

Plan of Service Focus Group Session

Dutchess County Trustees | February 4, 2011

Challenges & Issues:

- **Funding**
 - State cuts and cuts from the county are putting the squeeze on the local library budget and creating a feeling of uncertainty about the future
 - Trustees are spending more time discussing the library's finances
 - Trustees are becoming more cost conscious and fiscally conservative as there are less resources to meet the needs of the community
 - Trustee/director communication with staff about financial issues is lacking
 - Voters are not coming out in the same numbers to support the library's budget vote
 - Board is struggling to identify community priorities; needs help with strategic planning
 - Steep learning curve for the personnel committee (negotiations, legal questions, salaries and benefits)
 - Would like to seek community partners (schools, colleges, other area nonprofits) that could help maximize the library's space, staff and technology (or lack thereof)
- **Outreach / PR**
 - Understand that outreach to community = votes to secure funding
 - As libraries go beyond the traditional mission of "books" and "knowledge" how do we convey who we are and what we have to offer? Concerns that we are watering down our value by trying to be "all things to all people"; but it is understood that we have to "go beyond the book" to remain viable. How will the library be important in people's future?
 - Challenge of reaching the people who are not already involved
 - Promotion outside of the library building needs to be a priority
 - Must get better at conveying that the library has something for the "average" person – not just those in need; Looking for ways to get higher income users to want to come to the library and see their friends there
 - Programming is critical to building support in the community
 - Need more volunteers
 - Need help recruiting more members for the core Friends Group
 - Critical to have a "face of the library" (the director) at community meetings (Rotary, PTA, etc.)
 - Lack of staff and funds to produce a regular newsletter/enewsletter
 - Need new ways to reach a variety of age groups (specifically teens)
 - Looking for creative ways to do outreach
- **Staffing**
 - Need more staff to help patrons with technology (computers, Internet, ebooks)
 - Managing technology in-house is becoming unmanageable; cannot hire a staff person just for IT support
 - Need PR staff
 - Library sees a full spectrum of social issues and staff are not always equipped to deal with these situations (homelessness, unsupervised children, mentally ill patrons)
 - Dealing with staff fears in light of financial uncertainty
 - Helping staff deal with change: there needs to be new ways to use the library to meet current needs and reach new users but some staff are resistant to change
 - Want staff to be really good at customer service and reading recommendations for all age groups

- **Space**
 - Lacking space for more computers
 - Lacking space for programming
 - Lack of quiet space
 - Seeking partners in the community that have more space
- **Technology**
 - Trying to keep up with demand in the face of rapidly changing technology
 - Lacking the staff to
 - Maintain/manage technology on a day-to-day basis and
 - Leverage technology in the library to bring in new users (through programming; computer classes).
 - Managing expectations is a challenge; younger users expect the library to have everything
 - Increasing number of people (age 70 and under) are hooked up to technology constantly; how can we make the library relevant in light of this “constant connection” online?

What do you want people to say about your library?

- It’s a friendly place
- That the staff is knowledgeable about what they have (readers advisory for each age group)
- That we are known for having a high regard for the needs of the community and doing the right thing
- Libraries are a good value; something of value to an individual – no matter what their age, income or educational level

Roles for the System

- *Inter-library loan/delivery is critical*
- *Trustee education/consultation in the areas of strategic planning, finance, personnel and policies*
- *Technology management services*
- *Support for technology classes for the public*
- *Human Resources support*
- *Help with outreach and public relations; traditional and online*
- *Identifying partnership opportunities*
- *Readers Advisory support*
- *Customer Service training*