

Plan of Service Focus Group Session

Assistant Directors | April 15, 2011

Challenges & Issues:

- **Funding**

- Funding was the #1 self-identified challenge
- Concerns surround the stagnation of library funding, reductions at the state level and concerns about the tax cap.
- Libraries are busier than ever and budgets have not kept up with demand. Same amount of staff doing more and more work.
- Static amount of staff to deal with increases is resulting in morale problems.
- Rising cost of pensions is putting a pinch on budgets
- No clear answer as to how to meet/manage the needs/demands of the community given the budget situation

- **Management**

- Busier than ever – not just influx of patrons but in dealing with items in the delivery as well; “Our growth/success is out of control.”
- Morale problems due to increasing demand but no corresponding increase in staff to handle the demand.
- Continuing challenge to retain staff.
- Seeking ways to inspire staff
- Seeking ways to build staff buy-in to the library’s plans
- Perception that they are too busy to train new employees; resulting in on-going problems
- Finding it difficult to set personal goals/benchmarks; “too busy to plan”
- Trying to find creative scheduling approaches to help alleviate frontline staff stress
- “Seems to be a disconnect between volume of work and why we do this for the community amongst staff”
- Looking for more efficient workflow solutions
- Assistant directors feel isolated in their organizations.
- Intense multi-tasking makes it difficult to concentrate.
- Tough to get staff to work weekends; “there should be children’s programs when people want to come, not just when it is convenient for staff.”

- **Resource Sharing**

- Feeling that resource sharing rules may not be keeping up with changes in format types.
- Dealing with increasing number of problems from other libraries which causes more work at other libraries (not following Resource Sharing Standards, common courtesy issues); particularly notice this issue from libraries who rely on volunteers at the circulation desk
- Discrepancy between large libraries and small libraries re: Millennium policy. “In larger libraries director has less direct hands on experience with Millennium, but are

part of the decision making for everyone. Need for more people with hands on experience in Millennium as part of the decision making system wide. "

- **Collection Development**

- All assistant directors are involved with collection development.
- "We will become irrelevant without good collections"
- "Purchasing in the small library environment is challenging"
- Recognition that collection development needs/styles differs depending on size/role of each library; concern that there will be shrinking diversity in collections as more libraries focus on purchasing popular materials.

- **Outreach**

- All assistant directors indicated it was part of their job descriptions to help with PR
- All are looking to attract more/new people into the library; how to reach non-users?
- Growing understanding that the library's web site is key
- Dealing with patron confusion of how area libraries work together; need script to use when responding to patrons about equity issues

- **Facility**

- Some attendees are dealing with new buildings or about to; concerns about how to make the most of the new space
- Higher demand for programs creates higher demands on space; scheduling of the space is challenging for some libraries
- "Board seems in denial about need for security."

Trends in usage / differences:

- Much more volume driven by economic issues
- Increase in aggressive, stressed out patrons
- Waves of homeless people using the library; moving furniture, bathing in bathrooms
- Dealing with two sides of the spectrum with patrons: intellectual vs. "needy."

What do you hope people are saying about the library

- They love it
- Welcoming
- Friendly
- We have what they want
- Can get things. Happy if they can get things.

