Sustain Your Library Through Relationship Building and Community Engagement

SAM MCBANE MULFORD AND CHERYL GOULD
MAY 2ND, 2018
Rules of Engagement

1. You will be asked to answer our questions via polls. If you are in groups, please designate someone to be at a keyboard to respond.

2. Ask questions at any time and we’ll also leave time at the end
Poll 1 – How Connected Do You Feel?

Choose a number from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to show how connected you feel with the other people on this webinar.
What if we were all in a room and we asked everyone to share ...

- The city and state your library is in
- Whether you are a small, medium or large library (or system)
- Your library type
Poll 2 – What Type of Library are You From?
Who We Are

- Sam McBane Mulford
  - Strategist
  - Opportunist
  - Ideation Collaborative

- Cheryl Gould
  - Learner
  - Facilitator
  - Fully Engaged Libraries
Poll 3 – What’s a work relationship?

Choose the best answer
What’s a Work Relationship?

- Two or more entities connected in a meaningful way
- Not about just supporting the library!
- Relationships are different than advocacy
- Relationships should be in support of the mission/priorities
What Gets in the Way of Developing Effective Relationships?

- Time (Priorities, Commitments, Fire suppression)
- Communication Skills
  - listening
  - body language
- Relationship Skills
  - being engaged
  - getting back to people
  - willing to engage
- Introversion/Shyness
Strategies for Building Productive External Relationships

- Research who does what, in what areas, in your community
- Mutually beneficial
- Identify ‘What do libraries have to offer?’
Libraries Need to be Connected in Communities

- Research who does what, in what areas, in your community
  - Organizations (non-profits, for-profits, groups, etc.)
  - Government agencies
  - Community leadership
    (and different areas/interests in communities)

- Kumu.io – data visualization tool
Mutually Beneficial

- How does the relationship benefit our community?
- What do they get from the relationship?
- What do we get?
Strategies for Building Productive External Relationships

- Identify ‘What does the library have to offer?’
What Libraries Bring to the Table

- Unique Professional Expertise
- Staff and Resources
- Buildings and Meeting Space
- Presence in the Community
- Free and Equal
- Privacy Advocate
- Community Trust (Neutral Institution)
Poll 4 - Which of these relationships do you currently have?

- Local government
- Non-profits
- Schools
- Local businesses
- Community leaders
Partner Versus Sponsor

- Work together
- Get money or stuff
Rightsizing Your Relationships

- What relationships have you changed to align level of effort with benefit to community?
Ending Relationships

- Are there relationships you’ve ended because they are no longer productive?
Poll 5 - What does Engagement at work mean?
What Do We Mean by Engagement?

- **Discovery**
  - Learning about others and what they care about
  - Looking for opportunities to help or be helped or make something bigger happen
- **Focused**
- **Connected**
- **Interactive**
- **Equitable** – all involved gain something from it
Libraries and Engagement - Omaha

- Strategic Plan
- Two Year IMLS Grant
  - Creating a Collaborative Culture Through Community Engagement
- Facilitator Cohort
- Office at the Community Engagement Center at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO)
Original Definitions - Omaha

- **Programs** are events that occur inside a library building.

- **Outreach** events occur when we take our library materials and services outside a library building.

- **Community Engagement** may occur inside or outside of a library building. Community Engagement events can be arranged by the Community Outreach Department, the Adult and Youth Programming Managers, and/or branch staff members.
Updated Super Cool and Sophisticated - Omaha

- **Programs** showcase or deliver library services and collections to the public. Programs generally occur in a library building and are advertised to the public.

- **Outreach** is showcasing or delivering library services, programs, and collections to a targeted audience outside the library.

- **Community Engagement** is an externally focused and community driven process to create opportunities for connections and relationships.
In Order to Engage the Community More Deeply

- Trained 16 facilitators
- They researched community needs and stakeholders
- Designed and facilitated meetings
- Facilitation as a Service
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facets</th>
<th>Books / Resources</th>
<th>Devices / Access</th>
<th>Humanity / Emotions</th>
<th>Thoughts / Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Simple</td>
<td>Connect a patron with a book</td>
<td>Provide a device and access to the Internet</td>
<td>Be a welcoming, trusted institution where people feel safe</td>
<td>Develop collections that support exploration and discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Readers Advisory Connect people to resources from other organizations</td>
<td>Help with use of the computer or software and the task at hand</td>
<td>Model and provide / refer access to experiential Emotional Intelligence learning and development in the library and community</td>
<td>Provide ‘pathfinders’ on curated resources and local interest groups</td>
</tr>
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<td>Active</td>
<td>Convene healthy conversations on specific content</td>
<td>Connect patrons with other resources and opportunities to achieve their goal in a ‘pathfinder’ or resource directory and personal introductions to the orgs</td>
<td>Convene diverse groups and facilitate conversations that allow discovery, understanding and appreciation of difference; facilitate community wide problem solving</td>
<td>Host and/or facilitate local TEDx (or similar) forums and initiatives; tap community talent as speakers and mentors/coaches</td>
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Poll 6 - Why should libraries care about Relationship Building and Community Engagement?
What We Think...

- Why should libraries care about relationship building and community engagement?
  - Leverage
  - Sustainability (> Growth)
  - Free marketing
  - Ensure diversity

- It’s iterative
  - Have to have relationships for people to be motivated to engage
  - Have to engage people to have relationships
It’s More Than Having a Community Engagement Librarian

- If libraries are about life long learning, conversation, community engagement and collaboration... we need a culture shift from dealing with whoever comes through our doors to learning about the community and finding challenges and opportunities to address

  (maybe in collaboration with others)
Engagement Inside and Outside the Library

- Engage patron / customers
  - One on one
  - Through programs
  - Through staff gathering ideas about service improvement

- Engage communities
  - Learn about their aspirations and challenges
  - Engage them in developing opportunities
  - Facilitate their engaging each other
Poll 7 - How Do You Decide What Relationships to Pursue?
Pursue Relationships That...

- Align with your mission
- Enable and empower your strategic plan
- Utilize complementary strengths or skills
- Ensure you both GET something
- Leverage your work (shared service population)
Facilitative Mindset With the Community

- Much like a reference interview
  - ask to understand
  - learn about their challenges, goals and aspirations

- Instead of:
  - Here’s what we have for you.

- Try:
  - How can we help?
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**Spectrum of Connectivity**
Continue the Conversation at Your Library

- What is our value in the community?
- How do you decide which relationships to pursue/problems to solve?
- Is this a culture shift or do you just have a “community engagement librarian”?
- What training do we need to help staff pursue this?
- What can we stop doing so we can start doing more relationship building and community engagement?
Key Points!

- Relationships are crucial to engagement
  - Should be strategic
  - Require skills and behaviors
- Rethink assumptions about engagement
- Learn about your community and align relationships to library priorities
- Leverage existing or seek new relationships with intention
Questions?

To get in touch with us:
- Sam McBane Mulford – sam@strategicimp.com
- Cheryl Gould – cheryl.gould@gmail.com
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