

Minnesota Library Association Conference; October 11-12, 2018

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Meeting Patrons Where They Are: Legal Partnerships at St. Paul Public Libraries

Minnesota State Law Library + Public Libraries

Law library offers: open to public and librarians, training for librarians, reference assistance, and collection development assistance.

Law library holds twice monthly office hours at public libraries in Hennepin County (MN) for three hours each visit. Law librarians bring brochures and information and offer private information consultations.

Homelessness resources are in high demand in St. Paul in addition to family issues, landlords and tenant, immigration, criminal law etc.

Place a desk location in a very public spot and also use a private meeting room for sensitive conversations. Volunteer lawyers, law professors, law students, law librarians.

You need library staff buy in to refer library users to the office hour dates and spread the word at the desk.

“There’s a lot of terrible law information on the internet...” come to the library!

Libraries in Laundromats

Libraries Without Borders has a mobile library that fits into 4 crates (projector, computer, books, crafts) that travels the world... so why not the United States?

Placing libraries in unique locations that are natural gathering spaces may take away barriers, but the passerby or space user may not be self-selected. They didn’t go to the library, they went to the laundromat.

Wash & Learn initiative in St. Paul uses ideas from Too Small to Fail/Talking is Teaching and literacies.

Barriers removed:

- Scheduling: cannot fit the library into life schedule
- Travel/Transportation: cannot get to library
- Wifi provided in laundromats
- Laundromat customers usually do laundry every week

The entire library is not brought to offsite location, just what location wants or needs, wifi, storytime, information brochures, computer access.

Whole-person Librarianship: Structured Empathy on the Front Lines

Many libraries are collaborating with social services through library positions or volunteer office hours.

Relationship building with library users is the new reference collection. Librarians refer library users to the organizations they need to contact.

It's important for librarians to remember "what is before you is not the whole picture." A library user's life helps shape how they present themselves.

Librarians also need to acknowledge cultural humility and be aware of their own biases. Diversity training helps with this but it is a life-long process.

Teenagers Are Humans and You Can Too!

HOMAGO : Hang out, mess around, geek out, drives teen space and programming

Teen spaces should be places where teens can relax, vent, escape, and find support for their lives.

"Be the person you needed when you were younger."

"You don't have to be best friends every day."

Soft skills are very important in working with teens: patience, understanding, perspective, flexibility, humility, a good sense of humor, acceptance, open mindedness, build relationships, creativity

You need to know the teens by their NAME! Through relationship building you can learn habits, struggles, triggers, and engage more fully.

St. Paul Libraries used empathy interviews between teen librarians and teen library user regulars.

- Why do you come to the library?
- If you weren't here, where would you be?
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Everybody Supercharge! : Storytimes for All Training

This virtual class works with librarian schedules and creates a community of support for librarians offering storytime.

For six weeks, a trainer offers the same information twice weekly, live, at different times and also a recorded version to fit your schedule. Uses a moodle platform that offers a discussion board, certificate of completion, and live and recorded sessions.

Librarians use information, self-assessment, practical assignments/challenges, and reflection to evaluate their storytimes.

- Interactivity: storytimes should be interactive and lively
- Intentionality: activities and books should match the literacy skills built into the storytime
- Assessment: the course incorporates peer mentoring, self-assessment, observation

- Community of practice: you are building your peer support when you give this class your full effort!

Advocate's Action Plan: Building Support

When asked, everyone “likes” libraries, but library advocates need to convert those who “like” libraries into those who vote to financially support libraries.

The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt argues that all people are morally motivated and that selfishness is a powerful force in indecisions.

When Jonathen Haidt's argument is considered with what Julie Todaro, Dean of Library Services at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas and former ALA president, outlines as principles of persuasion, the game plan for library advocates is simple.

Speak to what impacts each decision maker. Consider your word choice, find common ground and don't use big words. If you cannot find point of agreement with a decision maker, your argument will appear less genuine. You cannot fake authenticity.

Advocate the benefits of libraries as it speaks to the decision maker's interests/passions and do not forget to make the ask. “... and libraries need you to vote on X...”