

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

March 7, 2018

6:30-8:00 pm

Rockville Memorial Library

Notes

Attendees

Debbie Brown, Cindy Buddington, Jane Carona, Steven Frank, Rita Gale, Francie Gilman, Barbara King, Elizabeth Lang, Jill Lewis, Dennis Pillsbury, Kathleen Reedy, Betty Thompson

Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and welcomed Mary Ellen Icaza, MCPL Assistant Director, Outreach and Programs. Mary Ellen joined the meeting to take part in the programming discussion. The following members shared organizational news: Jane Carona reported that The National Capitol Area Chapter of the American Council of the Blind was seeking speakers, especially ones who could address transportation issues; Francie Gilman and Cindy Buddington reported on a very successful open house held by Independence Now; via email Monica Martinez explained that xMinds will be holding a “10th Annual Extraordinary Minds in MCPS Forum” on April 10 at Tilden Middle School. At the Forum, administrators from MCPS will review the programs and services available in the school district to students on the autism spectrum. Jill reported that Amy Fier will be returning to the group starting with the next meeting, a welcome addition for consideration of service to people who have mental-health challenges.

Library Update

Rita Gale reported that two refreshed branch libraries will reopen next month: White Oak Library will reopen on Monday, April 2 at 10:00 am, and Bethesda Library will reopen on Saturday, April 14, also at 10:00 am. Design planning is beginning for FY18 refresh projects at the Praisner, Long Branch, and Poolesville branches; construction is scheduled for October 2018 through April or May 2019. The future refresh proposals in the County budget are Chevy Chase and German-

town in FY19 and Damascus and Potomac in FY20. The Noyes children's library hopes to make improvements and expects to raise a million dollars in private funds by this fall. A recommendation is before the County Council for the refresh cycle to be a two-year cycle instead of the current three-year cycle. Rita will provide more information on this recommendation at the next AAC meeting.

Elizabeth Lang discussed the Books at Home program which is the revised home-bound services program. Books at home was rolled out in January 2018 as a pilot program. The pilot began with twenty-four potential customers based on old lists, and so far is serving sixteen. The customers are very pleased with the program and glad to be receiving the service. Once all the branches have one customer, Elizabeth will create a revised waiting list and will evaluate the program's progress. In May, Elizabeth will mail customers a survey for feedback on the program. The Books at Home application is on the MCPL website and was tested for accessibility by Bobby Bobo. Elizabeth is working on a marketing plan to advertise Books at Home and is working with the branch staffs to insure that they are comfortable with the new service.

Books at Home follows the procedure of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Interested customers complete an application which is mailed to Elizabeth. After checking the application and insuring that the potential customer has a library card (one is issued if the customer does not have one), Elizabeth assigns the individual randomly to a branch coordinator. The coordinator contacts the customer to initiate the service.

Individuals registered for the service will receive and return books through the U.S. Postal Service. Books will arrive at the person's home in existing mail bags with a mailing label containing the person's address on one side and the library address on the other. When a book is ready to be returned to the library, the recipient turns the mailing label over and mails the book back to the library. Books will be sent library (book) rate. Guidelines specify that a certain number of books will be sent to an individual monthly (although this number can be changed). Initially, individuals will be limited to twenty books per month. The books sent will be chosen through the individual's perusal of the catalog or through discussions with a staff member. Once chosen, the books will be placed on hold for the individual, and each branch library will have a special place for the holds to reside. Staff will

pull the books to be sent from the hold area. All library materials except “Go Kits” will be available for check out with Books at Home. In response to a query from Francie, Elizabeth explained that the service will always need a system-wide coordinator and will not rely solely on the branch staffs.

At its September meeting, the AAC will discuss how its members will be able to assist with marketing this excellent new service.

Elizabeth completed a website review in which she looked for dated and/or repetitive information on the library system’s disability information and resources. She compiled a set of recommendations to simplify website disability information and resources and to make that information easy to find, and she provided the recommendations to the library administration.

