

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

June 6, 2017

6:30-8:00 pm

Rockville Memorial Library

Notes

Attendees

Richard Bell-Irving, Debbie Brown, Cindy Buddington, Jonina Duker, Amy Fier, Steven Frank, Francie Gilman, Mary Ellen Icaza, Barbara King, Elizabeth Lang, Jill Lewis, Monica Martinez, Jane Sheehan, Kathleen Reedy, Betty Thompson

Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves. Staff member Mary Ellen Icaza, responsible for system-wide program planning, joined the committee to continue the discussion on programming for individuals with disabilities.

Programming Update

Mary Ellen gave the following programming update.

Youth Services

- Christine Freeman, the Olney Library Children's Services/Early Literacy Manager talked to Monica Martinez about programming for children with autism and their families. Both agreed on the importance of the library as a safe environment for children with autism (or learning disabilities). Monica met with Elizabeth Lang to discuss further activities, and Mary Ellen expressed an interest in meeting with her.
- Diversity, early literacy, multiculturalism, and sensory story time training for youth services librarians are important issues. Loudon County libraries have successfully initiated sensory story times.

- A Noyes Library staff member is interested in “Reading to a Dog” programs. Jane Sheehan offered to be part of these programs with her guide dog.
- Intergenerational readers are visiting branches. The Damascus staff went to the Laytonsville Elementary School with learning toys and scarves to show teachers how to use the articles in interactive reading times.
- Mary Ellen would like to focus on infant and toddler activities. At the Jan Jablonski Special Collection and Early Learning Center the demand is high for training for caregivers and individuals who work with children. There is an interest in family nights, and perhaps a pilot activity would be held for families. AAC members could consider helping to put the focus on inclusive programming.

Adult Programming

- Financial literacy and work force development are promising topics for adult programming. The AAC had previously highlighted these areas as important to people with disabilities. A possible “how to conduct banking transactions” program could be held for all ages, including children.
- Mary Ellen asked what focus AAC members would like for programming and said that materials in alternative format will be available for individuals with disabilities attending all programs.
- The quarterly calendar has been completed and offers program highlights. Jane said that the calendar is compatible with screen readers, and online and printable versions are available.
- In partnership with Montgomery College, Silver Spring branch has a pilot program setting up a citizenship corner. Other topics can be explored for similar pilot programs.
- The library branches are offering an increased number of computer classes as well as iPad classes for senior citizens at five of the branches. Teen tech volunteers teach these classes, and participants are encouraged to bring their own devices for assistance with usage.

- In the area of mental health, staff members are working with the organizations NAMI and EveryMind to put together a blueprint for appropriate programs.
- Other areas of possible programming include cultural competency and language training, and discussions about different dialects.
- Staff diversity training is being planned for two training sessions.
- ASL (American Sign Language) is a topic of interest both for staff awareness and an ASL conversation club. Susan Cohen, Germantown branch librarian and manager of services to the deaf and hard of hearing community, is planning to present a program on the Deaf Cultural Digital Library (sponsored/funded by the State Library and managed by Montgomery County). AAC members expressed an interest in having Susan attend an AAC meeting to talk about programming and the DCDL.

Francie brought up an excellent program held for participants from the ARC conducted by the Youth Services Librarian from the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH). AAC members recommended that this program be repeated.

For the September meeting AAC members will come prepared for program ideas for Mary Ellen to explore.

Library Advocacy

Kathleen Reedy, Library Board Chair, reported that Director Parker Hamilton will retire effective August 1. The AAC decided that a card should be sent from the committee, and that the card should reflect Director Hamilton's dedication to the disability community. Jane, Francie, and Jill agreed to work on and deliver the card. Other members were invited to help.

The Budget process has been completed, and the libraries will continue to have adequate funding, more than 2% more than last year, thanks in part to strong library advocates at all relevant public hearings and Council meetings. The following funding priorities are being supported: increase or maintenance of hours of opera-

tion, expansion of book and media collections, continued funding for maintenance/upkeep, capital development, and IT upgrades.

