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The American Library Association
Libraries Transforming Communities
Interim Report 2
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Prepared for:
Lainie Castle
Project Director
ALA Public Programs Office
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611

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NewKnowledge is a non-profit research institute founded to pursue a deep understanding of how people engage with society’s grand challenges. The organization works to expand understanding of how knowledge is acquired and acted upon in order to promote a strong democracy that enables all people to live to their greatest potential in harmony with the biosphere.
Executive Summary

*Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC)* is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA), with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, seeking to strengthen librarians’ roles as core community leaders and change-agents through training by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation’s Turning Outward approach. In partnership with ALA, external evaluator New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) engaged in a multi-pronged, intensive evaluation to track the progress of the initiative. This second interim report summarizes findings of the assessment conducted from August 2014 to January 2015 and provides recommendations corresponding to each project objective.

NewKnowledge assessed activities based on the project’s four key areas: 1) intensive work of the Public Innovators Cohort, which consists of library leaders and community partners from 10 sites nationwide; 2) scalable learning across the library field using LTC resources and tools; 3) ALA staff and member leader training; and 4) a communications campaign that builds support, visibility and buy-in for the work of libraries as agents of community innovation and change.

Report chapters are organized according to these four areas. Each of the four chapters includes sections describing the primary objective as stated in the Gates Foundation Results Framework, desired outcomes, summary of key findings, overview of methods, findings and discussion, and recommendations for improving practice.

Ongoing assessment of the LTC initiative indicate the following:

- Members of the Public Innovators Cohort see their library culture shifting to be more community-oriented, though institutions still encounter challenges to this process;
- The reach of LTC extends to library professionals through Turning Outward sessions offered at ALA conferences (including the recent Midwinter 2015 conference in Chicago) and through online tools and resources;
- ALA staff and member leaders have opportunities to become increasingly Turned Outward through Kitchen Table Conversations and plans to improve internal training; and
- Opportunities exist for ALA to advance positive media engagement through the Cohort and by leveraging other examples of transformative practice, such as the presentation given by Scott Bonner of Ferguson Public Library at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Chicago.
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# Introduction

*Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC)* is a comprehensive initiative of the American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and largest library association in the world, with approximately 58,000 members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. The LTC initiative is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a global philanthropic leader. The initiative addresses a critical need within the library field by developing and distributing new tools, resources, and support for professionals to engage with their communities in new ways. To this end, four objectives have been established, as described in the Gates Foundation Results Framework:

- **Objective 1, Intensive Cohort Work**: Create an opportunity for a cohort to intensively learn and apply the Harwood Institute practice in order to understand its potential for the field, identify barriers to success, and track change results;
- **Objective 2, Scalable Learning**: Contribute resources to the field that will teach librarians new approaches to community engagement and innovation;
- **Objective 3, ALA Staff Work**: Train ALA staff in the Harwood Institute practice to focus the organization outward and align internal process to the work in the field; and
- **Objective 4, Communications**: Build awareness, participation, buy-in, and a sense of urgency—in the field and externally—about strengthening of this type of library work and its potential for community change.

ALA's LTC partner is the nonprofit Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, whose Turning Outward approach emphasizes changing the orientation of institutions and individuals from internal (institutional) to external (community-facing). This process promotes taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive about community issues; and putting community aspirations first.

In partnership with ALA, external evaluator New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) has engaged in a mixed-method evaluation to track the progress of the initiative. This second interim report summarizes findings of the assessment conducted from August 2014 to January 2015, according to the four objectives of the project. Each section includes the intended primary objective and outcomes, as determined by the Gates Foundation Results Framework. An overview of methods provides background on the evaluation activities and participation. Key findings and recommendations are provided for each section. These recommendations can be used to further improve the trainings and tools, making them more effective over the remaining course of the initiative.
Objective 1: Intensive Cohort Work

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE
Create an opportunity for a cohort to intensively learn and apply the Harwood Institute practice in order to understand its potential for the field, identify barriers to success, and track change results.

DESIRED OUTCOMES
- Sustainability for the community engagement work of libraries is enhanced (e.g. libraries and library staff adopt library-led community convenings as a practice, librarians are confident in their skills and practice their skills as part of the day-to-day job, the "turned outward" activities of the library indicate a different way of doing business).
- Cohort participants become champions for this approach by sharing their lessons learned, mentoring peers, sharing their experiences, spreading the practice, and providing feedback to ALA on tools for the field.
- Cohort participants communicate and collaborate more effectively with their community partners.
- Cohort participant-led conversations result in community-specific actions (e.g. development of library services to community, programs to address community issues, library involvement with community partners to address issues, community member involvement in issues, work of library, work of partners - with the outcome of strengthening the community).

KEY FINDINGS
- Cohort members perceive great value and take pride in holding Community Conversations and note an increase in their own ability to effectively facilitate Community Conversations; though not all staff members have fully participated in this work and internal buy-in is still a challenge at some sites.
- The perceived neutrality of libraries is a contributing factor to successful community engagement.
- LTC tools and resources are valuable and relevant to the Cohort’s work. The LTC method is being championed through Harwood’s mentoring of the Cohort, and the Cohort’s mentoring of their peers and colleagues.
- Cohort members have internalized some of the language of Turning Outward and use it to describe their work, but terminology is still perceived as challenging and potentially counterproductive. To address language obstacles, libraries use their own terms and language to convey the same underlying principles more effectively.
- The Cohort feels heard by ALA and Harwood, and the Midwinter Meeting’s Chicago Work Space agenda responded to the Cohort’s feedback following the Innovation Space.
Cohort participants feel accountable for their own learning; they are characterized by a desire to please and want to do LTC “the right way” but feel uncertainty about expectations and the project timeline.

Cohort members have become more confident in making connections with their communities and have begun to forge new partnerships and engage in new types of interaction, as well as using LTC to enhance existing initiatives. Libraries are perceived as an integral part of a community’s social ecosystem.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

This assessment of the Public Innovators Cohort outcomes use data from: 1) a content review of coaching calls and webinars facilitated by Harwood staff and postings on the online interactive forum, ALA Connect, 2) a delayed-post training survey completed by members of the Public Innovators Cohort, and 3) in-person interviews with members of the Public Innovators Cohort.

A NewKnowledge researcher listened to recordings of four coaching calls (taking place between October 2nd, 2014 and November 17th, 2014). During these group calls, Cohort members discussed their institutions’ use of the Harwood tools with one of two Harwood coaches and got feedback and suggestions for how to better Turn Outward and apply what they were learning in the initiative.

Harwood and ALA also conducted three webinars from September 2014 to January 2015, each of which focused on a different aspect of the Turning Outward approach: Partner Selection and Managing Relationships, Calibrating Community Conditions, and the Sweet Spot of Community Change. During the webinars, the instructors displayed slides, used a live voice over to discuss the content, and facilitated a text-based chatroom. For the webinar on Partner Selection, participants were allotted time to ask questions and could use their microphones – in addition to text – to speak to the group. The webinars were archived on both ALA Connect and the ALA LTC resource website. NewKnowledge researchers used the content of the coaching calls and webinars to assess the Cohort’s progress towards the intended outcomes.

