 - Overall need to be more serious about lobbying – possible role for MHLS
- Collection Development
 - See opportunities for collective collection development; individual libraries could specialize
- Less books are being borrowed
 - Many more formats (audio books, DVDs, etc.)

- Can this be changed?
- How to expose patrons to more diverse authors?; How to bring in more local authors?
- How to get kids and teens to read more books?
- How to reach parents of preschool-age children
- Programming
 - Increase in adult programming, want to see it to continue to increase
 - Continuous increase in children's programming
 - Still need to promote that library does programs for all ages in the community, many still don't know this
- Youth Services
 - How to keep kids using the library as they get older? Critical transition ages seem to be when kids enter elementary school and as teens
 - Difficult to connect with schools and teachers locally
 - Managing tutors who use the library as their workplace
- Community Center role emerging for many libraries
- More legal issues are coming up
 - Bonds, construction, personnel
 - Lack of lawyers specializing in library law
- Votes
 - Need help "getting out the vote"; vote publicity a challenge

System Services

- Keep:
 - Consultations to boards
 - print department
 - web site
 - delivery (essential)
 - "maintain and enhance"
- Avoid charging fees
- Lobbying
- Legal assistance
 - Forum to find out how other libraries deal with legal issues
 - Policy clearinghouse
- Publicity
 - Would like more centralized publicity (i.e. National Library Week)
 - Help libraries become more competitive (against Barnes & Noble)
- Projections
 - Need help keeping up with new technology and formats
 - What other changes are coming that libraries need to prepare for?
 - Usage trends
 - Demographic trends
 - Provide forum to hear from internal audience (member libraries) and external (through focus groups with users and non-users) about what they want and see the library providing
- Central purchasing
 - Keep costs down

- Minimize staff time at local level
 - Help with county-based negotiations (i.e. for heating oil)
- Grants
 - Raise awareness about grant availability
 - Supply libraries with a grant writer (libraries are willing to pay for this service)
- Financial accounting help
 - Accountant on retainer
 - Help setting up bookkeeping system
 - Templates

How do you define quality service?

- Staff training
 - Staff is knowledgeable about all available reference resources (print and electronic)
 - Staff learn “the basics” early on
- By remaining a democratic institution; “the library is for EVERYONE”
- Quality employees
 - Well paid with benefits = happy employees
- By being a gathering place for the community