Program Discussion

Elizabeth provided an update on autism spectrum programming which includes an inclusive story time and movie and pre-opening tours. The programs primarily will be for youths but will be family programs so that adults are also welcome. With Monica’s assistance, Elizabeth developed a social story about the Rockville Library and would like to develop similar stories for other branches. The story describes what an individual can expect to find in the library. She is working on a “lib guide” (library guide) for the website which will contain links to local organizations. The guide will provide a good place for individuals to start researching appropriate local resources. The branch staffs will conduct the actual programs/events and will receive training over the summer with a program roll out in the fall. Elizabeth is developing a training packet and has approached branch libraries about holding these programs. Pilot programs will be held at Gaithersburg and Little Falls libraries.

Debbie Brown reported on a recent program held at the Davis Library by the Sligo Creek Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. The program marked the birthday anniversary of Louis Braille. The well-attended and successful program was thoroughly publicized by branch manager, David Payne. David and a supportive staff ensured that the necessary equipment was available and in working order. However it was difficult to enable the audio description to play with the movie, and the sound level of the movie itself was barely adequate. Debbie explained that

the sound level at the program was sufficient for a small or medium sized group but that a larger group would require more amplification. Discussion revealed that DVDs have no standard way for users to start the audio description feature. Debbie's recommendation for any similar program is to insure that someone knows how to make the DVD's audio description work, and that there is sufficient amplification for a medium to large size audience. Elizabeth will look into this problem. Debbie feels the program is worth repeating at other branches, and Elizabeth and Debbie will work together to find the best library to host the program next year. Elizabeth invited anyone to contact her if they'd like help in deciding which branch might be best to hold a program. If someone has a particular branch in mind for a program, either Elizabeth or the branch manager would be a good contact.

Debbie reported that her organization will be holding an information-sharing event on September 29, 10 am-1 pm at the Praisner Community Center. The focus of the event will be information-sharing about communication (e.g., how to get news and information).

Based on the discussion of Debbie's programs, Debbie agreed to write up her recommendations about how to tweak current practices and send the recommendations to Elizabeth. Jill will talk to the outreach coordinator at the State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped about publicizing MCPL programs.

Mary Ellen stressed the importance of planning the AAC programs early enough to promote them through the MCPL quarterly calendar. The deadline for scheduling next January Louis Braille's birthday program is September, and the scheduling deadline after January is July 1. The library staff will schedule library-sponsored programs before the calendar is opened for scheduling of other programs. For programs that are not sponsored by the library, the deadline for scheduling programs is the quarter ending three months before the quarter in which the program will be held. For instance, a public program to be held in the quarter January through March must be scheduled by September 30, which is the end of the prior quarter. According to Mary Ellen branch library meeting rooms are in a high demand, and it is important to book a room early. It is easy to cancel an early room reservation if needed. She also stressed that program details should be forwarded to her and Elizabeth when the program is ready to be scheduled. Francie will share the tem-

plate she developed for her group's program and used to convey program information to Mary Ellen and Elizabeth.

Francie and Cindy reported on the Independence Now program they are developing. Geared to adults and open to the public, the program will focus on housing with emphasis on such topics as aging in place, how to be a smart consumer, and where to live. The program format will be a panel discussion. The organization would like to hold this program two or three times over an eight-month period at different branch libraries. Francie asked for suggestions for appropriate branch libraries, and the committee members recommended Kensington Park (good meeting room, close to transportation), White Oak, and either Gaithersburg or Germantown. Elizabeth will help find the best branch for these and other programs. Cindy will be the panel moderator, and Cindy and Francie will select speakers. Dennis Pillsbury agreed to be a resource person for ADA compliance issues and questions that arise during the planning stages and actual program itself. Cindy and Francie also reported that Independence Now is seeking a real estate agent to participate in this or future training, and asked AAC members to recommend any with whom they've had good experiences.

Recalling past recommendations specifically about White Oak but relevant for all branches, AAC members repeated the recommendation for branch websites to offer clear and concise descriptions to help people find their way from public transportation to the branch. E.g., the White Oak entrance does not face the street named in its address.