ALA Connect is an online forum used to facilitate discussions and resource sharing among a 71-person group that includes members of the Public Innovators Cohort, coaches from the Harwood Institute, NewKnowledge researchers, and ALA staff. The platform includes links to archived webinars, conference calls, and discussion threads, which can be accessed by all members. A NewKnowledge researcher coded the qualitative data content consisting of discussion threads to assess how the forum facilitates interaction among members of this ALA Connect group.

Six months after the initial Public Innovators Lab training in Denver, the NewKnowledge team asked each Cohort member to complete an online survey. Survey questions focused on measuring long-term changes in the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of the Cohort members and their libraries. It also provided an opportunity to the Cohort to provide feedback on Harwood tools and methods. Thirty-five responses were received. Two
NewKnowledge researchers independently coded the responses and compared results to identify overarching themes.

NewKnowledge researchers conducted in-person interviews with 2-3 Cohort members from each of the 10 library sites during the ALA Midwinter Conference in January 2015. These interviews aimed to gain more insight into the experiences, learning outcomes, and behavioral changes of the Cohort, and solicit feedback for improvements that can be made to ongoing LTC training. The researchers compiled the responses to identify themes and generate recommendations.

**FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

1.1 Sustainability of Library Community Engagement

Facilitating Community Conversations

Most Cohort members have facilitated library-led Community Conversations according to the Harwood tool by the same name, although the number of whom varies greatly across institutions, ranging from 0 to 25. Some noted difficulty in recruiting participants and most groups remained relatively small, typically ranging in size from 2 to 10 attendees. Some worried that their attendees were not representative of their community at large, one noting, *I think that non-profit professionals and community agencies are over-represented in our sample, and we lack the voices of people receiving their services.* Another stated that it was important to get responses from non-users to get a more realistic sense of how [the library] is perceived. The Harwood coaches recommended that each library engage in six Community Conversations by the Midwinter conference, and advised that clearer themes and issues will emerge after eight to 10 convenings. Cohort members themselves, however, have not come to a clear consensus about how many Community Conversations will be needed to provide a representative picture.

The Cohort overall is overwhelmingly positive about the experience of facilitating Community Conversations, noting that they valued the opportunity to learn and felt as though participants appreciated the opportunity to provide insight into their aspirations. One member wrote *we…provide…people [with] the opportunity to say whatever they want. I think it has been empowering for some of those citizens and enlightening to our staff.* Others noted that *it’s striking how much people appreciate the chance to discuss and give feedback and there’s a lot of power in just talking.*

The perceived neutrality of libraries contributes to the success of Community Conversations. A theme of libraries as trusted institutions was evident. During interviews, Cohort members took pride in being responsible for bringing people together to talk without the complications of a political or religious agenda. Some Cohort members anticipated that people would question the library’s motives for facilitating these convenings and were surprised when not asked to “defend” the library. One Cohort member said *a change for me is that I feel...*
like I don’t have to be broadcasting library stuff when I go out, I just get to listen to what others are doing and then figure out how to integrate.

A Changing Internal Library Culture

Many members felt that the training had resulted in a positive shift in their library’s internal culture, including a stronger collective interest in pursuing community partnerships and developing public knowledge. One member wrote the big shift I’ve seen…is how we gather information about the community. We were very much attached to census information and other researched data. This was the first time we looked completely to the community for information. Cohort interviewees, however, recognized that there is still a great deal of work to transform and institutionalize the Harwood practice, viewing buy-in from non-Cohort staff, the Board, and the Director as critical components of success. Some members noted that their library’s upper management has expressed strong interest in and support for Harwood’s methods and allowed staff members to adjust their job responsibilities to include time to engage with the public. This sentiment, however, did not characterize the Cohort as a whole and others felt unable to navigate these internal relationships, in some cases hindering the progress of the initiative.

Cohort members are dealing with a range of obstacles at their libraries, such as staff turnover or lack of interest, trouble balancing competing responsibilities, dispersion of library staff over different branches, scheduling conflicts, or overly ambitious goals. Cohort members at times spoke about the difficulty of convincing their colleagues to invest in the process, noting a status-quo mentality averse to change, such as this is my part-time job and this is how I’ve always done it. Cohort members continue to struggle to communicate effectively or find time for necessary work with wider staff given already busy agendas.

Changing the Perception of Libraries

Cohort members felt that many members of the public assert that libraries are a necessary part of the community, while simultaneously taking them for granted. They also felt that libraries have a lot of passive supporters and one member summarized this sentiment saying, they like us, but don’t really use us. The Cohort appreciates that LTC puts libraries firmly on the community radar, repositioning the libraries as valuable and integral community players and redefining the libraries’ role by characterizing them as institutions that organize people rather than items. Hosting library programs (e.g., Community Conversations) outside library walls is critical because it demonstrates a library’s willingness to relinquish control and actively reach out to non-traditional library users. Cohort members described their previous motivations for holding programs outside the library somewhat self-serving, for example, wanting to get people into our building. Cohort members are beginning to realize that even though LTC clearly focuses on libraries, it is not really about the library but rather an entire community’s social ecosystem.
1.2 Participants Champion the LTC Approach

Sharing Tools

Cohort members varied in their use of the Harwood tools. Members listed the Turn Quiz, Ask Exercise, Aspirations tool, and Innovation Space by name when describing the tools used. Some members used the tools with all staff members, while others focused on management or leadership teams. Of those who indicated they used the tools internally, many did so as a first step in increasing communication among staff members and giving a voice to staff that may not have previously found a way to make their ideas heard.

Being Mentored… and Mentoring Peers

One of the primary methods of mentoring the Cohort is through coaching calls with trained Harwood coaches. Feedback on the coaching calls has been mixed. While some members noted they appreciated feedback and encouragement, especially if they are implementing the Harwood approach without the direct involvement of library directors or upper management, others found coaching calls too long and too focused on reviewing information that had been previously covered. There is particular frustration around the format. On the phone it is difficult to pick up on visual clues such as who might be about to speak, with some people jumping in to avoid dead air and inadvertently cutting off a peer. Some members expressed a strong desire to use Skype or another format that allows each person to see who is speaking. Most members liked the idea of shifting coaching calls away from teams and toward topics that individual libraries could join based on their needs and interests.

Having been trained themselves, Cohort members are also now engaging in peer-to-peer mentoring and feel that expanding the Harwood training to non-Cohort staff at their libraries has been beneficial. For example, several noted that the training process served as an opportunity to reflect on staff progress and professional growth. Several librarians said that training helped to give each staff member a voice in operations and conversations about the library, including keeping staff up to date on the library’s current projects and long-term goals. Another member said that the training allowed the library to involve staff members who do not normally work on community engagement efforts. One member referenced impacts within the larger library community, noting, I am seeing some members of my team (myself included) being perceived as Harwood experts as word spreads throughout the state. This observation suggests that there may be interest in having members of the Cohort train library professionals outside of their home institution.

Other members indicated that additional staff have been exposed to the Harwood methods, but did not say in what capacity or comment on the outcomes. Still others said that they hope to include additional staff in the future, but have not yet done so. One librarian felt she needed to first spend time translating the theory behind the Harwood method to be able to effectively engage her staff. Another librarian said that she needs more training from LTC about how to best work within the rigid library hierarchy, which makes it difficult to involve
entry-level staff members and ensure support from upper management. In some cases, staff are curious but apprehensive to fully support LTC until they know it’s going to stick, and not just the flavor of the month.

