

2022 WVLS ARSL Conference Scholarship Reports



**September 14-17, 2022
Chattanooga, TN**

WVLS Post-Conference Report

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?

1. **Whole Person Librarianship: Social Services in Public Libraries** – presented by Ashley, Stewart, MSW, Library Director at Caseyville Public Library District in Caseyville, IL

This session focused on incorporating social work principles into the public library setting. The presenter was a social worker in her prior career and is now a library director. It was very interesting to hear ways that she melded social work and library best practices. I think this is so important because the library helps many people that could also benefit from the services of a social worker, but they are sometimes hesitant to seek one out. If a social worker is at the library and is a friendly face they see all of the time, they may be more receptive to their help and ideas. The main areas of focus for this presentation were: librarians as healers; trauma informed approach; community needs assessments; and materials, programs, and partnerships.

This library was able to work with a local social work school to have students complete their internship hours at the library, so they had someone on staff throughout the week to meet with the public. They also acted as a contact point for community members that needed items like food, diapers, hygiene products, and school supplies.

I especially liked this presentation because the speaker was very engaging and optimistic and had ideas for all sizes and types of libraries. It might not be possible for all libraries to have a social worker on staff or as an intern, but it is possible to include some of the practices. I really liked her example of having a small business card sized item printed for each staff to have on the back of their name badge that included community resource information for things like food pantries, shelters, etc. She also had examples for ways to make the library more sensory friendly and for it to be a safe space. I also really liked her examples of using the community needs assessment results to plan programming and services. This is something I think we could incorporate as we plan future programs at MCPL.

2. **Sharing Our Stories to Support Health and Wellness, at Work and in Our Communities** - presented by Noah Lenstra, University of North Carolina Greensboro and Chris D'Arpa, Wayne State University

This session described a partnership between these university researchers and selected small and rural libraries in the US to investigate how these libraries are promoting health and wellness in their communities. The project was funded by an IMLS Grant.

Laura Wood
MCPL Rothschild
10/8/2022

During the presentation, Suzanne, one of the library directors from North Carolina participating in the project, shared a lot of ideas she had incorporated at her library. First, she discussed how she planned her wellness themed programs by thinking about the wellness wheel. The wellness wheel is broken down into the eight dimensions of wellness – emotional, occupational, intellectual, environmental, financial, social, physical, and spiritual. She then focused on one dimension each month or so and reached out to community partners that would be interested in that area. I thought this was a very thoughtful and evidenced based way to plan programs. In the future, we hope to have more set guidelines on program planning at MCPL, so I think incorporating a method like this might be valuable. A few ideas that she shared that I thought would be possible at my library included a walking book club, a story time at the local pool, and purchasing pickle ball kits for the library.

If anyone is interested in this project, you can sign up for their monthly newsletter at <https://letsmoveibraries.org/about-us/newsletters>

3. Effective Staff Evaluations Made Easy – Jackie Mills, Library Director Mt. Angel Public Library in Mt Angel, OR

This session focused on ways to improve the staff evaluation process. I personally write eleven mid-year and eleven annual reviews each year, so I attended this session hoping to find tips to be more organized during this process. Jackie had a lot of great ideas, mainly surrounding her “monthly check-in” process. At Marathon County, we already do something called monthly rounding, which I felt was similar to her process, but I did find a few things I wanted to add to my normal rounding sessions, like including a chart each month on the back of the rounding sheet that includes positives, things to work on, training, and ideas for upcoming projects. She also made sure to have a written record of the employee’s goals from their last review on hand so they could make sure they were making appropriate progress. Finally, she provided her step by step process to writing and delivering evaluations, as well as a list of action verbs that could be used while writing reviews. I thought her tips were helpful and could easily be incorporated by all levels of supervisors. I will definitely be sharing her presentation and action word list with the other MCPL branch coordinators.

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?

I really enjoyed meeting librarians from all over the country and hearing their stories about what is going well at their libraries and what sort of challenges they are currently facing. One interaction that especially stood out to me was meeting Hannah, an outreach specialist – economic and workforce development librarian from Kent District Library in Michigan. We do not have any staff that focus specifically on economic and workforce development, so I thought

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that hearing about her job responsibilities was really fascinating. I also really appreciated her attitude and how she talked about working with adults from all walks of life and making sure they all had access to the information, help, and resources that they needed from the library. She does outreach at the local jail and also works with community members looking for jobs and other resources. This was just one example of a connection I made. There are so many great people at ARSL, and everyone is incredibly friendly and helpful. I would encourage all future attendees to reach out to the people you sit next to at a session or a meal or to make connections on the Whova app. It really makes for a more fun and fulfilling conference!

