

NJLA Diversity and Outreach Meeting Minutes for September 29th, 2016 at the South Orange Public Library

In attendance: Jill D'Amico (SBPL), Andrew Luck (PFPL), Dina Meky (Berkeley College Library), Erin Blatt (FTPL), Keisha Miller (South Orange), Jen Schureman (GCLS), Tara Kehoe (TBBC), Selwa Shamy (Somerset County Library System), Kyle Crais (RTPL), Enola Romano (Montclair PL), and Mimi Lee (NJ State Library).

The meeting began at 10:15 am, with the above members in attendance. The members were introduced formally to Erin Blatt, newest member-at-large.

I. Reports from:

a. The NJLA Executive Board.

It was announced that Jen Schureman had been elected a member-at-large of the Executive Board of NJLA.

In the review of the previous meeting's minutes, Jill and Jen reinstated the initiatives that NJLA and the committee were taking place to form potential task forces to strengthen partnerships between libraries and local businesses, associations, and non-profits within the town to show the library's worth and value in the community. Outreach does not necessarily equal a financial commitment, but rather a statement of support that the local township supports its local library and their programs.

A second taskforce would possibly be formed to create criteria in establishing a type of recognition for libraries that have excelled at programs or at impacting their communities. This would make them a "star" library and further enhance their value and recognition within their communities.

b. Reports from the NJ State Library was given by Mimi Lee:

There is an ongoing initiative to train ESL teachers, tutors and volunteers alongside Literacy NJ. This is not a nation-wide program but it will provide some across the board training and support for the libraries that choose to participate in this workshop.

The first session is tentatively scheduled for December, with a hopeful four additional workshops depending on demand and how well it is received.

c. Talking Book and Braille Center Report given by Tara Kehoe:

There are several grants that are ongoing at the TBBC which are being used for iPad training for people with disabilities. This program is in association with the LEAP (Library Equal Access Program), which provides basic training on JAWS (program that reads the text from your computer). Tara reports that this program is currently in high demand and has been received well.

The discussion then moved on to the subject of homelessness and homeless patrons at libraries and what policies are put in place to provide access and service to those who may not have a permanent residence.

An example of was given by the South Orange Public Library who have a social worker on staff twice a week for consultation and who the library staff can tap into for resources. The State Library and TBBC also meet with the Department of Families and Children to address such issues. After brief discussion, Jen Scheman suggested this topic as a possible conference entry.

The committee was reminded of the dates for the Adult Services forum (the 24th of October) and the Youth Services Forum (the 20th of October). The TBBC will be at the Adult Services Forum and host a pop-up technology clinic with handouts and demos.

II. Outreach and PR Kit

a. Right to Read

The Right to Read promo is underway and there are currently 8 boxes of books ready to be donated. There are drop off points in northern, central and southern NJ for libraries wishing to donate foreign language materials.

Jill D'Amico will be sending out a Google Form for events that members of the committee feel libraries (whether local ones or statewide) should have a presence at. This would serve as an outreach opportunity for libraries in the area to promote their programming.

III. Barriers to Access:

This includes items like fines, hours, cards and residency. Discussion took place regarding issues such as patrons who do not have a permanent residence come into the library to borrow materials (e.g. people in shelters or halfway houses). A point was made that circulation staff typically are more concerned with following policy and procedure rather than granting access. The question of fines (children vs. adults) and whether that was a deterrent to access or whether it was a source of income to the library was discussed. It was agreed that depending on the library, it could be a source of revenue.

VI. Planning Ahead

a. Conference Ideas

Google Forms will be sent out by Jill D'Amico for ideas, conference suggestions and projects anyone in the committee would like to discuss. Topics that were discussed for potential conference presentations included handling homeless patrons at the library, and establishing a program or series of programs to help adults with developmental and mental disabilities.

These programs would be targeted at helping them learn skills throughout their lifetime and would be different from Early Intervention programs (programs that focus on adjusting preschool aged children and their families to school) because it would focus on more long term skills for adults. Somerset County Libraries had done a similar program for adults and their families to great success. If there is any interest in pursuing this, Jen Schureman has offered to be the contact person.

b. Ideas Survey

Members who wish to suggest a topic for conference or pre-conference can fill out the pending Google Form. There can be panel or lightening round suggestions. After a brief discussion, it was decided that a webinar could be another potential medium, however, a panel or presentation would be preferable.

c. Grant/Award

The incoming NJLA president has indicated an interest in having the D&O committee address a project he wishes to develop that offers one membership and one conference admission to a non-NJLA member who would then be asked to serve on a committee. This is to try and promote diversity within the profession. Discussion ensued over whether a single membership was enough or whether this should take the form of a 'class' or 'cohort' where multiple people are selected (similar to the Emerging Leaders program). This would ideally be offered to library staff who are not library professionals. The consensus was that this would not be solely a D&O project, but rather include other sections and committees form NJLA and include them in the discussion and open up opportunities to collaborate.

Meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.

Upcoming meeting: October 27th – Long Branch Public Library

The minutes were taken by Dina Mekey.