Use of Harwood Terminology

The majority of interviewees spoke about the language used as part of the LTC initiative. Some indicated the degree to which Harwood phrases (e.g., *Turning Outward, Aspirations*) have become incorporated into their daily vocabulary and are consistently used when describing their work. For many, however, the terminology remains an obstacle, characterized with words like jargon, convoluted, and confusing. One interviewee noted that the way [Harwood] make[s] their money is by selling their particular product with these terms…but they have to let go of it a little, talk about it in regular English, cause that’s what we have to use to talk to communities, suggesting that the language may be alienating rather than engaging. Cohort members felt that communicating effectively requires using words your listeners can understand and that feeling forced to use particular terms may detract from the larger goal of engaging communities (who may have a range of education levels and English language capacity) in meaningful conversations.

The Cohort also worried that strictly adhering to Harwood’s terminology may pose difficulties for training staff, noting the time required to translate terms so they are accessible to staff who had not been exposed to the Harwood method. One interviewee noted you want to feel authentic, but the authenticity goes away with a lot of the jargon. You need to translate to your own words. To deal with the potential complications posed by terminology, most Cohort members simply described adaptations that would allow them to remain faithful to the Turning Outward principles and ideas without feeling wedded to the language. As one member said, I just disregard it! I don’t worry about the label.

A further terminology-related complication was expressed by Knox County Public Library, where the current Governor had recently visited their city and given a speech using the term community conversation to express something differently than the specific meaning articulated by Harwood. Libraries are aware that they need to be sensitive to other processes currently underway within their communities, and think strategically about how LTC may intersect or align so that the community benefits.

From Innovation Space to Work Space

Continued training and support from ALA and Harwood is crucial for the Cohort to be able to champion LTC and serve as examples to the wider field. Following a Virtual Innovation Space on October 7, 2014, the Cohort expressed opinions about changes for subsequent sessions, including the incorporation of more concrete examples and opportunities to engage with other Cohort members not included in their coaching calls. Members also want to better understand how ALA envisions leveraging the cohort as part of LTC in the wider field.
The original Innovation Space that had been planned for the ALA Midwinter Conference in Chicago was altered to reflect this feedback and designated a Work Space instead. Cohort members responded positively to these changes, characterizing it as a major improvement over the virtual Innovation Space. Interviewees felt like ALA and Harwood really listened…and made changes. They found it re-energizing and helpful for clarifying questions, as well as to know other Cohort members. Suggestions for a June Work Space at the ALA Annual Conference include spending even more time together as a Cohort, allowing members to talk without an agenda in a more casual atmosphere. Cohort members expressed a desire to hear more about the learning other libraries’ experience with implementing LTC, noting that they would benefit from this cross-pollination. One member highlighted the importance of knowing that their other libraries are facing the same challenges, saying it was good to hear we are not alone.

Overall, teams still want more concrete content describing how to implement the Harwood methods. For example, some felt that the documents provided in the Work Space were too theoretical or focused on policy rather than real action or inspiring examples. One interviewee said, I wanted to see examples of how you share this info [in a way] that makes people want to engage with what you’re doing, partner, and get excited about it. Most of the tools I saw weren’t going to do that; they were academic reports…for most of us that is not the type of reporting we will be doing.

Uncertainty About Process, Timeline, and Expectations

Interviewees were quick to acknowledge the responsibility they feel as part of the Cohort to demonstrate progress and accomplish the goals of the grant. They perceive learning and growth as occurring through shared responsibility between their library and Harwood. However, many Cohort members were concerned about what they viewed as a lack of clear expectations prior to the Work Space. They specifically expressed confusion about when action plans were due and wanted concrete feedback on the self-assessment completed at the request of Harwood coaches. They felt that more direction from coaches about expectations and written responses to the self-assessments would be helpful.

The Cohort aims to please. They sincerely want to do a good job and live up to Harwood’s expectations. They know that the diversity of libraries and populations represented in the Cohort makes it difficult to compare teams, yet they feel nonetheless that they are being compared without knowing what criteria are used for this comparison. They feel nervous and sometimes lost – even with the LTC binder – because they want to be perceived favorably, yet are unsure what a “good job” looks like or when they are expected to have accomplished project benchmarks. There is a desire to eliminate ambiguity and receive explicit answers. Coaches may flip questions around and re-pose them to the Cohort, which may elicit frustration: That’s why I’m asking, I don’t know!, I’m a very concrete person, tell me what to do, and What questions should I have? This is due, in part, to the design of coaching support for the LTC initiative, where libraries undergo group coaching even though they may be at different places in their learning trajectories. It should be noted that
libraries that have taken advantage of the one-on-one support from Harwood coaches have found it helpful and have had their specific questions answered. Individual or team access to coaches between group calls was part of the design in anticipation of the variability in development between libraries.

There is indication that Cohort members from backgrounds other than long-time library work may have an advantage with the entrepreneurial, out-of-the box thinking needed for success with the Harwood approach. For example, one interviewee who is trained in marketing brought an intuitive sensibility to his work, since marketing is about knowing your audience and inspiring people, much like what occurs through Turning Outward.

Following feedback received from the Cohort at the Chicago Work Space, ALA and Harwood immediately responded with an ALA Connect post describing changes that would take effect immediately, addressing concerns about process, timeline and expectations. Addressing the challenges of a group coaching design is an iterative process: As Cohort members express concern or frustration, Harwood and ALA respond with adaptations to better meet the needs of each library team. As promised in Chicago and in our last coaching call, here is written guidance on the LTC library milestones between now and November. We’re also providing more information on the two additional coaching calls...in response to your feedback in Chicago about restructuring coaching support. It is now clear what is expected of the teams: By March 2015 a completed action plan and Taking Effective Civic Action; by June 2015, action in the community based on public knowledge; and by November 2015 evidence of a “win” in the community reflecting a shift in library culture and practice.

1.3 Communication and Collaboration with Community Partners

Communication and collaboration are key components of the Harwood practice. Findings in the following section focus primarily on activities that occurred following the first interim report in August 2014.

Communication and Collaboration Skills

The newest training addition for collaboration was the Partner Selection and Managing Relationships webinar. It aimed to provide advice on how to identify partner groups that will be productive or problematic. The webinar facilitators allotted three periods during the webinar in which participants could ask questions and reflect on their own experiences. Some participants took advantage of these periods, asking questions related to specific experiences at their libraries or trying to better understand others’ experiences.

The Cohort has expressed increased confidence in their ability to identify and collaborate with community partners than before the Harwood training and some noted that the Turned Outward approach has resulted in more frequent interactions with partners. Libraries seem to be attracting and engaging new community partners as well as recognizing that some partnerships may not be worth pursuing due to a lack of
compatibility. Several respondents noted they are now able to discern which partners want to help the community versus those who just want to be known in the community. For participants who do not see a change in their abilities to communicate and collaborate with partners, some were optimistic that they would be able to apply their skills in the future.

