

ADVOCACY BY FRIENDS: discussion after panel presentation at the CML program at Hyattsville Library, Sept. 15, 2007.

A reminder that the panelists had been Irene Padilla, Maryland State Librarian, and Lynne Bradley of the Washington Office of ALA. CML Board member and former President of ALTA Pat Fisher facilitated the discussion. Fisher started by suggesting that comments be made on three points:

1. What are some essential services provided by public libraries?
2. A brief description of ALTA and FOLUSA.
3. How can Friends use the information from the Potomac, Inc. survey of Maryland Public Libraries and the suggestions made by Lynne Bradley?

Barbara Cuffie, Pres. of the Forest Park Friends of EPFL, said there is violence in the neighborhood of the library. The library is seen as a “safe venue”. But to attract teens to the library, the library needs to partner with other neighborhood organizations. At her branch after school teens stand in line to use computers; this is one way to militate against gangs. The Forest Park Friends have an ambassador program, in which members of the Friends reach out to neighborhood churches and the neighborhood associations. Padilla responded that partnerships are needed to succeed with library programs and to raise funds.

Mary Mallery told how the main library in Hagerstown is a focal point for bringing business downtown, which can be viewed as another essential service. This relates to “trip chaining” from the Potomac Survey. Library Director Mary Baykan reports that on an average day 1200 people visit the main library. Also, Baykan is hoping to raise \$16 million for expansion of the main library downtown. When the Urban Forum of Greater Hagerstown (which is interested in a revitalized downtown) learned these things, they put getting money for the library expansion at the top of their agenda.

John Cain of the Pratt Friends and a former Baltimore City Councilman said that it is essential to know the chief budget officer for the jurisdiction that the library is in. Cain said that the Budget Chief “provides cover to the politicians”. If you can persuade the Budget Chief of the importance of what the library is asking for, then that person can tell the Chief Executive to “keep his hands off the library” budget.

Public safety can be considered an essential service that the library can assist with. Glennor Shirley, CML Board member, former branch librarian in two counties, and now in charge of the Correctional System Library Program for the State, presented some interesting statistics. There are now about 24,000 State prisoners, of which 60% are from Baltimore City. Most are parents. Public libraries can help with intervention of services to the children of inmates, and also on literacy education for inmates, so they will be more likely to make a success of returning to their community. Each year about 15,000 inmates go back into the community. Ms. Shirley tries to have her library staff encourage

inmates to use libraries when they return home. At least one study indicates that there is 19% less recidivism with inmates who used educational services while in prison.

Padilla said that because of the I95 corridor gang violence extends beyond the city.

Related to public safety is emergency preparedness. Bradley indicated that in the aftermath of Katrina libraries in the central south were underutilized in providing information that they had access to. Padilla reported that a DLDS grant has been made to the Eastern Shore Regional Library to study disaster preparedness.

One woman who is a Court Appointed Special Advocate to a troubled teenager uses the Oxon Hill Library as a place to meet with him. She says this is a nationwide program and suggests that librarians could reach out to local courts to suggest that libraries be used for such purposes.

Mike Rindskopf raised the issue of how Friends can be useful in countering the far-reaching implications of the US Patriot Act. Bradley said that the ALA stance has been litigation to try to stop intrusion of privacy in regard to library records for circulation and computer use. That stance has been validated so far in one case, the Connecticut Four, in which the defendants were successful in their opposition to a national security letter which was too broad reaching. Bradley said that Friends could keep the community informed about the need for higher standards for libraries, because of the Right to Read. Government agents should be required to seek a narrow warrant to protect citizens against broad scale fishing expeditions.

Fisher shifted the discussion to how to keep abreast of issues facing libraries. Friends need to be aware of the hierarchy of government units in each county. There should be a staff liaison from the library to the Friends. Fisher said that ALTA is where lay people are members of ALA. She said in an analogy that ALTA is like the PTA and that FOLUSA is like a school's booster club. Herbert Davis from BCPL said that changes are afoot. Within ALA the Executive Director of ALTA has just gone to LAMA, the ALA division concerned with management; and that the Executive Director of FOLUSA will become the Executive Director of ALTA. Davis thinks that a merger is pending. But in the meantime everyone should be a member of ALA and then ALTA—in order to find out what is going on nationally in libraries. Someone then mentioned the Oct. 21-27 is National Friends Week this year.

Bradley called attention to the fact that during the June ALA Conference in DC there was launched an "I love libraries" website, which can be found at: www.ilovelibraries.org/. She also reminded the group of her ALA handouts useful for information and taking action.

Padilla said that libraries need handouts on key library services and issues and implied that Friends could help create and distribute those. Padilla referred to the statistics cards that CML for several years had created in a size to fit in a wallet that summarized statistics gathered by DLDS. Mallery said that we (i.e. CML) need to update these cards,

make them available in large quantity, and urge people to carry them with them for easy reference.

Someone referred to the pink sheet on “Key Library issues” that Bradley had brought and then pointed out that a Friends groups should NOT expect to be involved in all thirteen issues on the national level discussed by ALA.

Ms. Mason of the Forest Park Friends of the Pratt Library said that their group is 26 years old and that most of their members and board members are getting old. A concern of that group is how to recruit new, younger members. She also said that they are having difficulty finding someone to be treasurer, because the bank requires that officers of organizations give their social security numbers, and many folks are reluctant to do that. She was advised to seek legal advice to determine if banks really are required to secure social security numbers.

Going back to essential services, Ms. Freeny, Director of the PGCMLS, suggested that we should publicize to the community at large the important role that public libraries play in early education. Libraries are where children start their organized education—in addition to what parents provide. Referring to a study by a man at the Minnesota Federal Reserve Bank, it was suggested that \$1 investment equals about \$17 in returns. Early investment in children pays off down the pike with better informed citizens, who may be less likely to turn to criminal activities. Freeny also referred to a “Ready at Five” conference to be held at a Baltimore hotel the next week. The Ready at Five Partnership can be found on Google at: readyatfive.org.

In partial answer to Ms. Mason about recruiting younger members for the Friends, Bradley suggested that libraries “go to where they are” with blogs and second life. This technique would be useful in attracting young people to library services, as well. Someone from the Bowie Friends said that one way to attract high school students is to provide opportunities for them to provide “community service”, which is now a high school requirement in Maryland.

Padilla said that DLDS has made use of “23 things” that library staff should be aware of in serving younger customers that was created by the library in Charlotte, NC. This can be found on Google at: merlin.lib.md.us; then click the 4th line from the top left of the home page for “Maryland 23 Things Blog”. That course is now being used for in-service training in public libraries throughout Maryland. 1300 staff have had the training, with 1000 yet to take the course. Ms. Shirley has taken part in this training and suggested that what appears on the DLDS website be linked to the CML website.

Fisher said that Friends could update bookmarks with library statistics and services such as were created in the 90s. Lisa Williams suggested that statistics could be put on door hangers and then distributed to offices of the members of the General Assembly.

The group ran out of time but not ideas.

Notes prepared by Bill Wilson, Oct. 4, 2007, and revised Nov. 17, 2007