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 I discussed above, here are some of the things I plan to implement in the next few months

1. Health and wellness – plan a walking book club for the summer that meets at the Gaska Park Trails in Rothschild. At the moment, I do not think we will all read the same book, but will read books that fit a similar theme and discuss while going on a short walk.
2. Create an addition to the rounding form I use during monthly check-ins that includes a written record of the employee's smart goals as well as information about trainings they have participated in and ideas for future projects. I will also create a binder to hold all of this information and to hopefully help me be more organized in the future.
3. Incorporate using the wellness wheel and the community needs assessments in future program planning. At MCPL, we are hoping to establish a programming committee soon. I am hoping to share these two resources for program planning so that we can have a well rounded plan that best reflects the needs of our community.

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?

Items one and two will be easy to implement on my own. Item three will need to wait until we have a programming committee established, but I think that we will be able to incorporate some of these ideas fairly easily. This one will take the most time, but it will also probably have the greatest impact on our community.

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

I really think that the ARSL conference is outstanding and that employees at WVLS member libraries are incredibly lucky to have access to such a wonderful scholarship. The entire experience was incredibly valuable, and I cannot think of many ways to improve it for me personally. I hope to encourage other MCPL employees that are eligible to apply in the future because I think we can all learn so much from the opportunity.

One thing that was new to me was the Whova app. I think I figured it out pretty easily, but I know that it was overwhelming for many attendees. I would recommend having some sort of training or digital bite about using Whova at a conference.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Please note: This report will be shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees and posted on the WVLS website in an upcoming board meeting packet.

Allison Puestow, Tomahawk Public Library

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?

One session I attended was “How Can I Help You?’ & Other Ways You're Losing Your Patrons” presented by Phillip Carter, which focused on customer service. I enjoyed the speaker, and he shared tips on how to attract and keep customers coming in the building until they become regular patrons. It was reassuring to see some of the strategies we've been implementing here at the Tomahawk Public Library were mentioned by him as good strategies, like making sure to greet everyone as they enter and leave.

Another session I attended was “Survive and thrive as a first-time supervisor” by Gary Deziel. Although I am not the full time supervisor nor director at our library, I do have to step into that role when Heidi isn't here, and it is a position I had never been in previous jobs. This session was very helpful in laying out what makes a good supervisor and how I can work on being better at this aspect of my job.

A third session was “Relighting Your Programming Fire: Combatting Job-Related Burnout & Guilt to Make Programming Fun Again” by Chelsea Price. As we are working on our programming here at the library, it is good to be mindful of burnout from trying to do too much too quickly. She also presented a long list of sources and programming inspirations to utilize to ease the burden of brainstorming fun and engaging ideas.

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In general, I loved talking with other librarians from different states. It was interesting to hear what similar challenges we are facing, but I loved learning about what makes these other libraries unique, and what they do to combat the challenges they face. For example, one library's building is so small, it doesn't have any space for programming, so they hold their programs outside in a large teepee. One of the lunches was set as a roundtable discussion so that we sat with different librarians and we chatted over different topics—like programming and staffing—that they had on a screen. It was nice to hear that, although we are all so different, we all love our communities and strive to provide the best service for them that we can.

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

One of the sessions I had attended—Relighting your programming fire—shared a lot of interesting resources that I look forward to sharing with my staff who are involved in our programming. We all need help coming up with ideas sometimes, so I think this will be a good

resource of ideas for the future for myself and my other staff members who are involved in program development.

The session that focused on customer service topics I intend to go over with my staff. Some of the ideas presented we are already doing, but there are always ways that we can better serve our patrons.

I would like to look into different sustainability projects that we could possibly do at our library. We have started implementing some ideas—like using recyclable bags for our take-and-make crafts or the shift we made to LED lighting—but I would like to see what else is out there that we could possibly bring for our community.

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?