Forging New Connections

Members felt that the Harwood methods have enabled their libraries to become more connected to the community and widened their circle of relationships, including developing some unprecedented connections. For example, Knox County Public Library conducted a Community Conversation at a local women’s prison, where participants were eager to share thoughts and grateful to participate in a conversation oriented around aspirations. Cohort members noted feelings of togetherness and a recognition of the library as the center of the community. Members who noted positive changes feel that the community sees them as breaking library stereotypes and one wrote we seem to be positive front-page news at least once a month. One member, however, worried that some community organizations seem to see her library as a competitor in the community instead of a potential partner.

1.4 Increase in Community-Specific Actions

Changes to Community Engagement Strategies

At this stage of work it is not expected that libraries have much evidence of community-specific actions. This will be evaluated more fully in the summative report. However, most members felt that they have internalized the Turn Outward approach, helping them to better engage with their communities and identify specific issues that are locally relevant. Some members explicitly stated that they are no longer marketing library services or telling the community what they think it needs, but are listening to discover community aspirations and building new relationships. One powerful example of a change in community engagement strategy was offered by the Red Hook Public Library, where library representatives went door to door to engage community members in the Ask exercise, spending an average of 40 minutes chatting with people whose voices would otherwise have not been heard (Brewer, 2015). Staff members from the Suffolk County Public
Library, which had already been staffing pop-up libraries in remote places with no branch access, used Harwood tools to better assess the aspirations of people in these previously disconnected areas (Figure 1).

A few members expressed some doubt or uncertainty about whether their libraries’ community engagement strategies have improved, often citing setbacks that included a lack of formal changes to institutional processes, the fading of initial excitement, and a *wait and see* mentality among staff members.

New Services and Programs

The most common change in programming were Community Conversations led to engage members of the public. Some libraries, however, described additional programs that have also been developed as a result of participating in LTC. The Columbus Public Library, for example, turned the Ask exercise into a tree, encouraging community members to write down and hang their aspirations on the tree for others to view. In partnership with the Columbus Public Middle School, the Columbus Department of Public Works, and local businesses, the tree has traveled around the city and has started many conversations about how to improve the community (Fesemyer, n.d.).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Incorporate training in recruitment tactics to increase the number of attendees and broaden representation at Community Conversations.
- Provide guidance for creating a timeline or benchmarks and setting realistic goals that consider institution-specific characteristics (e.g., library size) to increase the probability that members understand and achieve expected outcomes by the end of the grant term, and continue using the Harwood tools after completing the training.
- Take additional steps to help people understand the importance of terminology used in the Harwood approach (that it’s not about selling a product but engendering a new mindset that requires a different way of speaking about community engagement); ensure that libraries feel the freedom to make adaptations without feeling self-conscious or judged for doing so.
- Support the use of a recently created Facebook page to give members opportunities to engage more actively and directly with their peers on a platform that many already use regularly.
Objective 2: Scalable Learning

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE
Contribute resources to the field that will teach librarians new approaches to community engagement and innovation.

DESIRED OUTCOME
- Librarians have long-term, sustainable access to a wealth of resources to support their work doing community engagement.

KEY FINDINGS
- Conference attendees enthusiastically embraced LTC conference sessions and tools.
- In particular, the Aspirations tool appeared to be the most relevant and implementable in home institutions.
- The Turn Outward information and tools were broadly viewed and accessed on the LTC website.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS
At ALA’s Midwinter Conference in January 2015, Harwood held four 90-minute conference sessions to train attendees to use the Harwood Method at their home institutions (Figure 2). Each session focused on one of the four Harwood tools: Aspirations to identify community aspirations, challenges faced, and necessary changes to target; Turn Quiz to assess if groups are “turned outward” and identify ways to better engage with their communities; Intentionality to help groups be more intentional about the choices they make; and Sustaining Yourself to help groups identify ways to “recharge their batteries” throughout their work.

ALA and NewKnowledge adapted a survey used to assess previous Harwood training sessions at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference and Public Library Association Conference. The main change made to the instrument was to turn several open-ended questions into closed questions that included the most frequent responses to the 2014 surveys, reducing the burden of time on those who attended multiple sessions throughout the day. NewKnowledge distributed paper surveys at the end of each session at the Midwinter Conference to

Figure 2. An attendee tweets about the Turn Quiz session.
obtain feedback on that specific session. A single person who attended all four sessions could have completed the survey four times; the surveys did not collect personally identifying information, so individuals were not tracked across surveys. A NewKnowledge researcher entered the survey data into Qualtrics to compute all summary statistics.

Google Analytics allows the LTC project team to track the number of site visits and downloads on the LTC website. LTC staff exported several reports corresponding to the period between January 1, 2014 and February 9, 2014 and identified events (e.g., media exposure, conferences) that likely explain the patterns. We provide a brief overview of these patterns.

**FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

2.1 Increased Access to Resources

Attendance at Conference Sessions

Sixty-five people attended the first session on *Aspirations*. Of those, approximately 20 stayed for the subsequent session, *Turn Quiz*. The *Intentionality* session had 61 attendees, of whom 40-50 had attended a previous session. Attendance for the last 90-minute period, *Sustaining Yourself*, had 69 participants, of whom approximately 35 had attended at least one session earlier in the day.

We collected a total of 211 surveys after the four sessions (Table 1). Fourteen respondents indicated that they attended all four sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn Quiz: 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionality: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining Yourself: 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 200 people who provided background data, 66% were librarians, 16% worked in the library in another role, including doing volunteer work, and the remaining 18% selected “other” and wrote in their specific title or type of organization they work in. Individuals who noted that they work outside a library included future and former librarians, students, programming coordinators, and marketing and education professionals.
Almost half of respondents (45%) accessed the online materials before attending the sessions. Of those who accessed the online materials in advance, 68% noted that the materials influenced their decision to attend.

Intention to Use Harwood Tools

The intended outcome of these conference workshops was to ensure that library professionals are able to apply the Harwood tools at their own institutions and in their own communities. There was slight variation in respondents’ intention to apply each of the different tools. The Aspirations and Turn Quiz tools were particularly popular. Most respondents selected *Strongly Agree* in response to the statement *I intend to apply what I learned in the session* and almost all of the remaining respondents selected *Agree* (Figure 3). The other two tools – Intentionality and Sustaining Yourself – were also well-received, albeit less so; the majority of respondents selected that they *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* that they intend to apply what they learned, although in both cases, about 10% of respondents selected *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Neutral* (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Responses to I intend to apply what I learned in this session.](image)

Additional survey questions aimed to determine the specific contexts in which the respondents were planning to use the tools. For all sessions, almost all respondents *Agreed or Strongly Agreed* that they intended to use the tool in community engagement (Figure 4). Slightly fewer respondents *Agreed or Strongly Agreed* that they intended to use the tool in strategic planning, with 12-18% of respondents selecting *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Neutral* for each of the four tool types (Figure 5). Respondents were least likely to use the tools in staff training, with 15-27% of respondents selecting *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Neutral* for each of the four tool types (Figure 6). The Sustaining Yourself tool garnered the most neutral or negative responses for each of the three contexts, which may suggest that respondents view it as the least useful or the most difficult to implement.
Figure 4. Responses to *I feel I can use this information to improve my library or organization’s community engagement.*

Figure 5. Responses to *I will apply what I have learned to my library or organization’s strategic planning.*

Figure 6. Responses to *I will use this information in staff training.*
Satisfaction with Conference Sessions

Many of the responses to the sessions were positive, with respondents characterizing them as *worthwhile, engaging, inspiring,* and *helpful.* Some respondents noted that they wanted additional training or wished that they had more time for discussion, suggesting that they found the tools interesting and worth pursuing further. The Aspirations workshop, in particular, received many positive comments, including that it was a *good foundation for the other workshops,* and it helped to validate some of the activities libraries are already pursuing. Additionally, tweets using the handle #librariestransform suggested that attendees were excited about the LTC sessions and internalizing the messages that the sessions aimed to communicate (Figure 7).