Debbie Brown reported that the legislation creating an independent state library commission passed. The Maryland Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped will be part of this commission and no longer part of the Department of Education. The hope is that this will bring better funding and services for LBPH clients. Jill thanked all who testified. Passing the legislation required considerable work and effort by many groups.

Library Update

Elizabeth Lang presented the library update. Elizabeth is wrapping up her assessment of the branch services and has only three branch assessments remaining. The assessment includes meeting with branch staffs to ascertain branch needs. She also is planning staff training and will meet shortly with the MCPL staff person who leads staff training. At the start, the training will be at the basic level and will include training on how staff members interact with individuals with disabilities, particularly how to interact without being worried. The annual Staff Day meeting in October may be a good opportunity to conduct training. Currently, all staff members are required to have ADA training. Jonina Duker asked if Elizabeth can share with her the 1-hour online ADA training module.

AAC members discussed how to insure that all staff stay current with services to individuals with disabilities. One committee member suggestion is to send emails related to serving individuals with disabilities to all staff, not just managers, since it is critical that the front line staff be comfortable and prepared to help all clients, including individuals with disabilities. Another committee recommendation is for substitute librarians to receive disability training. Currently there is none for this group.

Elizabeth also is interested in improved community communication about what the library offers. To this end, the website is being updated so that it is a solid resource to help individuals understand the library. Elizabeth will return to the branches to continue gathering and giving information. AAC members offered to attend these visits and discussed the importance of having individuals with disabilities attend formal and informal training sessions.

Richard Bell-Irving asked about County demographics. 82,479 individuals report having a disability, 14,000 report a visual disability, 22,000 report hearing impairment, 20,000 report cognitive disability, 40,000 report ambulatory disability. 33,000 county individuals reside in independent living facilities. In formulating her work plans, Elizabeth is looking at the census information, the history of services, past events, and special needs.

Homebound services remains a priority. Her attention also will be on services to individuals on the autism spectrum and the demand for ASL conversation groups. Elizabeth is interested in creating an “introduction to the library” module for individuals on the autism spectrum perhaps through a pre library tour, sensory programs, or a social video (what happens in the library). She met with Monica Martinez to see what a partnership with xMinds would be like. She also reported that every branch now has the new ADA PCs and adjustable tables.

Elizabeth said MCPL is working on making library cards accessible for County residents without an official ID, using a mailing process to verify residency.

Elizabeth has reviewed all past AAC recommendations. She summarized current initiatives (many noted above) that respond to AAC recommendations. She is also reviewing the MCPL website and revising/updating information on disability services on any part of the site.

Recommendations

- Jane Sheehan and her guide dog to be part of “Reading to a Dog” programs.
- Pilot programs in partnership with county organizations be explored and modeled after the Silver Spring branch partnership with Montgomery College for a pilot program setting up a citizenship corner.
- Invitation to Susan Cohen to attend an AAC meeting to talk about programming for the deaf and hard of hearing community and the DCDL.
- Repeat the program for participants from the ARC conducted by the Youth Services Librarian from the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

- AAC members could help put the focus on inclusive programming for “family night” programs.
- For the September meeting AAC members will come prepared for program ideas for Mary Ellen to explore.
- A retirement card will be sent from the committee to Director Hamilton. The card will reflect Director Hamilton’s dedication to the disability community. Jane, Francie, and Jill agreed to work on and deliver the card. Other members were invited to help.
- A recommendation that AAC members join Elizabeth on visits to branch libraries. Committee members expressed the importance of having individuals with disabilities attend formal and informal training sessions.
- Emails related to serving individuals with disabilities be sent to all staff not just managers.
- Substitute librarians receive disability services training.
- Recommendation for programming for individuals on the autism spectrum and perhaps an introduction to the library through a pre library tour, sensory programs, a social video (what happens in the library).

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at the Rockville Memorial Library on Wednesday, September 6, 6:30-8:00 pm.