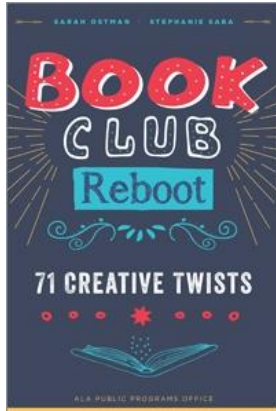


## WVLS Post-Conference Report – From Heather Bain, Branch Coordinator-MCPL Hatley Branch.

### 1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

The very first session I attended was titled “Book Club Reboot: Creative Twists on the Reading Groups We Know and Love,” and was presented by Sarah Ostman from the ALA Public Programs Office and



Stephanie Saba from the San Mateo County Library and are the authors of the book “Book Club Reboot: 71 Creative Twists.” This session was all about different options for a new book club, new ways to invigorate your current book club, or add a new book club entirely. I very much enjoyed the information given, even though a majority of the ideas given I know wouldn’t be of interest to my patrons or I simply wouldn’t be able to do, one idea that really stuck out was a “Free for All” book club where patrons read what they want and give a short summary or review of the book. This idea is talked about more below as one of the things I am going to try and implement within my library. The presenters made to sure include us in the discussion and get our ideas and what we are all currently doing or had tried, as well gave us

examples from their book. They gave us just enough of a taste of what was in their book that I am currently looking to see if I am able to get a copy to see what else was included. By making the session interactive and not just talking at us, it made it meaningful and made sure that we all knew that we are in the same boat as far as either needing to revamp, add or change up our book clubs.

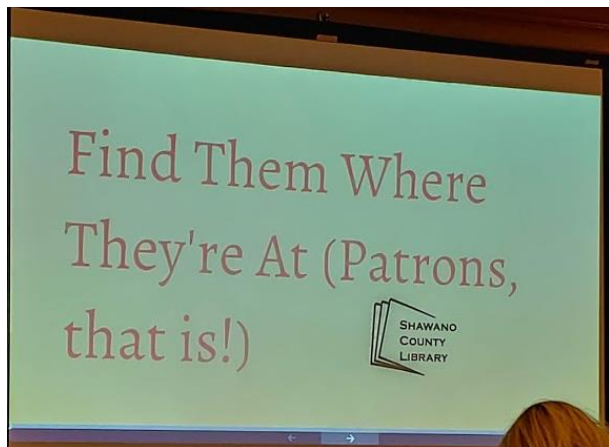
On the second day I attended a session titled “Displays on Dime” given by Kacee Garner, a clerk at the Earlville Free Library in Earlville New York. I attended this session mainly with the intention of walking

away with ideas on how to maximize our limited display space but walked away with so much more! The presenter was energetic and knowledgeable and had the greatest catch phrase “FREE from my home” meaning a majority of the items used within her displays to make them pop were things that came from her home or the homes of other staff members to help cut down on any costs. The presentation itself, while all done through PowerPoint was engaging in the sense that she provided pictures of some of her displays (ones that were popular and not so popular) as well as where and how she got



some of the more obscure ideas. I walked away with tons of awesome and creative ideas, from what to a display to where displays can go (got to think outside the book). I have already started creating new displays and will hopefully start adding more of them and switching them out more often.

One of the last sessions I had the opportunity to sit in on was titled “Find Them Where They’re At (Patrons, that is)”, which was presented by fellow Wisconsin Librarians Wendy Rosenow, Kristie Hauer, and Mikki Moesch of the Shawano County Library.



This was a great and informative presentation on how to make your libraries visible within the community and making those great partnerships. They talked about thinking outside the box and looking at area festivals/celebrations, the Farmer’s Market, or even just doing a special story time or program at a local park. A big thing they made sure to mention was that at certain events they have a selection of materials for patrons to browse through and check out right from that event. While Hatley is in a unique situation, where we don’t

have many events that go on close by, one of the things that we could do if allowed is to host an event at a local park or see about doing a story time at the closest festival to us (Ringle Days which is in October). I definitely walked away with ideas and got the feeling that the presenters were very passionate about doing outreach in a variety of ways which made it engaging for the attendees.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn’t know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

There were several experiences I had throughout the conference that really stood out to me afterwards, but two really stuck with me even a few weeks after the conference had ended.

My first experience happened even before arriving in Vermont. While waiting for my connecting flight at the Chicago airport, it quickly became apparent that we were all going to the conference! The ones that had attended before were quickly willing to share their past experiences. While on the plane I was seated next to a vendor and across the aisle from a lady that was traveling from Arkansas. All three of us got to talking and was a great time. Once we landed and while waiting for the bags, the lady from Arkansas asked if I had a ride to the Hotel, I was planning on taking the shuttle, but instead ended up taking a cab that she had already reserved as she didn’t want a cab to be wasted on just her. Throughout the conference we kept running into each other and talking about what we had seen and learned. The vendor I sat next to on the plane would also see me throughout the conference and called me his “plane buddy” and made sure that I was enjoying my time. These two people made me realize how lucky I was to be able to attend, meet such amazing people and that while yes, we were all there to learn from the sessions we were also there to network and making some, hopefully, lasting acquaintances. It showed me how welcoming and open a group of small/rural librarians can be and that vendors really do pay attention to who they see and talk to.

