

Executive Director's Column: Notes from a Binge Thinker

By Adam Wright, Executive Director, North Texas Library Partners

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Happy May!

This month, we are looking at Technology Trends. Check out our latest podcast and guest article. We interviewed Christine Peterson from Amigos about trends she is keeping an eye on while Jeff Bond, Science Librarian at Texas Christian University, instructs us on how to plan for Web 2.0.

For my identity crisis series, I am exploring the role of the library as a community gathering place. I sent out a list of questions via my favorite listservs and received more responses than ever. Apparently, many librarians feel very strongly about this role.

My first question dealt with how libraries are acting as community gathering places today. All of the feedback I received expressed that the library is already acting as a community gathering place. Curren McLane, director of the Azle Public Library that recently opened up a new library building, exemplified the typical response I received. "The Azle Library is most certainly a community gathering place. This did not occur until we moved into our new building. I attribute our library to becoming a community gathering place for a number of reasons. First, we are on the same grounds as the newest/biggest park in town. This naturally means park visitors also come in the library, and vice-versa. Next, we are the ONLY place in town with Wi-Fi. We also have a large community room and several study rooms available for public use. Other than a few banquet halls and a city-owned fee-for-use building, we are the only place in town where people can gather indoors (for free). I also attribute the "newness" of the building to being a big draw. People come to the library just to see the new building, and when they realize all we have to offer they stay. Then the next time they come in they bring a friend. Even the City departments use us for town meetings, trainings, etc."

I also inquired about whether libraries make an effort to promote the library as a community gathering place. Almost all of the feedback said that libraries do offer some structured outreach to the community about this role as a community gathering place. "In order to promote the library as a gathering place we always bring free bookmarks and copies of our calendar of events and we set-up a large tri-fold display board covered with photos of people having fun at the library along with reproductions of the latest book covers, music CDs and games at every event held in our area. We had left-over clown noses last summer which were a big hit with the kids at the 4th of July Fireworks show. We put up flyers on local store front windows about our programs and we are very friendly with the reporters for our two local papers." Leanna Cowen, director of the Alvarado Public Library, wrote to me in an email.

Paul Waak, our Libraries for Literacy Coordinator, actually went as far as identifying some possible reasons for people to use the library as a gathering place.

- *Coworking* – People who telecommute might want to join others at the library.
- *Family Education* – Parents will still need a place to take their children for educational activities.
- *Socialization* – People like to socialize. Why not at the library?
- *Independent Study / Distance Learning* – If you have ever taken an online class, you know how important it is to get out amongst others like yourself.
- *Group Projects / Study Groups* – Teens will need a place to study.

Libraries should be seen as a destination or a place for residents. “On my soapbox - folks in Coppell have the Internet at home. They have laptops and desktops. But they are social people. They want a place to go and the library meets that criteria. Denelle Wrightson, the architect who did a feasibility expansion study for us called libraries "3rd places" when she briefed the board and council. One is home, two is work/school and we are a 3rd!” Kathy Edwards, Director of the Coppell Public Library, wrote to me.

Jesse Ephraim, Roanoke Public Library director, backed up Kathy's thoughts in his own email. “Part of the success of the big chain bookstores has been their redefinition of their spaces as community gathering places. Many people head to Barnes and Noble with the intention of settling in for the day, attending a program, reading some books, drinking coffee, and visiting with other customers. I worked in Borders Books for three years in the early 90s, when that was still a concept, and saw how effective it was first hand. Sales rose dramatically as a result of it, and many people considered it to be their normal place to hang out and meet new friends. Ironically, the big bookstores borrowed that concept (and many others) from libraries. It is a winning formula, particularly when you add in a few more services, like coffee bars and cafes.”

Space was indicated by several responses as being the biggest barrier to acting in this capacity. Libraries need more of it if they are going to fulfill this role. “YES - at the Burleson Public Library that role is part of its historical background. We have programs to encourage that role, but not the space necessary to really accommodate the role,” wrote Rodney Bland, Director of the Burleson Public Library. He went on to state that libraries will need to change in the future to accommodate for this role. “Having adequate meeting space is one huge factor. The number of public service hours is another and insuring that rates charged for use of the rooms or meeting space encourages the service, instead of discouraging it.”

