



LLNJ Community Workshop
Ocean County Public Library, Jackson Branch
March 2, 2017

1. Context: What's happening in the world right now that is having--or will have--a big effect on libraries in New Jersey, their people and the people they serve? Consider all scales (global, national, local) and opportunities as well as challenges.

- People are tired and libraries need to be more compassionate
- The population is aging
- Politically divisive but seeking community
- People are nervous about all the changes. It's very difficult to remain neutral.
- Federal funding cuts to agencies that provide resources to libraries are at risk
- New president, funding threats, healthcare, racism, budgets, taxes, not believing facts, alternate facts
- Changing community demographics
- Immigration/civil rights fears
- Technology skills gaps (older and younger users both)
- Budget
- Changing tech, staffing, no kindness
- Immigration policies put patrons at risk and how should the library assist/be a partner in citizenship process.
- Citizenship or lack of for new community members
- Technology is leaving many behind
- Mass incarceration and its aftereffects.
- Job skills—keeping up with what the market is looking for
- Class inequality
- Communities are diversifying; lack of unifying collective experiences
- Text messaging exceeding phone calls; people interacting more with technology than other people
- Changing role of the library and how the staff adapts and supports that.
- Customers' sense of entitlement and being racist and thinking it's ok
- Need for quiet spaces!
- Convenience is more important than ever. Things done fast and people can get that in other places.
- Getting necessary resources to veterans who should receive what benefits are available to them
- Uncertainties, world events, economy, demographics, role in the community, health care changes
- Yelp, FB reviews—no recourse for bad reviews
- Lower circulation stats.
- Making our resources more available to vulnerable populations such as senior community and nursing homes etc.
- Technology constantly changing
- More people have own devices versus computer use at library—but do they still need our wifi?
- Staff are expecting more despite budgets being tight
- Public safety
- Safety issues for customers and staff

- Federal and state gov. changes—new governor
- Role in the community is changing, trusted resource for everyday information, taxes, healthcare, referrals
- Hate crimes increasing; need for inclusion

Themes and further conversation: Neutrality... Libraries feeling pulled in many different ways. People waiting/trying to see what side we fall on. Difficult to stay neutral in the current situation. Don't want to lose 40% of our patrons because we've taken a side. Interacting with folks with different points of view have given an opportunity to learn more. Exploring other people's worlds. Change and uncertainty; movement to capitalize on what's going on. People are willing to go into the community and do things they've never done before... being engaged in the community. Our focus is not as much on money as it has been in the past—much less than in 2013 planning process. Our focus has shifted. We have adapted and we're not seeing the same number of effects—speaks to what we can do as a community. Technology is dominating our society. Every single person has access to multi-function devices like smart phones... don't know how to write an email. Good challenge for libraries to push beyond the borders... we have to rise to the challenge and be more for our communities besides books... communication and information literacy. Big opportunity.

Citizenship and changing community demographics/habits. Greater interest in engaging with the community in a meaningful way from libraries, e.g. community engagement staff in libraries. Anger and anxiety, miasma that is following people around no matter who you are and what you believe. It's not that there's a particular segment of the society that's angry or confused, worried, upset... it's everyone. Kids are very anxious. They are concerned for their friends as well as themselves and don't get told the whole story. Kids are in the middle of the fray. People are scared of each other probably because they haven't had exposure to each other in a safe place doing non-threatening things. Just sharing in being human. There aren't very many places where that can happen. Libraries are not neutral because they take a stance of diversity and inclusion. Neutrality is an important issue, what it means.

2. Envisioning our future: It's 2025 and libraries of all types are thriving hubs of their communities. Draw a picture describing what's happening. What do libraries look/feel like? Where are they? Who is in and around them? What are they doing? How are libraries connected to the rest of the community and the world? Who are our partners/collaborators? What services do they offer and for whom? What new skills do librarians have and what new roles do they take on?