Staff Training

The AAC members are working with their organizations to update, revise, or create new staff training tip sheets that apply to the disability they serve. When completed, the tip sheets should be emailed to Jill who will collect and forward them to Elizabeth and the entire committee. Elizabeth stressed that scenarios would be very useful when she conducts staff training and asked committee members to create scenarios along with the tip sheets. Dennis asked how the tip sheets would be used with the staff, and Elizabeth said the sheets would serve as quick reference or study guides but has not yet hammered out usage details. Several committee members had discussed creating a general "welcome to the library" tip sheet to insure that an individual with a disability and staff members are comfortable when the individual

enters the library. Betty, Francie, Jane, and Jill (and anyone else interested) will work on this tip sheet.

The following staff members agreed to work on tip sheets: Jane/Barbara/Debbie with their organizations will work on the blindness tip sheet; Steven will work on a tip sheet for the deaf/blind community; Monica has already created and sent to Jill a tip sheet on autism. Jonina Duker also sent varied comments before the meeting. Jill will contact other members of the committee absent from the meeting to see which tip sheet they will edit or create.

The committee discussed when to invite Susan Cohen to a meeting to discuss services to the deaf community. It was agreed that a weekend would be best because of traffic, and, if possible, the meeting should be held at Susan's library, the Germantown branch.

Board report

Kathleen Reedy reported that the Library Board interviewed candidates for three vacant seats and sent recommendations to the County Executive. The Board is updating and completing the Library Advisory Committee (LAC) handbook and Advocacy Toolkit. Kathleen will make sure the toolkit is in accessible format.

The County Executive budget forums had good representation from library advocates, and Aspen Hill Library will host a candidate forum. Expenditures for capital improvements have been reduced and some projects are being deferred from FY18 to FY19 although all safety and security projects will continue.

Rita added that there are no recommendations for building a new library facility except for one in Clarksburg which will be constructed after the Clarksburg town center is completed, probably in either FY23 or FY24.

Next Meeting

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

Recommendations

- At its September meeting, the AAC will discuss how its members will be able to assist with marketing the newly established Books at Home service.
- Insure that audio description is working for all programs and that there is sufficient amplification for a medium to large size audience.
- Elizabeth and Debbie will work together to find the best library to host the Louis Braille film program next year.
- Debbie will write up her recommendations about how to tweak current program practices and send the recommendations to Elizabeth.
- Jill will talk to the outreach coordinator at the State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped about publicizing MCPL programs.
- AAC members plan programs early enough to be advertised through the MCPL calendar and to obtain an appropriate meeting room.
- Program details should be forwarded to Mary Ellen and Elizabeth when the program is ready to be scheduled.
- Francie will share the template she developed for an Independence Now program.
- Dennis to be a resource person for ADA compliance issues and questions that arise during the planning and actual Independence Now program.
- Cindy and Francie are seeking a real estate agent to participate in Independence Now housing program and asked AAC members to recommend any with whom they've had good experiences.
- A repeat of the recommendation for branch websites to offer clear and concise descriptions to help people find their way from public transportation to the branch. E.g., the White Oak entrance does not face the street named in its address.

- Committee members will work with their organizations to update, revise, or create new tip sheets that apply to the disability they serve. The tip sheets should be emailed to Jill who will collect and forward them to Elizabeth and the entire committee.
- If possible, scenarios should be created and sent with the tip sheets to enhance staff training.
- Betty, Francie, Jane, and Jill (and anyone else interested) will work on a “welcome to the library” tip sheet to insure that an individual with a disability and staff members are comfortable when the individual enters the library.
- Jane/Barbara/Debbie with their organizations will work on the blindness tip sheet; Steven will work on a tip sheet for the deaf/blind community; Monica has already created and sent to Jill a tip sheet on autism. Jill will contact other members of the committee not at the meeting to see which tip sheet they will edit or create.
- Susan Cohen will be invited to a future meeting to address services to the deaf community, if possible at a weekend meeting at the Germantown Library.