The second was my interaction with one of the vendors. I enjoyed stopping and talking to all the vendors and seeing what they brought but there is one that really stands out to me that made me realize how much they put into these events and really like to get to know who they are talking to. I had

the opportunity to stop and chat with Pam Saxelby and her Husband of Saxelby's Childrens books LLC. They were not pushy sales people they truly just wanted to make us aware that these books exist and that she is willing to travel to do story times and talk to children and parents about her books, which are adorable. I think I ended up just talking to them for quite some time, come to find out that they have family Stevens Point, where I live, and they travel there to visit family! Afterwards I did see them in the hotel restaurant one of the nights watching the Packers/Bears game and then again on my flight leaving Vermont and each time they made a point to see how I was doing and to ask how I was enjoying myself. This vendor, in particular, I felt went above and beyond the call of being vendor by interacting with us and making those connections. By making those connections it brought the overall conference experience even higher by helping to make the environment welcoming and fun!

3. As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

As stated above in the answer to question 1, I am working on implementing a "Free for All" Book Club. The Tuesday after returning from the conference I broached the subject with my current book club members about trying out a "Free for All" book club, they were all very receptive but were all in agreement that adding a completely new book club on top of the existing one would be a lot, especially when we have been adding new members quite regularly. So we came up with a compromise to try it and will be trying a "Free for All" session in June in place of our normal session. While I know that this is more than 6months out, we have discussed this opportunity and I have already submitted the event and it is on the calendar! If this session is a success myself the book club members have decided that we will try it out twice a year at first and possibly in the future add more sessions or make it a completely separate book club.

I am hoping to implement a "Try VR" program but am still trying to figure out the logistics. While going



around and talking to all the vendors, many of them had giveaways that we could sign up for. I was fortunate enough to have signed up to win a "Merge Cube" from the TLC SmartTECH Booth and I won! I had never heard of a "Merge Cube" but have come to find out it is actually a very cool VR item. Since I had never heard of this or even dealt with VR in general, I am thinking that many of our patrons have little to no experience with VR as well. I have asked my staff and other staff within MCPL and have come the conclusion that I should do some sort of weeklong "Try VR" program but am not sure how to do it, as most VR sets need a phone with apps downloaded. I am currently waiting for the Google Cardboard kit from WVLS to try those out at well and see what is needed. I am hoping to get this program set up for a week sometime in January or February to give patrons something to do during the cold

winter months and would love to be able to show the Vendor that the item I won is in-fact being used 😊

One more item I am hoping to start implementing in the New Year is programming that is not geared necessarily towards one age group but all ages so as not to inhibit or exclude anybody. We do a quite a bit of programming geared towards just adults or just children but what happens when a family that crosses a variety of age groups want to participate but we don't have any way of making the craft/program harder or easier for the family members? There was a session I attended titled "The Age Limit Does Not Exist: Combining Youth and Adult Services into Unique Programs" presented by Jessica Hilburn and Becky Stahl of the Benson Memorial Library in Pennsylvania, where it was all about their success in making programs all ages and not just geared towards one. This got me thinking about our programming and how if we were to create programs that were not limited to one age group would we get more participation, would it be attractive to our patrons? Well the answer to that is we don't know until we try! One the great ideas that came across was an Art Show, where patrons of ages bring in any form of art they want to show off by specific time and then it goes on display for all to see for a couple of weeks and that is all there is to it. Other ideas is making crafts that are similar in theme but have various difficulty levels to appeal to all ages. So am I going to implement some new "All Age" programs starting in the new year, one being, hopefully, an Art Show leading up to the summer program theme of "Imagine Your Story." The picture next to this paragraph includes some other awesome ideas from the presenters as well.



4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these three things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?

Only one of the three items I am looking to implement will really need any support. That would be the one about implementing the "Try VR" program. I am not sure how much support can be given or who would be able to help. The biggest hurdle I currently see is how to make it inclusive for everyone, as most VR if not all, require a smartphone with apps downloaded. That would be figuring how to make it so that patrons are able and willing to bring their own smartphones with them and then download the apps or have smart devices/phones on hand with the apps already downloaded on them. How do I make it inclusive and accessible for patrons that don't have a smartphone/device? I think I have an old phone that still works but one may not be enough. I am still waiting to see what all comes in the Google Cardboard Makerspace Kit that WVLS has as well. If anybody has any ideas/thoughts I will gladly accept them!

5. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

This conference was very impactful and meaningful. The one downfall, for me at least, was not knowing the other WVLS attendees. I feel like it would be beneficial for all attendees to get together before attending the conference. This would help us to feel better about possibly trying to find flights or to travel together, as well as possibly to help cut down on costs of the hotel by sharing a room. As the

other attendees were the Directors of their respective branches and I am a branch coordinator within the Marathon County Public Library, I do not attend the director meetings, so had no clue what anybody really looked like. By helping all attendees to at least meet once, I feel like it would be even more impactful after the conference ends because we would all feel more open to sharing ideas, outcomes (good or bad) from things we saw and tried out, and asking each other for advice. When we did want to meet up I felt a bit out of place but was quickly welcomed into the group and hope to continue growing a working relationship with all of them.

Thank for the opportunity to attend this wonderful, engaging, and educational conference. I came back with a lot of information. I hope to be able to attend future library conferences to continue learning and growing as a librarian and branch manager.