

Colorado Public Library Directors
Annual Retreat
May 26, 27, 2009

I attended this meeting held at the Vail Public Library with 50 other library directors and several staff from the Colorado State Library. After introductions and reports on the highlights at each library we got into the agenda:

1) Dealing with Tough Times –

And, boy, are they tough! Vail is reporting a 25% drop in sales tax revenue and even the library districts that rely on the “stable” property tax for their funds are quaking. The more sophisticated districts have frozen their operating budgets for 2010 anticipating the very significant drop in property values that will happen with the 2010 assessment. They are banking every cent they can now with the idea that their assessed valuations will drop 20-40% and no voters will support mill increases. It will take years to “ratchet” back up to their current tax revenue levels.

Some other suggestions are as follows:

- Bring in social service counselors, psychologists to help staff deal with their personal levels of stress and to learn how to recognize and deal with their customer’s stress. Specifically they are training to recognize and react to adult, and children’s abuse issues, drunkenness and drug abuse.
- Look to various grants for capital costs of photovoltaics and wind generators for electricity, geo thermal systems for heat and cooling. (see last section of this report).
- Downsize buildings and number of branch locations in districts, Denver. Cut hours of service as well as programs and services, avoiding “punishing” the library’s funders, AKA taxpayers, by taking away highest use hours, services, but making cuts that are visible, consequential and present opportunities for public discussion on public investment on all municipal services.
- Avoid cuts on budget areas that never or very slowly recover, ie. the collection, materials budget. Protect hours of highest visitor count, circulation, computer usage.

2) Friends of the Library groups, Foundation –

Some of the issues mentioned were about Friends groups that raise money, but refuse to systematically use it to benefit the library, endangering the Friends tax-exempt status, or are so focused on one activity – book sales – they won’t consider any other activities, eg. volunteering, advocacy for library. Other issues are library boards wanting to establish a foundation to seek out grants, establish endowments for operations. The Wyoming State Library has some very useful information on the roles of library boards, Friends groups and foundations.

The Arapahoe Library District foundation has an interesting organization: the Chair and Vice-Chair are foundation volunteers, while the President, Vice- President, and Secretary are library district staff. Library people.org is a Colorado statewide, friends organization that makes grants for small libraries.

3) RFID & Self-Check circulation –

High Plains Library District (Weld County) uses RFID for check in stations that produce a receipt. Broomfield is a III/RFID product site with questions on retaining barcodes/readers for some types of materials – magazines, newspapers, for phone in renewal of RFID items. Durango complained of high loss rates of DVDs, CDs while Rangeview is using ITG (?) for CDs, DVDs. Jeffco is filing non-fiction AV with book collection.

Tuesday evening staff from the Colorado State Library presented information on the Colorado Library Consortium (CLIC), the changes pending to the statewide database package with the loss of \$1 million in legislative funding, federal stimulus money coming to Colorado libraries, the ASK program, a statewide marketing campaign, and various other topics. (see handouts)

Wednesday morning we reconvened to continue the agenda:

4) Colorado Libraries Collaborate, or formerly, Colorado Library Card/CLC.

Kari Baumann, Elbert County Library District, a CLC committee member, led discussion with her report that \$16,000 is banked for claims on lost materials in CLC system. (I asked if this fund was for lost ILL items, such as the \$200 copy lost either by the courier or CU-Boulder staff. Alas, no) There was discussion on licensing arrangements on databases that are affected by out-of-town CLC card holders using them. CU-Boulder (again) charges Boulder residents \$75/year to access their databases. We talked about sharing information on dead beats and thieves who travel the state borrowing large amounts of materials and moving on.

5) ASK Colorado –

The online reference service which is part library-operated and part commercially supported is celebrating 5 years of service. There is a significant charge (\$4,000/year from Weld) and staff commitment (10 hours/week from Weld) to participate. There also was discussion about ASK serving the Colorado legislators and their staff, but this is not done now since the legislature won't pay for service and there is a private contractor currently doing this.

6) Policies for unattended children –

Denver Public director Shirley Amore led discussion on their new policy which is in development .

They found no designated age when kids can,can't be left unattended while Araphoe identifies children needing supervision to be under the age of 5. Arapahoe will put link to policy/procedure up in June.

7) Building projects around Colorado – Spanish Peaks/Walsenburg discussed their renovated 1st floor of 3, 1911 school building that has noisy areas near entrance shading back to quiet areas in rear of the building. Pikes Peak reported that they are using glassed, vertical garage doors to delineate a computer teaching lab from public lab on class days, while Douglas Library District indicated they are designing all of their buildings for future material handling gear even if they can't currently afford it. Many said they are looking at/planning for no big public desks for circulation, reference. They are looking at moveable, roving carts with laptops ballasted by rechargeable batteries.

Parents want computers in children's areas, so laptops and/or carts maybe an answer. Libraries (PPLD) are providing laptops in building secured by GPS trackers, cables to carts while others (High Plains/Weld) are lending 5 out of the building.

Drive up drop offs/pick ups are very desirable but difficult because of traffic patterns, closeness to circulation area, staff room. We also talked about sources of money for alternative energy grants – solar, wind, geo thermal:

- Governors Energy Office
- Department of Local Affairs/DOLA
- USDA
- Tax rebates for contractors that can be redirected back into building budget
- GEO Solar Rebate Program/Colorado Solar Energy Installers Assoc.