Kathy went even further to state that libraries need to redesign their space to make it more appealing to library patrons. "Space, space, space. While we have Kindles, ipods and whatever other devices folks can use to download, they still want a place to go. Libraries need to be flexible and design space to allow increasing flexibility as needs change. But comfortable chairs, smart boards, group study rooms all take space."

Jesse also wrote that doing additional outreach on the library as a destination with redesigned space will be a necessary component in the future. "A certain amount of people will naturally gravitate to libraries that offer adequate seating and meeting room space, but it is important for libraries to market their availability directly to groups that might be interested in it. That is why it is so important to approach service organizations, hobby groups, and other special interest groups directly, preferably at their live meetings. Many libraries have been too passive in this regard, adopting a "build it and they will come" mentality."

What do I think? I tend to agree with all the feedback I received. I think libraries will have to either redefine themselves as community gathering places, or enhance what they are already doing. At the same time, I am cautious about losing sight of the central focus of a library as a center to find good credible information. Paul Phelan, Director of the Walworth Harrison PL in Greenville, agrees with me and wrote, "I think it is also important to remember, all this is great but it is an extra so to speak. We have to stay focused and fulfill our primary mission as an information center for the community." If we move away from this central role, can we truly define ourselves as a library, or have we evolved into something else? A question, we will need to answer in the next decade.

Next month, I tackle the age old question of do we give what a community wants or do we give them what they need.

Now, here are some things going on around the System.

May Workshops

Register for these workshops at <http://www.ntrls.org/ce/>. If the course is full, let us know if you want to be put on a waiting list.

- Teens in the Library - Let's Chat!, 5/3/2010, Online
- TechNet 2010 , 5/14/2010, Decatur Civic Center
- Long Range Planning for Your Library, 5/18/2010, Decatur Public Library
- Long Range Planning for Your Library , 5/19/2010, Fort Worth Library, Ella Mae Shamblee Branch

Consulting

Here are some consulting activities that took place in November.

Region 2

Alvord – Library management

Region 3

Roanoke – Summer Reading and Food Bank

Region 4

Saginaw – Staff Development with True Colors

Region 6

Azle – Focus Group

Fort Worth – Advisory Board

Region 7

Alvarado – Summer Reading and Food Bank

Other Misc Activities

- TWDL – Jacksboro, Aubrey, Azle
- Texas Workforce Youth Division Meeting
- Presented three sessions at TLA on Collection Development and Interlibrary Loan
- Attended various sessions and meetings at TLA
- Met with Terry Woodfin at Amon Carter to discuss the pet food drive and summer reading partnership
- Attended the Interagency Literacy Council meeting in Austin
- Attended the National Family Literacy Conference in San Antonio
- Attended the Linking for Literacy Luncheon in Fort Worth
- Attended the Texas Library Association Conference in San Antonio
- Received Training of Trainers instruction in preparation for the distance learning workshops this summer
- Released the RFP for Self-Guided Workforce Literacy Material
- Selecting and purchasing accessibility tools for public libraries
- Conference planning tips for other organizations
- Possible topics and speakers for staff development events at libraries
- Workshops and speakers available relative to effectively working with others
- Membership benefits
- Ways service providers can work with us to reach library personnel in our area

Website and Internet Support for NTRLS Programs and Services

- Regular updates to NTRLS.org website.
- Website and other support for the Library Supporters Conference and TechNet Conference.
- Administration for NTRLS-supported listservs.

Plinkit

- Assistance to projects and training for librarians at 10 libraries, plus the NTLC Plinkit site.

North Texas Library Consortium (Evergreen)

- Technical and administrative support for North Texas Library Consortium project.
- Provided administrative and technical assistance for migration of Justin Library to Evergreen.
- Served as NTLC's contact point with TSLAC and OCLC for ILL Pilot.
- Trained 1 librarian on Evergreen Reporting.
- Provided custom Evergreen reports and report templates for 2 libraries.
- Handled and/or tracked 24 support issues.
- Served as NTLC's ambassador at Evergreen Conference.

General

- Support for Librarian Live project.
- Regular updates to Overdrive barcodes for participating libraries in Overdrive Consortium.
- General technology assistance to NTRLS office, including preparations for technology changes connected with office reconfiguration.
- Attended TLA Conference and Evergreen Conference.