The first two can easily be done by myself and the rest of the staff at the library. These are projects easily within our wheelhouse and are geared towards us and our daily work. For any large sustainability projects that catch our eyes, we will need support from our Board, but that will be down the road if and when we decide on any projects.

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

Unsure. I had a pretty great experience at the conference—almost-lost luggage notwithstanding. Even though I couldn't go to all the sessions I had been interested in, most if not all the session presenters still uploaded or are in the process of uploading their slides and resources from their presentations, which I intend to download and go over when I have time to see what information can be beneficial to our library. I did enjoy and appreciate having the other three directors from the system with me at the conference. It was nice to get to know them and share ideas—and notes from other sessions I couldn't go to—while at the conference.

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Maxx Handel, Frances L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford)

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?

Three sessions from the conference that I loved were:

Effective Staffing Evaluations Made Easy presented by Jackie Mills. This presentation was meaningful in that it gave me a starting point on how to communicate with staff and had some great resources. It was very helpful to get insight on how to effectively help your staff and make communication easier. I came away with lots of knowledge and some helpful documents that I can now use in my own library.

Marketing for Small Libraries: Leveling Up presented by Suzanne Macaulay. This presentation was one of my favorites because of how enthusiastic and easily relatable Suzanne was. She had some awesome tips on how to market your library as well as some great stories to go with it. Best of all she has done these marketing techniques in her own library. What was amazing is how her ideas gave me a whole new perspective on how to market the library, in the past I never even thought about how impactful our logo could be or stickers. Her ideas could be done by big and small libraries and there were varieties for bigger and smaller budgets.

Beyond Late Fees: Eliminating Access Barriers for All Community Members presented by Carrie Valdes. I came into this presentation looking for information about going fine free. What I came to find out is that there are differences on what I thought was fine free and what the presenter thought was fine free. My thoughts on a fine free library was having no overdue fees. Carrie brought forth a whole new perspective about going completely fine free (no overdue fees, replacements fees, cards fees, etc.) Most importantly it also brought up not just money barriers but also policy barriers that could greatly impact patrons that need our help and can't access these services due to something in these policies such as needing a parent guardian signature or having a valid home address. This was an amazing presentation with a lot of great stories on how removing these barriers helped people who really needed services that the library provided and opened my eyes to what a library really stands for.

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?

A conference experience that I would highly recommend to anyone is attending the dine-arounds. It gives you the chance to meet a whole new group of people. I learned about how some libraries are branching out from their buildings to better reach their communities and provide services they otherwise wouldn't be able to access. During that experience I also got some helpful advice about funding. This experience made me realize how nice this conference is it provides a great environment

surrounded by peers that are in the same profession and are willing to share advice that can be very helpful.

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

Three things I plan on implementing in the next six months are:

- I would like to start having regular check ins with staff so if there is anything they need or problems they may have it can be brought to my attention faster and in a controlled environment.
- In the marketing presentation I came away with a lot of new ways to market our library. I would like to purchase tablecloths with our logo on them for when I set up a booth outside the library building. Another great marketing technique she shared was to have stickers of your logo, it is an affordable way to market your library. So, I will be looking into getting some stickers with our logo and finding creative ways to use them.
- A big thing that was already on my mind before I attended the conference was to get rid of overdue fees. After attending the Beyond Late Fees: Eliminating Access Barriers for All Community Members presentation it has made me realize how beneficial this would be to the community and the library. I don't believe I will be able to implement this in 6 months but I hope to try implementing this in a year.

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?

To make the check ins and the logo implementation work all I would need is the support of my staff. To get the most out of the check ins I would need them to allow me to help them and trust me as their supervisor.

The staff is also the key to marketing our library. When implementing the logo, you need a great staff because when patrons think of the logo they aren't just going to associate it with a building they are going to think of all the services we provide and the staff that makes that happen.

When it comes to going fine free I know I am going to need the support of my Board of Trustees, staff, and WVLS. The Board would need to approve the change. The staff would need to be positive and market the change. WVLS would need to change all of our items to not accrue fines and help us with the transition.

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

Honestly, this conference was amazing and as a first timer coming in I was very nervous. After getting there and experiencing it I didn't see anything that needed improvement. All the events, presentations, and other gatherings/discussions were clearly highlighted in the Whova App. I didn't have any trouble finding anything and the experience was pretty stress free. During my time I was able to learn a lot and make a lot of connections. The presentations had a lot of different topics so I was able to pick one in each time frame that would be helpful to me and my library.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Carla Huston – Jean M. Thomsen Memorial Library

Stetsonville, WI

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?