Respondents sometimes commented on the content of the workshops. They felt like Aspirations, Turn Quiz, and Intentionality would benefit from the inclusion of *more background information,* including a discussion of why libraries (as opposed to other types of community organizations) would benefit from the Harwood approach. Respondents to the Turn Quiz and Intentionality workshops characterized them as *too abstract,* *fuzzy,* or thought there was something *missing.* Several thought that it would have been helpful to have more contextual information and guidance before asking the small groups to address the topics on their own.

Respondents also commented on the workshop facilitators, some praising the ability of the facilitator to *keep the discussion on track* (Sustaining Yourself) and others feeling that the *facilitator had a preconceived bias* and was leading the participants to generate a particular response (Aspirations). The incorporation of current Cohort members into the Turning Outward Sessions was a welcome improvement, allowing attendees to glimpse what the process looks like in implementation (and perhaps had the additional and unintended benefit of reminding the Cohort just how much progress they have made, as compared with those hearing about Turning Outward for the first time). Comments after the Turn Quiz and Intentionality workshops suggested that
the discussions would have benefitted from more involved facilitation, with additional roving facilitators to monitor and contribute to group discussions. Comments and survey data indicated that respondents in each workshop – especially Aspirations – would have appreciated more time for small group discussion (Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Responses to There was enough time for discussion among peers.](image)

**Web Traffic**

Google Analytics enables the LTC project team to track the traffic on the project homepage and subpages, as well as the number of times the LTC tools have been downloaded. Since January 1, 2014, there have been over 16,000 views and 12,000 unique views to the project homepage (www.ala.org/LTC). Traffic has been fairly consistent since mid-2014 (Figure 9), with the exception of two spikes in views early in the project, including one around the announcement of the Public Innovator Cohort grant in January 2014 and one around the selection of the members of Public Innovators Cohort in April 2014.

![Figure 9. Visits to the project homepage](image)

There were over 12,000 views and over 9,000 unique views to all subpages combined (e.g., resources, about LTC, cohort, blog etc.) during this same period. The Resources subpage received the most traffic, with almost 7,000 views and almost 5,000 unique views alone, followed by the About LTC subpage and the Public
Innovators Cohort subpage with about 1,500 views and 1,200 unique views each. Spikes in visits to LTC subpages occurred later in the project than spikes in homepage views and likely corresponded to a press release about the free LTC Resources in August 2014 and a press release about the Public Innovators Lab for Libraries in Atlanta in September 2014 (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Visits to LTC subpages.

There have been over 3,000 unique downloads of LTC tools since January 2014. The Turn Outward and Aspirations tools were the most popular with 765 and 609 unique downloads respectively. Downloads followed a similar pattern as page views, with spikes around the timing of the press releases about the availability of the resources and the Public Innovators Lab for Libraries in Atlanta (Figure 11). Additionally, the number of downloads increased in January 2015 during the ALA Midwinter Conference. These data suggest that people have access to the Harwood tools to support them as they evaluate their organization’s community engagement strategy.

Figure 11. Downloads from LTC website.

Feedback on Tools and Resources from the Cohort

Use of the tools and resources by Cohort members, who act as a pilot test group and can help indicate when adaptations are needed, will be the best predictor of success in the broader library field. Most of Harwood tools have been well received. One member commented that the tools overall are very helpful in doing this work. It takes a bit of faith, like following a new recipe, to know that these have been tested and results will be
forthcoming. Members felt that Community Conversations was the most popular and valuable tool, and one member wrote even with one or two participants, [Community Conversations] will never be a waste of time.

Members generally felt that the webinars were too long and covered much of the same information as coaching calls, including providing time for progress reports from members of the Cohort (Figure 12). One member suggested that webinars would be more engaging if Cohort teams took a leadership role in their facilitation, although this member also noted that the preparation may be too time consuming for some teams.

Figure 12: Informal poll during the January webinar about libraries’ progress on hosting Community Conversations.

An ALA Connect group for LTC is a platform for interaction between Cohort teams. This resource aims to be a space for the ongoing development of a community of practice by connecting people who are interested in learning together about the Harwood methods and how to effectively implement the Turned Outward approach at their institutions.

During the review of ALA Connect from September 3, 2014 to January 8, 2014, NewKnowledge researchers noted that 56% of the materials posted on ALA Connect were from the ALA staff, 33% were from the Harwood staff, and 10% were from the Cohort, with most Cohort members making no contribution whatsoever. Importantly, however, this low participation rate still reflects a community of practice, where participants can be engaged at different level and typically, a small core group (10-15% of members) forms the “heart” of the community, actively and frequently contributing to discussions. A larger group (15-20% of members) participates regularly, but with a lower frequency; and the majority of members contribute rarely, if ever.
(Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). We observed that several core members have emerged as leaders in the ALA Connect group, posting and commenting more often than others.

The post with the most views (220) was about media coverage of Red Hook Public Library’s outreach efforts, however, most posts had far fewer views, with the average being 15 views. Most posts received no comments. Several members noted that they would be more active in online discussions if they took place on a social media platform they already use, such as Facebook. The Cohort decided to self-organize and create their own Facebook group, following a discussion at the Chicago Work Space. Facebook is seen as a way to avoid some of the difficulties with Connect, while not replacing it as a means of sharing content. The group is worried about whether they will be able to operate autonomously without the ongoing coaching and continued clarification provided by Harwood and ALA and see connecting via Facebook as a good support structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide examples of the value of training library staff to use each tool, thereby encouraging attendees to engage in peer-to-peer training and mentoring at their home institutions.
- Include more background or contextual information in all conference sessions, continue to focus on concrete, real-world examples or case studies to support the use of the Harwood methods.
- Incorporate more time for small group discussions in each workshop, especially Aspirations;
- Provide opportunities for small groups to get input and feedback from facilitators and give current Cohort members a greater role in leading sessions.
- Consider additional promotional strategies to encourage ALA members to browse the LTC website and download the free tools.
Objective 3: ALA Staff Work

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Train ALA staff in the Harwood Institute practice to focus the organization outward and align internal process to the work in the field.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- ALA becomes a more Turned Outward organization (e.g., member conversations regularly convened, conversations actively inform ALA planning processes and decision making).
- ALA communicates and collaborates more effectively with partners and allied organizations (e.g., convenes partner conversations as part of partnership planning process, conversations inform partnership planning and help to align messaging).
- ALA staff and member leaders become "fluent" in the practice this initiative seeds in the field and can support the work of library professionals (e.g., ALA officers and committee chairs are active in this work, bringing it to the committee level; staff actively participate in and facilitate conversations; feedback used to inform strategic planning, conference planning and member support).

