Community-Led Interest Group (BCLA) Meeting

Tuesday, June 5, 2018, Richmond Public Library Brighouse Branch

Hosted by RPL's Anne Bechard (CLIG Chair)

In attendance, in person: Gordon Yusko (UBC), Millicent Everrestars (VPL), Jorge Cardenas (BPL), Anna Piccolo (RPL), Heather De Forest (SFU; CLIG Secretary), Catherine Lindsay (RPL), Tania Tong (SPL),

In attendance, teleconference: Rachel Burke (FVRL), Tara Thompson (Okanagan Regional Library), Mikale Fenton (NV City Library)

Anne welcomed the group and we began with a round of introductions, including our libraries, the geographic areas we serve, and the roles we take. In many cases, participating librarians are engaged with community as part of their job and may be the only staff at their library who work (explicitly) in this area, though we discussed the idea that this fits into everyone's roles. Some librarians have a community focus as their main role while others have it as an addition to many other aspects of their work, either in a managerial or direct way.

Outline/agenda
1. Outcomes and metrics
2. Where would we like to take this group?

1. Outcomes and metrics:

This discussion took several main threads:

How libraries are currently measuring CL work:

-boards and funding agencies are looking for outcome information.

-outcome reporting is closely aligned with libraries' current strategic plans (if library has a current strategic plan! Some are in progress). Shows how community-led work supports organizational objectives and priorities.

-a number of libraries (BPL, RPL, VPL) are at different stages of adoption of – or consideration of adopting --Project Outcome, a North-America-wide system through the Public Libraries Association that allows for some comparison between different areas. It addresses 7 different areas of impact: Civic and community engagement, digital learning, economic development, education/lifelong learning, early childhood literacy, job skills, and summer reading.

-representative information that librarians are tracking include: how many contacts are made, how many cards are resolved (fines waived, accounts created, etc), number of events and attendees at events. Some libraries are not tracking community-led metrics per se, but are looking at activities in programming and outreach that connect with access and inclusion.

-many (most) libraries are looking at qualitative reports to truly illustrate impacts. For example, descriptions of most impactful encounters (could be librarian's interpretation and/or quotes from community members).If x number of staff attended a session on honouring indigenous perspectives, it doesn't tell us that much, but if those staff say that they are better able to do something as a result of their attendance, then we can identify the impact.

- theory of change model (combined with a logic model) can be useful in looking at metrics not just to prove but to improve work. It encourages laying bare assumptions about what you're doing and how that will create change and then testing those assumptions. It addresses the idea of inputs, outputs and outcomes and and takes a long-term view. Julie Creaser (librarian with Northern Health Authority) has offered training on this in the past.

Challenges in CL reporting

-many libraries are in relationship-building phases currently and don't have a clear, quantifiable picture of the impact of community-led activities.

-some of the impacts are intangibles; some are not yet realized.

-It's difficult to report outcomes of time spent building, strengthening, and maintaining relationships …> because the direct connection from establishing a relationship with an individual to that individual using the library is not trackable unless they tell us… and if we are not on the floor to meet them, the cause and effect are not always linked.

-capturing of stories is important to boards, but also important to relate back to the community. This is equally true for podcasting (eg. "Frequencies" at UBC-O), video-storytelling (NVan City: how has the library impacted your life) and stories of community engagement on a library's website. Not an easy thing to tell and share an impactful story of engagement. If we are all trying so hard to gather and capture these stories, we need to make them available and accessible and stop hoarding and hiding them.

-follow-up to events and programs needs to be budgeted in to the planning. We plan and execute many things but don't follow-up as we move on from an event. Not so much measurement, but how you're going to move ahead in the relationship. We miss out on the final step that gives it legacy impact. We need to be conscious of how we plan our year: not just adding and adding, but slowing down and being deliberate with how we 'close the circle' on our communicating.

Distinguishing CL from other library work.

-there's a difference between outreach and CL, and we are all still grappling with that. "Community-led" data may often overlap with and be difficult to disentangle from activities associated with "outreach", "community engagement",. The bigger question is whose job is it to go out to community events? Any staff or only community services staff?

-we all have different ideas about what community-led and community-engagement are, both at the table and in our organizations. In-house interactions may actually be or lead to CL activities, but may not be identified as such. How can CL work happened within the building and be taken up by all staff?

-there's a difference between partnership and relationship. Relationship is not "instant coffee". It can be challenging to build relationships if you're always moving toward outcomes (a la "what does the library get out of this?")

2. Where would we like to take this group?

-we are all at different places and capacities.

-this group can be a collaborative, connecting, sharing space. A community of practice. Reduce isolation.

-ideas as the group moves forward:

> -sharing out our work at each meeting. Program design, successes, failures.
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> -standing agenda item: evaluation
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> -working through a definition of Community Led to bring into our service models, to establish a framework that can be in use across the Lower Mainland and beyond. In the long term, develop a contemporary and local toolkit.
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> -invite guests to talk with us about evaluation; nonlibrarians
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> -sharing sources and resources (Michelle recommends *The Feminist Reference Desk* , ed. Maria Accardi, Library Juice Press, 2017)
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> -grow and invite other library systems to the table.
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> -develop the group's webpage on the BCLA site.
>
> -prepare for a presence at the next BCLA Conference.

3. Next Meeting

North Vancouver City Library

Tuesday September 18th, 10am-noon.

Topics: Training and definitions

Teleconference will be available.