Libraries Served by the Technology Consultant

<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>
Alvarado	7	NTLC	Keller	4	Overdrive
Aubrey	3	NTLC	Krum	3	NTLC
Benbrook	6	Overdrive, Plinkit	Lake Cities	3	NTLC, Plinkit
Bridgeport	2	NTLC	Mineral Wells	6	NTLC, Plinkit
Burleson	7	Overdrive	Ponder	3	NTLC
Chico	2	Plinkit	Roanoke	3	NTLC
Crowley	5	NTLC	Saginaw	4	Overdrive, NTLC
Decatur	2	NTLC	Sanger	3	NTLC
Jacksboro	2	Plinkit	Stephenville	7	Plinkit
Justin	3	NTLC, Plinkit	The Colony	3	Plinkit
Henrietta	1	Plinkit	Wichita Falls	1	Overdrive
Kennedale	5	NTLC, Plinkit			

Special Interest Groups & Conferences

- LibraryTechNetwork SIG <http://www.librarytechnetwork.com>

- TechNet 2010 ★ the 3rd annual North Texas Conference for Library Technology ★ Friday May 14 ★ Decatur Civic Center ★ *Ahead of the Curve: Learn, Explore, Engage* ★ Keynote: **Playing Catch-Up with Technology** - *Amigos Consultant Christine Peterson* ★ Technology Petting Zoo ★ Exhibits ★ Vendor demonstrations during lunch Registration continues for participants and exhibitors; staff and committee planning is in the final stages; detailed conference information on the TechNet site is current and should be complete by May 5.
- LibrarySupportersNetwork SIG <http://www.librarysupportersnetwork.com> Registration continues for *the 2nd Annual North Texas Conference for Library Supporters*, postponed from the snowy dates of February 12-13, 2010 to the sunny dates of July 23-24 ★ **The Future of Libraries** ★ Decatur Civic Center ★ Friday Night Kick-Off Dinner Presentation: **Your Library's Guide to Surviving & Thriving in the 21st Century** - *Anita Duckor, President of Duckor & Associates, Inc.* Registration continues for participants and exhibitors. Members of the planning committee met at the Decatur Civic Center this month to determine changes needed due to the change in venue.
 - LibraryYouthServicesNetwork SIG <http://www.libraryyouthservicesnetwork.com> CYC 2010 ★ the 4th annual Children & Youth Conference for North Texas Library Personnel ★ Thursday August 5 ★ Lockheed Martin Recreation Area
 - LibraryPresentationsNetwork SIG <http://librarypresentationsnetwork.com> LP3 2010 ★ the 3rd annual North Texas Conference for Library Program Planners and Presenters ★ Thursday Nov. 18 ★ Lockheed Martin Recreation Area

Accessibility

- Although the April 1 workshop *Funny, I Don't See It That Way: The ADA vs Living with a Disability* had to be cancelled since only two people registered for it, the April 30 event attracted over 30 participants, many of whom made strong positive comments about the value of what they had learned during the day. Several participants expressed interest in having Accessibility Fairs at their libraries.
- Accessibility Consultant dona weisman met with the directors of Denton and Alvarado public libraries to help them plan purchases as Accessibility Pilot Project libraries. DPL will be the first library system in NTLP to have accessibility tools available at every building in the system.

O2U REPORT			
Region 1	None		
Region 2	Bowie	2 requests	Bookmarks, flyer
Region 3	Aubrey Area Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Carrollton Pub. Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	William T. Cozby Public Library, Coppell	1 request	Bookmarks
	Denton Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Flower Mound Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Frisco Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Justin Community Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Krum Public Library	3 requests	Bookmarks, calendar, flyers
	Lake Cities Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Lewisville Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Little Elm Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Pilot Point Community Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	Plano Public Library System	1 request	Bookmarks
	Betty Foster Public Library, Ponder	1 request	Bookmarks
	Roanoke Public Library	2 request	Bookmarks, poster
	Sanger Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
	The Colony Public Library	1 request	Bookmarks
Region 4	Bedford	1 request	Flyer
	Keller	1 request	Flyer
	Saginaw	2 requests	Brochure, bookmarks

	Watauga	1 request	Bookmarks
Region 5	Haltom City	6 requests	Flyers, posters, bookmarks
	Mansfield	8 requests	Reading lists
	Richland Hills	4 request	Calendar, SRP Materials
Region 6	Mineral Wells	2 requests	Flyers, posters
	Gordon	6 requests	Flyers, brochures, bookmarks, newsletter, posters, certificates
Region 7	None		
	11 Requests completed. 7,130 Materials Distributed.		