

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting  
December 5, 2018  
Rockville Memorial Library  
6:30-8:00 pm  
Notes

**Present:** Richard Bell-Irving, Debbie Brown, Cindy Buddington, Jane Carona, Amy Fier, Steven Frank, Francie Gilman, Elizabeth Lang, Jane Williams, Monica Martinez, Dennis Pillsbury, Betty Thompson.

### **Introductions and Organization Updates**

Francie Gilman said that Jill Lewis needed to be away with family, and thanked her for her advance work on the meeting. Debbie Brown noted the Louis Braille celebration scheduled for January 19 at Davis library. Amy Fier made an announcement that I didn't catch. There may have been more.

### **Library Update**

Elizabeth Lang noted plans for physical improvements at libraries, with additional comments by Dennis Pillsbury. At Praisner and Potomac, ADA improvements to sidewalks and parking are scheduled for ADA compliance, not part of the refresh program. At Damascus, work will include the book drop and the employee entrance ramp. Next on schedule for refresh are Praisner and Long Branch, with extensive work planned which is complicated by current Purple Line construction there. No closing dates have been set for Praisner and Long Branch.

Elizabeth said that the Books@Home program is rolling out nicely. Marketing and promotion will aim for a gradual increase in customers to ensure continued smooth growth and good customer service. The AAC can do word-of-mouth marketing now. Elizabeth will tell the AAC when marketing materials are ready for wider use.

Elizabeth has worked with Monica Martinez on Sensory Story Time programs being piloted at the White Oak, Quince Orchard, and Little Falls libraries. Three have been held and more are set for January and February. They are being marketed by Monica Martinez through newsletters, and by the library through online postings and social media. Evaluation will occur after the pilots; initial feedback from parents of participants has been very positive and touching. Over time, the hope is to expand Sensory Story Times to all branches on a regular basis.

Elizabeth has begun doing pilot training at branch staff meetings in autism awareness and service to customers on the autism spectrum. To develop the training, Elizabeth used Monica's tip sheets and worked with Kate Tavakolian, who is in charge of staff training programs. Staff independently review material and watch a video before the sessions. Elizabeth asks staff to come with scenarios of their past experiences and what they did or could have done. The first

two sessions have gone very well. Before- and after-surveys showed that staff had gained concrete tips, new skills, and higher comfort levels. Staff were able to recognize common autism-spectrum behavior; to think about why people do things like pacing, repetitive behavior, or noise; and to know that developmental disability is not the same as mental illness. Since the training began, Elizabeth has received fewer staff phone calls about how to handle immediate situations.

Elizabeth said that she will work with Kate to use other tip sheets and scenarios as well. Updated tip sheets were distributed by email not long before the meeting. Elizabeth will carefully read all of them, give feedback, and discuss options with Angelisa Hawes, who is the deciding official.

In reference to a concern about emergency evacuation, Elizabeth noted that Angelisa is the official MCPL liaison with all emergency and disaster agencies. Their goal is to ensure that all staff know how to assist all people, including those with various disabilities.

There was a good general discussion of the tip sheets. Jane Carona noted that “How may I help you?” is the most important question. Cindy Buddington noted that it’s important to ask first and to assume neither what one should do nor that one should do nothing. Richard Bell-Irving and Monica respectively noted that intellectual disabilities and mental illness are hard to see and staff awareness the crucial first step in offering help. Amy added that there may be behavioral symptoms, and that de-escalation skills are important as well as knowledge of whom to call for help. Monica said staff should be aware that people with autism often use auditory coping mechanisms which do no harm and may be comforting to the person, so giving them space can be an option. Elizabeth said that staff are getting creative in how to work with individual needs as they simultaneously avoid disruption to other patrons.

Elizabeth gave an overview of the idea of a Human Library. An example might be a 3-hour event a bit like speed dating, where a patron can “check out” a person instead of a book for 10 or 15 minutes. The person would represent a particular group, like drug addiction or being HIV positive. The patron can ask questions to increase his or her understanding. The “book” person sits in a place with some privacy. The term Human Library usually refers to an event but could be done differently. Elizabeth has not asked Angelisa if there are any resources for something like this. Francie raised the possibility of the AAC developing and giving to Elizabeth a proposal for a disability-oriented MCPL Human Library event. There is a Human Library organization that can help people to design events. Francie, Jane Carona, and Debbie will have a conference call to discuss this. Monica is willing to participate if it happens.

### **Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL)**

Francie noted that when we visited the Germantown library, Susan Cohen had given us an introduction to the DCDL. An action item from that meeting was to discuss how we can help market the DCDL. Committee members came up with these actions and suggestions:

- Francie and Cindy will interview Susan Cohen for the Independence Now newsletter, and tell Independence Now staff.
- Amy will add the DCDL blurb and contact information and web address to the Every Mind 24/7 hotline resources.
- Monica will pass the information to the special education department of Montgomery County Public Schools.
- Jane Williams will tell the new library board about DCDL.
- Betty will tell the Takoma Park library and community center about DCDL.
- Jane Carona will mention DCDL to the NCAC; she also has a contact at an Olney newspaper who may be interested in pursuing a story about DLDC.
- Debbie will mention DCDL to NFB and to its deaf-blind group.
- Elizabeth will pass along AAC ideas that Montgomery Cable could interview Susan and record a PSA about DCDL; Montgomery Week in Review could feature DCDL; and MCPL public affairs could suggest a human-interest story for local broadcast TV and radio stations, the Washington Post, and Germantown/Olney local newspapers. Elizabeth noted that this is a State-wide project so the responsibility for action is beyond MCPL or Montgomery County.
- Everyone is welcome to send additional ideas to Jill.

### **Library Board Update**

Jane Williams, our MCPL Board Liaison, gave an update on the November 7 Joint Meeting with the Board, the Friends of the Library and Library Advisory Committees:

- Acting Director Anita Vassallo gave a state-of-the-library report;
- the Correctional Facility Library received the 2018 Eleanor Abelard Award for its poetry program, with more than 30 inmates participating;
- The speaker was Sally Reed, former Executive Director of United for Libraries, who spoke about the role of citizen supporters of libraries and the importance of speaking with one voice to deliver the same message about the system as a whole rather than about one branch.
- The focus of the January 9 meeting was educational and advocacy efforts.

Jane will email the Committee monthly reports on Library Board meetings.

Francie noted that this is the first time a librarian has represented the Library Board on the AAC, and invited Jane Williams to share some of her experience. Jane outlined her extensive career in libraries and organizations that support libraries, beginning in Charlotte, NC, and including roles in Mecklenburg County, as State librarian in North Carolina, in administration at the University of Maryland, on the US National Commission on Libraries and Library Science, and as a consultant with Montgomery County libraries. As she said, “public libraries are my home.”

Francie closed the meeting at 8:30 PM.

### **Actions:**

For the Books@Home program, the AAC can do word-of-mouth marketing now. Elizabeth will tell the AAC when marketing materials are ready for wider use.

For Tip Sheets, scenarios, and staff training, Elizabeth will provide feedback and will discuss training options and priorities with Angelisa Hawes, the deciding official.

For the Human Library idea, Francie, Jane, and Debbie will discuss the possibility of an AAC proposal to Elizabeth for a disability-oriented library event.

To publicize and market the Deaf Culture Digital Library:

- Francie and Cindy will interview Susan Cohen for the Independence Now newsletter, and tell Independence Now staff.
- Amy will add the DCDL blurb and contact information and web address to the Every Mind 24/7 hotline resources.
- Monica will pass the information to the special education department of Montgomery County Public Schools.
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