[Link to photos on site here]

3. Strategic Analysis: Thinking about our conversation so far, what is working really well that we want to KEEP? What isn't working that we might do well to ABANDON? What might we INVENT or REINVENT that would make a big difference to our success?

KEEP

- Traditional services
- Innovating, story time, early literacy, welcoming everyone, community, comfortable spaces, kindness
- Stories, books, information access, traditional story times, outreach
- Innovation and adaptation
- Staff to help people

- Databases, physical resources (books), statewide delivery service, providing community space
- Support of literacy (reading and tech)
- Health information
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Quiet spaces
- Multicultural programming, children's programs, parenting programs, health literacy programs and outreach, business classes, maker-type programs
- Excellent customer service, continuing to value existing customers, give respect and attention to current customers
- Focus on community and patrons

ABANDON

- No restrictions on getting a library card—can use in all of NJ
- Fines
- Fines, restrictive policies
- Fines
- Reference desk; fines and fees; the "warehouse" attitude
- Technology bandwagon; being trendy for the sake of being trendy
- Being all things for all people
- Trends but only focus on what your community actually needs that you can provide
- Gatekeeping resources and spaces
- "Keeping up with the Jones'"—don't have to do the next big thing—chasing the shiny for good
- Some rules, convention, stereotypes, fear, red tape, lack of flexibility, roadblocks, paper application cards, “shsh”ing

INVENT

- Statewide library card!

- New ways to introduce STEAM, community engagement opportunities, take the library out to the community, create opportunities for connections
- Library Uber
- Drone library delivery
- Invent a regional structure of communication for libraries
- Board requirements/training
- Library standards and evaluations

REINVENT

- Diversity recruitment of staff
- Bookmobiles services, outreach service, delivery of materials and knowledge on how to download, teach skills in the community, programming
- More flexible borrowing procedures; more fine amnesty days
- Library hours for the convenience of the customer
- Reference service
- Outreach
- Bookmobile door to door
- Adult programming—bordering on abandon? 19-35s—debate—bring them in or not put anymore resources in it?
- Chat reference; reference desk; readers advisory
- Literacy services
- More information delivery methods
- 24/7 access and ease of use
- PR without necessarily having meaningful impact
- Library spaces for the future (gardens, incubators, community rooms, etc.)
- How stakeholders view the library and success—not just circulation stats
- Educating users about resources
- Inter-library communication, networking and camaraderie
- Capturing patron's real question

4. Thinking about what we've learned so far, what is an action step/project/initiative that we might start today to create the desired future for LLNJ and its members and stakeholders? Include a 5-6 word catchy title and 50 word description of the project.

1. **"Work It"**: Grants for libraries to build co-working or business incubators spaces to provide spaces for entrepreneurs, unemployed and small businesses to meet and sustain their business as so many people are starting and maintaining businesses from home.
2. **A Fine Time for NJ Library Patrons**: The project would be the evaluation of the roles of fines in public libraries. We want to study alternatives and the impact of the elimination or reduction of fines and fees. How would this impact budgets, collections, and patrons?
3. **Changing Spaces**: Provide small grants to review/evaluate existing space and purchase new furniture to better utilize and also attract diverse patrons (i.e., group and individual space, ex. autistic needs, religious group needs, etc.). in other words, evaluate and improve existing space.
4. **Librarians on the Loose**: Taking library services to the community where they are: restaurants, senior centers, schools, parks/recreation (pop up library services). Tracking with social media and letting folks know what the library has to offer.
5. **Value yourself so you can value others**: Empowering staff to be knowledgeable so they're confident in serving patrons. Learn about the skills your library staff members have that they can share that with other staff who may need to learn those skills, such as customer service, library systems and processes, policies, etc. so they're confident with their dealings with the public. Library staff can then communicate better with the public. Library staff can educate each other. Value your staff by supplementing that with the best outside training you can provide.
6. **Library Works**: Recruiting a diverse staff at all levels. Offering scholarships, marketing and outreach to high schools, churches of all faiths, awareness of the occupation and what we really do. Market to communities about what the library is and what we offer and who we are.