KEY FINDINGS

- Kitchen Table Conversations, despite low attendance, are a welcome opportunity for ALA members to provide feedback to ALA as a professional organization.
- Some ALA members perceive the Association as exclusive in some of its practices, but offer a range of actionable solutions to help ALA achieve its goal of Turning Outward.
- Based in part on recommendations provided in NewKnowledge’s first interim report, ALA has generated a new plan to accomplish the grant objectives in a way that aligns with ALA’s organizational structure and process to facilitate the Turning Outward of its staff and member leaders.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

At the ALA Midwinter Conference in January 2015, the LTC coordinating team organized twelve Kitchen Table Conversations, inviting any conference attendees to participate. At the beginning of each conversation, facilitators established ground rules to ensure that the Kitchen Table Conversations were non-judgmental and fun for all participants (Harwood Institute, 2013). A NewKnowledge researcher was present for one of the conversations and recorded observations. A second researcher read through the notes to summarize participants’ responses and identify themes. We describe these themes in this section and provide recommendations for facilitating future Kitchen Table Conversations.
NewKnowledge has amended its evaluation plan to reflect a shift in the training strategy for ALA staff and member leaders, shared with NewKnowledge in January 2015 following approval by the ALA Executive Board. A comparison was made between the previous plan and the updated version, while also taking into consideration recommendations made in the first interim report based on the ALA Staff Intentionality Forum.

**FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

### 3.1 ALA Turns Outward

**Kitchen Table Conversations and the ALA Community Narrative**

Overall, Kitchen Table Conversation sessions did not see high attendance rates, but still prompted substantive discussion about the type of professional leadership opportunities desired by the ALA community. The session explored in this evaluation began with introductions (six people were in attendance in addition to the NewKnowledge researcher and ALA facilitator), followed by a reading and explanation of ALA’s Community Narrative as determined by 2013 ALA Conference attendees. This Community Narrative describes the type of organization that ALA strives to be as well as some of the inherent challenges it faces. ALA members want their professional organization to be welcoming, inclusive, engaged, relevant, and supportive, but feel like ALA has been unable to achieve these ideals because of its complex organizational structure, reticence to embrace new members and ideas, and inability to develop a sense of community. The Community Narrative encourages the organization to incorporate flexible ways for members to participate, foster a safe environment for learning and growth, and find ways for ALA leaders and staff to collaborate. Overall, Kitchen Table participants felt resonance with the Community Narrative; however, they disagreed about the current inclusivity of ALA. Several highlighted the potentially prohibitive cost of attending regional and national conferences, although some noted that their home institutions provided some support for staff to travel.

**Feedback from Kitchen Table Conversations**

The participants provided suggestions for potential solutions to the challenges highlighted in the Narrative and the additional challenges that they have observed (Table 2). Several solutions were aimed at increasing the inclusivity of ALA. One participant felt that ALA would be more inclusive if they used language that did not alienate members who are not librarians, but rather identify as academics, consultants, and other types of professionals. Another reiterated this point by highlighting the importance of including members from a variety of professional backgrounds on ALA committees to ensure the inclusion of more diverse perspectives. Several participants wanted to find ways to develop new leaders in the field, suggesting that ALA facilitate mentoring partnerships between early-, mid- and/or late-career professionals.

Some participants felt that ALA is disconnected from the outside world. Specifically, one participant felt that ALA ignores negative or challenging feedback from outside organizations. Another said that [ALA is like] a
cheerleading club...which is useful for camaraderie and support, but then you go back and have to fight city agencies and administrators. This participant felt like ALA could only effect change if it first closely examined its own relevance to communities and operated with community needs at the forefront of all initiatives. Other suggestions for how to make ALA work relevant for the communities it serves included providing ways for different types of libraries to share their experiences and learn from each other, thereby capitalizing on others’ knowledge. Finally, one participant suggested developing a guide of best practices, so that – even in the absence of direct communication with other institutions – libraries can have a sense of the types of programs that work and do not work in different settings. As one participant commented, it’s also important to know what doesn’t work...where the failures are [because] you never read about these in official reports!

Participants wanted ALA to help them develop certain skillsets, including communication skills for speaking with different audiences such as funding organizations and political bodies, about the importance of supporting libraries. Several participants wanted basic skills training, such as budgeting, noting that the current ALA certification training offered is cost-prohibitive. [Certification training] is so expensive...[you] might as well get an MLS degree. Participants noted that professional development skills (e.g., organization, leadership) can be gained by serving on ALA committees, but also worried that committees did not always have a clearly articulated mission, which may reduce their utility. The experience of the Public Innovators Cohort can help identify skills that might be necessary for ALA as it continues to Turn Outward as an organization. The LTC framework is a necessary complement to encourage librarians to focus on community engagement, because they don’t teach that in library school.

Kitchen Table Conversation participants spent a lot of time discussing how to broaden conference attendance and impact. Several noted that many libraries – especially those from rural communities – can often not afford to send staff members to regional or national conferences and all expressed a wish that ALA would provide conference support for these libraries. Along the same lines, participants wanted ALA to provide resources for libraries that could not send staff to conferences, including a virtual conference experience and presentation materials. One member felt that ALA was attracting new members with interests that were not in line with those of the larger organization, including younger members who were mainly interested in building their resume. This participant suggested breaking up the larger conference into smaller conferences with different goals. Another challenge mentioned was getting younger members interested in the resources developed for them. One participant said I know there are opportunities for first time attendees...but don’t know how to get the right people to access or navigate those resources.
Table 2: Summary of challenges and suggested solutions discussed at the Kitchen Table Conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Suggested Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase Inclusivity of ALA</td>
<td>Recognize the variety of professionals who are members of ALA by using more inclusive language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that committees include ALA members from a variety of professions and backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide mentoring for new members and early-career professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Work Relevant</td>
<td>Examine needs of local community to ensure that the library’s goals reflect those needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generate a guide of best practices on how to make libraries’ work as relevant and meaningful as possible including information on programs or strategies that were unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide forums where different types of libraries (e.g., public, school, special) can share their experiences and collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize Skill Development</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for staff to develop communication skills for speaking to funding organizations about the importance of supporting libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide affordable basic skills training or certification courses (e.g., budgeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use Cohort experience as a guide to what skills might be missing from current Library and Information Science degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden Conference Attendance and Impact</td>
<td>Reduce costs to attend conferences, especially for libraries that have not been able to send staff members in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider hosting multiple smaller conferences, possibly in a virtual format, aimed at members with specific goals (e.g., networking, skill development, community action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop new recruitment strategies to encourage new members to attend certain conference events (e.g., Info for First Time Attendees session, New Members Roundtable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve the virtual conference experience for members who cannot attend conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamline Conference Format</td>
<td>Reduce the number of lecture-based sessions and increase the number of interactive sessions or workshops to allow members to engage with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide practical takeaway messages at the end of each session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to improve conference Scheduler to make it intuitive and easy to use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other suggestions focused specifically on the ALA conference format: one participant wanted more opportunities to engage in conversations and interact with other members rather than attending lecture-style presentations. Another wanted the conference to highlight useful take-home messages that could be easily retained and applied in their own communities. Although one participant commented that the Scheduler had greatly improved, others noted that it can still be challenging to navigate and use.

