

Report of meetings on new approaches to library collaboration among different types of libraries

On July 25 and 26, METRONET hosted two luncheon meetings – one in Hennepin County and one in Ramsey County – with groups of approximately 15 librarians to discuss how we might more effectively collaborate. Those attending the meetings represented all types of libraries – school, public, academic and special. Tom Shaughnessy, METRONET’s Executive Director, framed the discussion by acknowledging the leadership displayed by Minnesota’s librarians in sharing their collections. Certainly resource sharing is the most important element in interlibrary cooperation. The question that he asked the groups to consider is whether there are other opportunities for collaboration, and how might METRONET be a catalyst in facilitating these opportunities. He indicated that METRONET has funds available with which to implement one or more of the ideas proposed.

The two discussions, which were facilitated by Sally Lederer, produced many good ideas and most of the topics proposed at the first meeting surfaced again at the second meeting. METRONET staff recorded most of the ideas presented and grouped them into five categories.

First, there would seem to be many opportunities for collaboration among the types of libraries in addressing the educational and informational needs of new Americans.



Libraries of all types need more native language materials, information on finding employment, starting a business, preparing resumes, and connecting with Minnesota WorkForce Centers. Several public libraries have already established liaison relationships with these centers. These relationships are important not only to new Americans but to other citizens who are seeking employment. One of the special librarians present observed that libraries should expand their efforts in preparing not only workers for today’s jobs but also help prepare children (the “next crew”) for tomorrow’s workforce needs.

Second, librarians at both meetings underscored the need for staff training and development. If subject matter experts in local libraries could be identified, they could share their knowledge with others – for example, provide mini-tutorials on finding consumer health information online, present best practices in teaching information literacy and critical thinking skills, or teach other librarians in the use of media, ITV, or instructional software.

Third, several librarians spoke about the need to reach young people more effectively. It was suggested that many teenagers and Generation Y types are enthralled by microworld technologies and gaming. Yet this is a cultural phenomenon that many librarians are at a loss in terms of understanding how their institutions can use these technologies as a means of connecting with these young people. Once again, the need for ways to efficiently share information arose, along with a suggestion that METRONET sponsor a program on gaming and libraries. One librarian stated that most library web sites are unappealing to “gamers” and that web pages should be redesigned to incorporate some of the trends found in online games.

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Fourth, the question of sharing library facilities, including computer labs was raised. Public library users seem to have an insatiable need for computer access – completing job applications, preparing resumes, keeping in touch with friends and families through email, using licensed software programs, etc. Many school libraries and media centers have workstations that are unused after 4:00 p.m. most weekdays. Would it be feasible for schools to make these facilities available to the public once the school day has ended? This is another of those interesting questions that should be explored.

Other suggestions made by the two groups included the need for a speakers bureau. Frequently, well-known speakers are invited by individual libraries for specific purposes, for example, an evening meeting with a Friends of the Library group. Sometimes these presenters might also be available to other libraries in the morning or afternoon of the day of their visit. METRONET might be the most appropriate agency to maintain a listing of these speakers and dates of their presentations. Finally, one library director suggested that whatever project METRONET decides to undertake, it should be sustainable. While sustainability is an important consideration, it should not prevent the implementation of pilot or demonstration projects, projects which may or may not prove to be sustainable.

METRONET will distribute this summary of the two meetings to those who attended them and will seek additional advice and clarification. Once this input is received, a revised report will be prepared and sent to METRONET's governing board and other selected library leaders in the metro area. METRONET's goal is to launch one or more new initiatives based on this report in early Fall.

Minnesota Digital Library (MDL) Update

With a Library Services and Technology Act grant, the Minnesota Digital Library launched its first major project last year – Minnesota Reflections. The project's goal is to create a visual record of the first fifty years of the state's history by means of digitizing photographs, postcards, or other illustrations contributed by libraries and historical societies throughout Minnesota.

Phase I of Minnesota Reflections will be completed sometime this fall and will make available almost 7000 images created before 1909. Libraries wishing to contribute images to the project may scan them locally or request that they be scanned at one of the MDL's two scanning centers at the University of Minnesota or at the Minnesota History Center. All scanning must meet quality standards established by the MDL. Thus far some 60 libraries and historical societies have participated in the Reflections project. Phase II of Minnesota Reflections will focus on digitizing about 3600 land survey maps which were created before 1923.

For more information, please consult the MDL website: <http://www.mndigital.org/>

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METRONET Wind-Down Presentations

Typically 15 to 20 librarians have attended METRONET's Wind-Down discussions during the past few months. It is interesting that different individuals usually attend these sessions, although there are a few "regulars" who seldom miss attending. Recent presentations have been made by Dan Donnelly of the University of Minnesota on copyright, Mary Wagner of the College of St. Catherine on trends in library/information science education, and Marvin Anderson and Archie Givens on the importance of reading to children and exposing African-American children to their literary heritage.

Soon METRONET will be announcing some of the Wind-Down presentations scheduled for Fall. These include a tour of the Hmong Cultural Center and Library in St. Paul, a presentation on the various electronic files maintained by the Minnesota History Center, a report and discussion of MnLINK's progress to date, a session on the Minnesota Digital Library, and a discussion on the MEMO/MLA Information Literacy standards. METRONET's goal is to sponsor two programs each month as a means for promoting professional development, networking, and communication across type of library categories. All librarians, library staff, and library science students are invited to attend METRONET Wind-Downs.

NEW!! METRONET Continuing Education Scholarship Program

Have you been wanting to attend that professional conference for MLA, MEMO, SLA, etc., or that class that will help you gain that particular skill that will help you do your job even better, but your organization just doesn't have the money to send you? METRONET can help! As a pilot project for 2005-06, METRONET will be offering scholarships to members who wish to attend professional development events/training. Applicants can request up to \$250 to help pay for event registration/tuition, travel expenses, materials, etc. Applications will be reviewed by METRONET's staff and Governing Board and will be awarded based on criteria specified in the Scholarship Policy. Both the policy and application form are available on the METRONET website at www.metronet.lib.mn.us.



METRONET Website Redesign

Watch for the new, redesigned METRONET website. Work is in progress, but we welcome suggestions from our members! Is there any particular content you'd like to see included on the METRONET website? How can we help you in your daily professional life? Contact us at info@metronet.lib.mn.us

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Upcoming Fall 2005 Events

Minnesota Library Association (MLA) Annual Conference September 21-23, Minneapolis
(www.mnlibraryassociation.org for more info)

Minnesota Educational Media Organization October 13-15, Mankato
(MEMO) Fall Conference (www.memoweb.org for more info)

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