

Executive Director's Column

By Adam Wright, Executive Director, NTRLS.
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Happy August!

Our theme this month is Library Volunteers. We have a great podcast from our Librarian Live series interviewing Leanna Cowen, Director of the Alvarado Public Library and board member of the Library Foundation of North Texas. In this interview, she talks about the importance of volunteers to the success of any altruistic organization. Mary Rodne, Director of the Colleyville Public Library, is in agreement with Leanna and writes about how important volunteers have been to the success of her library. Please also do not forget to participate in our monthly discussion concerning volunteers. It is only through sharing that we grow and develop.

NTRLS is also looking into establishing a volunteer program to help us out around the office and at our regional conferences. In my research, I have discovered the following considerations, in no particular order, when developing a volunteer program.

1. *Volunteers are unpaid staff members.* Our HR rep at ADP Resource wrote the following email reply when asked about starting a volunteer program. "Just as with employees, there are certain liabilities that you assume as having volunteers for your organization and as such they need to be treated as employees, they just don't get paid – obviously. So you will need to cover them from a Workers' Compensation stand point and manage them from a HR front as well – discipline, performance, laws, etc." You will need to make sure to evaluate your volunteers like you do your staff. In this way, if a volunteer does not work out, you have written justification for going your separate ways.
2. *Review your insurance policies to ensure that you have proper coverage.* According to our insurance rep, your workers compensation insurance will only cover volunteers if you have an explicit endorsement in the policy. Without it, your volunteers will not be covered. You also need to review your building or rentals insurance to cover all possible liability resulting from damages or injuries caused by volunteers.
3. *Do background checks.* In this litigious society, you can never be too careful; especially if your volunteer is going to work around children. Background checks are not cheap, but they are required to limit your library's liability.
4. *Interview your volunteers.* It is tempting to say yes to every person that wants to help out around the library. Be careful! Some volunteers are not a good fit for what they want to do around the library. For example, a person might want to work the reference desk, but make sure that person

- is truly qualified. As with employees, certain skill sets are required for certain positions.
5. *Have written volunteer job descriptions.* This goes hand-in-hand with interviewing your volunteers beforehand. When designing your volunteer program, you should consult with staff to find out where help is needed. From the staff feedback, some job descriptions should be created. This step accomplishes two things. First, it lets your potential volunteers know exactly what is expected of them. Second, library staff will feel involved in the process and will hopefully be more accepting of volunteer help.
 6. *Consult an attorney before starting a volunteer program.* Attorneys are paranoid for a reason. It is their job. An attorney will most likely think of something about your potential volunteer program that you did not consider.

Volunteers are important to any library, but it is a good idea to be educated before utilizing their services.

Partnership with District 7

At Annual Assembly last month, I proposed to District 7 that we form a partnership to create some Special Interest Groups(SIG). The actual governance of these special interest groups will reside with District 7. NTRLS staff will be available to provide an infrastructure, and support, to these SIGs in the form of online tools and regional conferences. Here is what we hope to accomplish with these SIGs.

Mission Statement

To create a networking foundation for librarians sharing similar interests to interact, share knowledge and benefit their users.

Objectives

- To create four SIGs for librarians.
- To hold an annual regional conference for each of the SIGs.
- To create an online networking environment where SIGs can interact with each other more readily.
- To enable librarians to meet and discuss with product and service providers in person.

Here are the four SIGs we agreed to create at the outset.

Technology – This SIG will focus on library technology. Any District 7 member who is interested in technology is invited to participate in this SIG.

Library Supporters – This SIG will focus on library supporter issues including library advocacy, fundraising, governance of support groups, etc. Members of

friends groups and library foundations, library board members, volunteers, other lay supporters and library staff are invited to participate in this group.

Library Program Planners and Presenters - This SIG will focus on library programs, the people who plan them and the people who present them. Any District 7 member who is interested in library programming, both children and adult, is invited to join this SIG.

Children and Youth Librarians – This SIG will be focused on children and youth issues. Any District 7 member interested in youth and children issues is invited to join this SIG.

Please look to ntrls.org in September for more information on the SIGs.

Here is what is going at NTRLS this month.

Continuing Education

- » [Children and Youth Conference for Librarians 2008](#), 8/8/2008, Lockheed Recreation Center
- » [Forecasting and Libraries: Planning Your Future](#), 8/22/2008, North Richland Hills Library (Note: I hear the guy doing this one is very good :>)
- » [Certified Library Computer Technologist Program](#), 8/29/2008, System Office

Consulting

- Granbury – Consult with weeding collection and collection analysis
- Flower Mound – Collection Analysis
- Stephenville – Image Audit and Collection Consult
- Farmer's Branch – staff development day with True Colors (2 sessions)
- Plano – Staff Development Day – True Colors
- Roanoke – Teen Program on True Colors
- TCC – Staff Development Day – Image Audits and True Colors
- Aubrey – Collection Analysis
- Azle – Staff Audit
- Burleson – Image Audit
- Olney – Weeding and Collection Analysis
- Chico - Weeding

Plinkit Project

Judy Daniluk, NTRLS' Technology Consultant, is the administrator of the Plinkit program, a web hosting program created by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to assist libraries in establishing a web presence. She is willing to travel to any interested library to review the program options.

Libraries for Literacy

The Libraries for Literacy council is meeting on August 11 to discuss recent activities. As many of you know, the NTRLS Board of Directors held a fundraising campaign this past month called Close the Book on Hunger. The board teamed up with the Tarrant Area Food Bank and raised funds for literacy while at the same time bringing in food donations. Through this effort, NTRLS was able to raise around \$10,000 for literacy and collect nearly 700 pounds of food. The Libraries for Literacy council will oversee a grant program to help Tarrant county libraries install literacy programs in their libraries. If you are interested, check ntrls.org in September for more details.

NTRLS Roadshow

One of the major concerns of the NTRLS staff and the NTRLS Board of Directors when it comes to the evolving systems is how we continue to serve the rural areas of the region. I am taking three days in August to visit with the small library directors in Region 1 to discuss how Systems can continue to serve them. At this same time, I will be videotaping our conversation so we can begin a video blog in FY2009.