Using Kitchen Table Conversations as a way to critically reflect on ALA’s structure and operation is an extremely valuable part of the LTC initiative. Conversations should be advertised more widely so that participation increases and more voices from throughout the organization are heard, including some way for those who cannot attend conferences in person.

Overall, participants seemed pleased that ALA were interested in hearing their opinions and hoped that ALA would take their comments into consideration when planning changes to the professional development initiatives. One participant said that she enjoyed the conversation so much that she would consider participating in another. Despite the challenges they discussed during the conversation, all participants valued ALA, commenting that people really care about ALA and want it to succeed and I don't want to just give up on [ALA]. These comments suggest that members are likely to be excited to see that ALA is making an effort to listen to their community and respond to their needs and aspirations.

The purpose of these conversations is to bring together members of various ALA committees and roundtables as well as interested librarians to better understand how ALA can best serve the needs of their members. The new training plan for ALA staff and member leaders involves the LTC coordinating team taking ownership of the Kitchen Table Conversation process. This is a positive step in the right direction.

### 3.2 ALA Communication and Collaboration

The activities during the period covered by this report did not focus on this specific outcome. ALA has plans to convene conversations with partners and allied organizations in the future. These conversations will allow ALA to solicit feedback for planning and to align organizational messaging.

### 3.3 ALA Leaders Become Fluent in Harwood Practice

ALA staff and member leader involvement in LTC is intended to build the capacity of ALA as a professional organization to support a Turned Outward orientation in the broader library field. Based in part on recommendations provided in NewKnowledge’s first interim report, ALA has generated a new plan for upcoming staff training sessions to accomplish the grant objectives in a way that aligns with ALA’s organizational structure and process.
Additional Support

The new staff training plan includes several components aimed at providing more support to participants, including training refreshers for staff already trained in the Harwood method, quarterly staff innovation spaces and follow-up coaching calls, technical support from a Harwood coach between Innovation Spaces, and coaching calls that focus on specific aspects of the initiative (e.g., Community Rhythms). We anticipate that these new program components will result in a more effective and lasting implementation plan because staff will have access to regular support in case they have challenges implementing the Harwood methods. Additionally, regular communication with Harwood coaches will likely serve as further reminders for ALA staff to regularly revisit and reflect on their use of the Harwood methods.

The new training plan will also provide more support for the LTC Coordinating Team by establishing quarterly in-person meetings with Cheryl Gorman of the Harwood Institute to monitor progress and strategize.

Additional Resources

In the new staff-training program, ALA will provide participants with a goal template where they can describe what they are hoping to get out of their practice within a given time frame (e.g., by December 2015). We anticipate that this change will clarify training expectations and ensure that everyone is on the same page, as well as increasing attendees’ sense of ownership over the training process and strengthening their intention to apply the information in their own lives.

The new staff-training plan will also include an invitation for staff to present examples of how they have applied the Harwood methods. This change specifically addresses the NewKnowledge recommendation to increase the focus on concrete case studies and examples. We anticipate incorporating these into the training will give participants the confidence to be creative in their own implementation, adapting examples offered by their colleagues.

While the new staff training did not include a specific plan to provide participants with background materials before subsequent training activities, we would like to reiterate the importance of this previous recommendation (made in the first interim report). We believe that providing optional reading in advance will allow the participants to prepare to the degree that makes them the most comfortable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Aim to increase the inclusivity of ALA by altering the language used and committee composition to include non-librarians and providing opportunities for young librarians to identify mentors in the ALA community.
• Document the learning that is emerging from the current LTC initiative so that best practices for meaningful and relevant library work can be shared with the broader field.

• Prioritize skill development among ALA members by providing opportunities for skills training and ensuring that committee work is goal-oriented.

• Broaden conference attendance and impact by reducing costs for libraries that have not been able to send staff members in the past, encouraging new members to take an active role in the community, and providing conference resources to members who could not attend the conferences.

• Streamline the conference format by increasing the ratio of interactive to lecture-based sessions, summarizing key take-home messaging, and continuing to develop the conference Scheduler.

• Continue to hold Kitchen Table Conversations to demonstrate ALA’s interest in getting feedback from its members.

• Always provide participants with advance access to resources.
Objective 4: Communications

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The goal across all target audiences will be to build awareness, participation, buy-in, and a sense of urgency—in the field and externally—about strengthening this type of library work and its potential for community change.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Shift in discourse about public libraries in the national and local media away from the narrative about libraries in crisis and debate over libraries as "essential institutions" to one of libraries as agents of positive community change.
- Excitement in the field evidenced by member-driven conference sessions and activities related to libraries as engines of community development at ALA annual, division, regional, and state library conferences.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Cohort is well-positioned to work with media partners but could use additional support from ALA to do so effectively.
- Presentations like the one by Scott Bonner of Ferguson Public Library are extremely valuable for shaping the discourse around libraries as community change agents and getting the field excited about the potential of Turning Outward as a field.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

NewKnowledge conducted a library media discourse analysis in the second quarter of 2015 to evaluate the national and local discourse about public libraries in recent years. We used the LexisNexis and ProQuest Gannett NewsStand databases to determine the sources, content, location, and sharing method of library-related discourse. We then ran newspaper titles through the software program Leximancer to identify themes and connections between themes. A full description of the methods, analysis and findings can be found in the Library Media Discourse Report (NewKnowledge Report #PVT.74.175.03). We will use these same methods to conduct a similar analysis in the final phases of the LTC initiative.

NewKnowledge researchers, ALA staff, and the Public Innovators Cohort have all been collecting local media stories that may not otherwise appear in LexisNexis and ProQuest for the second media discourse analysis. Incorporating local media will allow us to better describe the impact libraries are having on their community and reveal changes around the portrayal of libraries in the media. Some examples of these media stories are described in this section.
FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Shifting Discourse About Public Libraries

In the last month, we have recorded several examples of positive media attention that has focused on libraries participating in the Public Innovators Cohort. For example, the Red Hook Public Library was named the first finalist for the Best Small Library in America Award receiving an award of $10,000 from the Gates Foundation and Library Journal. Additionally, the Roots for Columbus campaign run by the Columbus Public Library has been praised for its efforts to connect to the community. The second media discourse analysis will include these examples and more to assess if and how discourse about libraries has changed over the course of the LTC project.

Relationship with Media Partners

Cohort members recognize that it falls to each library to define its role in a community and each institution must actively train people to perceive the library differently. Libraries may be able to accomplish this goal establishing and cultivating relationships with media outlets. While the Public Innovators Cohort is enthusiastic about these potential relationships, they do not yet feel that they are generating stories that will sell. However, they do feel that additional training in how to work strategically with media partners to highlight their work in community engagement will enable them to move forward and generate media buzz around their work. Thus, the implementation of action plans over the next few months are well-timed to capitalize on this enthusiasm. Cohort members view the contact list of local media partners provided by Sarah Ostman (Communications Manager, ALA Public Programs Office) as a valuable resource. However, the webinar offering media training at the outset of LTC did not resonate with Cohort members who viewed it as boring, too basic, and coming too early in the process. They felt this initial media training set an expectation that libraries need to see their name in print at a time when they were not yet able to talk about their work in concrete terms.