FRAMING THE FUTURE – Presented by Sarah Jones-Lutter

As long as I have been working in a library, I have heard little mentions about “strategic planning”. And I had no idea what that even meant, let alone how to go about creating(?), drafting (?), copying (?) one. What terminology is even used? So as soon as I saw this session, I knew it was calling me. The speaker walked through the steps of developing (!) a strategic plan, and who I needed to call upon to make it effective. I can’t say I’m raring to go on this project, but now at least I know what it is.

NO MORE NEUTRAL – Presented by Angela Hursh

The critical takeaway is in the title of this seminar...libraries are not neutral and are professionally expected to follow the ALA Code of Ethics. Libraries must stand for racial and social justice and promote and market their library as such. While most individuals do not support book bans, they are always part of the background noise of librarianship and we need to be prepared for any challenge by the public. This includes having solid policies in place that thoroughly explain the process of selecting materials. It’s also important for the public to be aware of these policies, and the steps they can take if they disagree and want to lodge a complaint, beginning with a request for reconsideration. Links to excellent resources were also included that are always extremely helpful.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES – Presented by Laura Pitts

I’ve thought for a long time that librarians must be among the most progressive of individuals and have tried to develop a diverse collection. I know that many of the books I select will not be checked out, but it is essential to represent the entirety of the world around us, not just the small space we inhabit. Sometimes, though, I have a hard time presenting a side to an idea or action under debate when I disagree strongly with some opinions. But it is also the librarian’s job to develop a collection that responds to all sides of an argument and doesn’t try to create an unbalanced perspective. Ms. Hursh pointed out how easy it can be at times to self-censor ourselves, and I realized that I do that to some extent. I really struggle with purchasing some items, so I have imposed a standard on myself the information must come from a credible source and be backed by research. It is still a challenge, but it also made me think that I need to rewrite our collection development policy considering the era in which we now live.

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?

I attended an after conference meet up for LGBTQ+ librarians that I think was the best part of the conference for me. I have long considered myself an ally to this group, supporting policies that strengthen their rights and fighting against stereotypes and hate speech. This position became more a part of my core belief system in the last few years. Talking to these men and women for that one hour, hearing their stories, expressing my fears and uncertainties was a lift to my spirits. Coincidentally, the lunch speakers were a trio of poets, one of whom identified as LGBTQ. I stood in line to speak to her and told her how her words moved me. We both ended up in tears as she described how she no longer had a mother and asked for a hug. All these poets were very moving as they read one of their works aloud and ignited my desire to begin writing poetry again.

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

I really should begin looking at a strategic plan and doing it properly, with community involvement and taking all the necessary steps. I would also like to look at our collection policy and strengthen it, as well as place more signage in the library space, emphasizing it as a safe and supportive place. Lastly, I want to study our circulation and numbers related to diversity and develop some ways to promote items that are being bypassed by patrons.

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?

Staff support would be ideal, but since I am currently understaffed that is not a reality. My Board of Trustees is very supportive of me and my needs but are pretty hands off regarding the day to day running of the library. I hesitate to ask them for help, as most of them are working parents, and I'm just grateful they agreed to be on the board! My community does not have many individuals interested in taking on yet another commitment. I have my own issues with mental health and ADHD, so what I think would be most helpful would be to rely on the experts at WVLS. I would really like to schedule a face-to-face meeting with someone for each of my goals. For every project I undertake I do the research, the organization, the writing or creating of materials, etc. When I put that on top of other daily tasks, something is going to be set aside or lost in the chaos. We needed to make some changes at the library, so I feel that group sessions or trainings, are not always helpful, as we are functioning differently than in the past, and unlike most of the other libraries in the system. And while I have been a director for many years now, I'm sure there is much I don't know, though I'm hard pressed to synthesize it into a brief question to pass along via email.

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

All in all, the conference was a great experience. The seminars were informative and covered a nice range of topics. The only way it could be improved are through changes of mine, not from WVLS or ARSL or any other outside influence. It's always difficult to get away when you are running a small library; playing catch-up is hard, and this fall in particular has been full, with college visits on top of work responsibilities.