

People, Place and Platform (Summary from Jean Anderson)

Download *Rising to the Challenge* at <http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/AspenLibrariesReport.pdf>

Thank you to all the directors who joined in reading *Rising to the Challenge* and discussing it with us at the March All Directors Meeting. It was a great discussion and as promised, we're sharing the notes and a summary with you.

The first part of the discussion focused on what your libraries are already doing with Library as People, Place, and Platform. You can see the entire list [here](#). All I did was transcribe what you contributed so there are duplicates and repeating/similar themes.

Several ideas came through on the Library as People discussion. The one that struck me the most was that “we know you” and “my librarian” as it reminds me how central our libraries are to creating connections and relationships within our communities. The second theme that I noticed was how all ages were talked about—everyone from babies to our older patrons—and including something for everyone was an important aspect of library service. The third theme that came through was seeing library staff and the library as a connection to other services—social services, government services, other experts in the community, etc.

The idea of a “trusted” or “neutral” space came up several times in the Library as Place discussion. Trust also came up in the Library as People discussion so earning and maintaining the trust of our patrons and community is extremely important. Similar to an earlier theme, being a space for bringing people together for library workshops and programs, meeting/study room use, art gallery/exhibit space, or just a comfortable, warm (or cool) space to sit and relax. It was also surprising how many times bathrooms figured into our discussions! How can we invite those who only come in to use the bathroom into the library?

The words “trust” and “safe” and “neutral” also came into play in the Library as Platform discussion. Seed libraries, local history, and connecting people with services & information were just a few of the topics of discussion here. Building and maintaining partnerships and relationships with members of the community and community organizations and agencies came up a lot in the discussion.

You are all doing awesome and amazing things for your community and the discussion at the All Directors Meeting reinforced this message. As a system consultant, I appreciated hearing your discussion and ideas and seeing how we at SCLS can help you provide the best possible service to your community.

Strategies for Success (Summary from Shawn Brommer)

After our discussion about People, Place, and Platform we turned our attention to the Strategies for Success section of *Rising to the Challenge*. During this time we discussed strategies for planning future services, listed community partners, and identified opportunities for libraries to be recognized as community leaders. Once again, we used the language and content of the Aspen Report to structure our discussion; a brief summary of our discussion is included below and a complete list of ideas is available [here](#).

Aligning library services in support of community goals

Library directors reported that we already are doing a great job knowing the needs of our citizens and understanding community goals. Ways to dive deeper into community knowledge include:

- Asking the community what they want through community discussions, surveys, suggestion boxes, and by working with community agencies and organizations. Several library directors mentioned looking to the [Aspen](#) and [Harwood](#) Institutes for methods and discussion guides and strategies.

- Providing unique services to support community members, such as: connections to social service agencies, connections to technology, printing services, providing innovative public programs, and going out into the community through intentional outreach programs.
- Partnering with community agencies and organizations to identify community goals, reach a shared target audience, and share resources.

Access to content in all formats

The examples in the Aspen Report for Access to Content in all formats focused on electronic content. Our group identified electronic content as important and also created innovative examples of additional content, services, and collections:

- E-resources, digitized local history, and genealogy resources.
- Internet and wi-fi access to electronic content.
- Homebound delivery and outreach services.
- Access to unique collections, such as: fishing poles, tool libraries, cake pans, seed libraries, and backpack book collections for youth.

Ensuring long-term sustainability for public libraries

Transformation and change does not happen overnight and it requires practical examination and discussion about organizational sustainability. Library directors speak the language of sustainability and our group identified great examples of ways that public libraries can sustain transformation and organizational change:

- Continue to partner with local organizations.
- Identify clear goals and outcomes that meet demonstrated needs.
- Continue to listen to community members and be nimble organizations that create services and programs to support community goals.
- Tell the library story. Talk about what the ways that we support community life. Tell our tale as a qualitative story rather than a quantitative one.
- Identify alternative funding opportunities, such as grants and partnering with local agencies to write them.

Cultivating Leadership

Library leaders gathered in the meeting room at the DeForest Public Library on March 17 to discuss organizational and community goals. These leaders identified opportunities for public libraries to be viewed as organizational leaders within their communities and examples include:

- Setting and being “at the table.”
- Identifying talents and leadership qualities of staff and providing opportunities for all staff members to be leaders.
- Encourage professional development and take advantage of continuing education opportunities.
- Become active members of community organizations, such as the Chamber, Rotary, Optimists, etc.
- Create a library “elevator speech.”
- Improve communication with local leaders and legislators (advocacy).

Our discussions during the afternoon of the March 2016 All-Directors meeting were energetic, engaging, and exciting. The discussions provided a foundation and structure to identify System services and projects. We look forward to continuing the discussion about ways that public libraries can support community life and identifying SCLS Service Priorities that meet shared goals.