4.2 Conference Sessions Focused on Libraries as Community Changers

A poignant example of how one library made national news involves the Ferguson Municipal Public Library in Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting death of Michael Brown in August 2014. During the ensuing protests that shut down much of the city, the library stayed open, serving as a temporary school and safe haven for members of the community. The library showed itself to be the heart of the community and donations poured in from all over the country, exceeding $350,000 by the beginning of December. Ferguson Public Library Director Scott Bonner gave a talk about his experiences, strategies and lessons learned during the Ferguson protests at the ALA Midwinter conference in January 2015. This inspiring talk generated a lot of interest among conference attendees, resulting in multiple tweets highlighting Bonner’s messages (Figure 13).
In light of the success of Bonner’s talk, we recommend that ALA continue to schedule similar talks by speakers who can discuss their personal experiences with connecting to their communities.

Figure 13: Ferguson Library Director Scott Bonner speaks at the ALA Midwinter Conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to compile examples of media pieces focused on libraries to add to the database for the second media discourse analysis.
- As Cohort members are increasingly invited to be the public face for the work they are doing, ALA may want to offer training in presentation skills and public speaking, to help the Cohort best convey the work of LTC to various audiences.
- A media timeline should be created along with boilerplate language for libraries to adapt as they communicate with media partners, to help elicit or identify the story of what is happening at various stages in the process.
- Continue to facilitate opportunities for speakers to present concrete examples of engagement with communities, such as the session with Ferguson Public Library Director Scott Bonner.
Conclusion

In six months since the first interim report, the LTC initiative has advanced in many promising ways according to the criteria established in the Gates Foundation Results Framework.

Public Innovators Cohort members have made substantial progress toward learning and applying the practice of Turning Outward. They understand its potential for the field, have identified barriers to success, are able to more effectively communicate and collaborate with community partners and are tracking change results. The work is becoming increasingly sustainable, and the Cohort is championing the LTC approach through mentoring peers and providing feedback on tools for distribution in the wider field. The Cohort is on the verge of finalizing and implementing their action plans, turning the results of the Community Conversations into concrete and identifiable community-based action. Cohort members felt that it is a library’s responsibility to Turn Outward and that going out into the community is just being a library! As such, many commented on the usefulness of the Harwood approach at providing structure for their community engagement efforts and allowing them to more effectively build on the trust that communities already have in their local libraries.

Tools and resources for the broader field are undergoing the rigorous testing and revision necessary for supporting a field that attempts to increasingly Turn Outward. Upcoming ALA staff and member leader training will continue to help align internal processes to the work in the field through regularly convening conversations that actively inform ALA planning processes and decision-making. Steps are in place to make ALA staff and member leaders “fluent” in the practice, so as to seed the field and support the work of library professionals. There is a feeling of excitement in the field evidenced by conference sessions and activities related to libraries as engines of community development.

Overall, library professionals view LTC as part of a larger shift occurring in the field. Cohort members know that the library is a dynamic place that can adapt to many changes simultaneously and are eager for the library to move toward a more relevant role in the community as traditional services level off. While Public Knowledge used to be primarily accessible through books, facilitating the exchange of information today relies much more on people and relationships. The LTC focus on being out in communities listening to people is an apt expression of this shift and provides a way for Cohort members – and ultimately the library field at large – to situate their work within a broader community-focused context.
References


Appendix A. Public Innovators Cohort Delayed Post Training Survey

Q1. Did what you learned in the Public Innovators Lab shape decision-making on behalf of your library in the ways you expected it would? Why or why not?

Q2. Did you end up applying the training you received how you anticipated, or has your initial plan evolved over time? Why?

Q3. Please briefly describe any activities internal to your library that have resulted from being part of the Public Innovators Cohort (including mentoring colleagues or promoting innovation and learning with those who are not part of the Cohort).

Q4. How is your library’s community engagement strategy different now from what it was prior to the start of LTC?

Q5. Has your library adopted a community engagement strategy that encompasses staff members not previously involved with community engagement or outreach?

Q6. Please briefly describe any library-led community convenings that have resulted from participating in the Public Innovators Cohort.

Q7. Has your understanding of your community’s aspirations and needs been expanded based on the training you’ve received as part of LTC? If yes, what impact do you anticipate this knowledge will have on how your library does its work?

Q8. Has your ability to communicate and collaborate with community partners changed over the past six months?

Q9. During the six months that you’ve been involved with LTC, has the community’s perception of your library begun to change? Please describe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have found the <em>Turn Outward</em> tool(s) valuable.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have found the <em>Aspirations</em> tool(s) valuable.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have found the **Intentionality Tests** tool(s) valuable.

| | | | | | |

I have found the **Ask Exercise** tool(s) valuable.

| | | | | | |

I have found the **Community Conversations** tool(s) valuable.

| | | | | | |

I have found the **Innovation Space** tool(s) valuable.

| | | | | | |

I have found the **webinars** valuable.

| | | | | | |

I have found the **coaching calls** valuable.

| | | | | | |

Q11. Please explain the reason for the scores you indicated and offer specific feedback about the above tools and support you have received.

Q12. What suggestions do you have for maximizing the usefulness and effectiveness of remaining in-person Innovation Spaces?

Q13. Have you discovered anything new about yourself or your role as a result of being part of the Public Innovators Cohort?

Q14. Are there any “aha moments” you’d like to share?

Q15. Is there anything you would like to share publically with ALA and the Harwood Institute about your experience with LTC thus far *(Please note: Your name will be included with this response. Representatives of ALA or Harwood may wish to follow up with you as a way of harvesting stories of practice, to be used internally or for external communications, such as testimonials on websites associated with the LTC initiative.)*
Appendix B. ALA MW 2015 Conference Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1. Which Turning Outward to Lead Change in Your Community session(s)…</th>
<th>Is the one you just completed?</th>
<th>Did you attend previously?</th>
<th>Do you hope to attend?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn Quiz: 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionality: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining Yourself: 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2. Please rate how you feel:</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall I am satisfied with this conference session.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training was effective in facilitating learning.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information presented in the session was relevant and meaningful to my current library work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to apply what I learned in this session.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3. Please rate how you feel:</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel I can use this information to improve my library or organization’s community engagement.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will apply what I have learned to my library or organization’s strategic planning.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will use this information in staff training.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I learned more about my library or organization’s role in our community.

Q4. Did you access/download the session materials in advance using the link provided in the ALA Conference Scheduler?  ☐ Yes ☐ No  
   If Yes, did the materials influence your decision to attend?  ☐ Yes ☐ No

Q5. Please rate how you feel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was enough time for the presentations.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was enough time for discussion among peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the size of my discussion groups.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training included practical examples.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</table>

Q6. Do you currently work:  ☐ As a librarian  ☐ At a library in a different role (including volunteer positions)  ☐ Other  
   If Other, please specify: ____________________________

Q7. Reflecting upon either the current session you just attended, or all the sessions you’ve attended cumulatively today, please share any thoughts below. (Were the sessions valuable? Was one more valuable than others?)

Please choose from the following:
☐ I give ALA permission to use my name and affiliation (please indicate library or other organization)

☐ I do not wish to provide my name but I give permission for ALA to use unattributed quotes from my survey responses