

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – February, 2011

IL Library Systems

PALS held a Town Hall meeting on Friday, February 25th. It introduced Jane Arsenault of FIO Consulting to present why systems are merging, as well as the current status and what it will mean for PALS members. This meeting was an opportunity to gather key information from the merger design team consultant, as well as hear concerns directly from PALS members. Member questions were an important part of the discussion. On the PALS ends, costs for technical hosting and support will continue to be transferred to each library. Delivery continues to be a priority topic and collective concern. We share books and resources with libraries in 850 locations in PALS alone, so funding to support delivery is critical.

As PALS works to merge with the other regional systems and consolidate to restructure the organization and operations there will be many challenges. The process of merging five system agencies – PALS, NSLS, ALS, MLS and DLS - continues and representatives from each system (the Merger Design Team) have met nine times. Merger meetings are available with an online link. This type of meeting access is helpful to understand the merger process and see it live in action.

A web site is available to detail the progress and answer questions. It can be found here:
<http://www.systemsmerger.info/>

E-Rate

The Library's e-rate application for Year 12 (2011-2012) has been filed. The discount on local and long-distance telephone service we've been receiving will be approximately \$1,558. Alex Annen is overseeing the e-rate paperwork and application.

Customer Convenience Initiatives

We provide convenience for our customers with initiatives like e-pay and undertaking online program registration. We will also be reviewing smart card technology.

Smart cards are credit-card sized plastic cards that have embedded microcomputer chips. Smart cards are used for a wide variety of applications that you may be familiar with, used instead of coins or tokens in mass-transit fare collection, for online Internet banking and purchasing, and for various types of network access. For a public library environment, smart cards can be a user identification card for the library circulation system, or used for fee-based services such as paying fees, fines, or printing. They can provide levels for internet access; used for photocopying, and more. Smart cards in conjunction with a PIN can provide an extra layer of security. Again, we continue to examine ways to provide added convenience for our customers. Smart cards would be a nice addition to bring forward, as funds allow.

Computer Classes and Usage

Our computer room houses 9 public computers. These are in heavy demand and are logged onto approximately 1000 to 1500 times a month. The average session length for each login is approximately 50 minutes.

Staff In-Service Day

Staff training is an important component for teamwork and issues faced in the workplace. I have identified a new avenue for staff training that we are reviewing. It is a “train the trainer” program that Assistant Director McCambridge and I would present to library staff. Developed by a renowned library consultant, it includes a PowerPoint presentation, handouts, and can be customized for our use. This year we would like to offer training to provide direction and support for customer service and issues staff face. Our theme this year is “Difficult Times bring Special Challenges.” We will present for a portion of the day, and use additional time undertaking a teamwork activity.

Each day people visit the library that are affected by today’s tough economic times and lead stressful lives. They visit public libraries asking for help. We want to provide effective tools that staff can use to manage customers and ensure we provide the most effective services. A staff training and learning experience will assist staff to:

- Focus on the positive for successful outcomes
- Be able to define the types of listening skills, needed to help those who are under duress
- Know how to assess a situation
- Communicate more effectively with different personalities
- Work to defuse confrontational situations
- Manage defensive tendencies
- Read non-verbal behavior – their own and the other person’s
- Find effective strategies for dealing with the people at work, home, or other

Collection

- ❖ We will be re-labeling the children’s collection to add larger labels, and reorganize some of the easy readers into subject categories (ABC, 123, holidays, etc.) for ease of use by children and their families. This will also showcase the collections better.
- ❖ We would like to present many parts of the various library collections with display or face-out shelving, similar to what bookstores use.
- ❖ A mid-year budget adjustment will bring collection spending to the approximate level of previous years. This will allow us to adjust for long range planning expenses as we determine when to undertake a physical facility analysis and capital replacement plan.

Marketing the Library

- We will be featuring the library’s teen volunteers in an upcoming news article as well as a Geek program feature.
- We are sending monthly library calendars to the schools in our district; reaching approximately 10,000 students. We are supplying the same monthly library calendar to local area daycares. Some of the schools now scan the documents into a parent portal for parents to access online.
- Positive press coverage continues from the local newspapers.
- The library outside sign is encouraging program sign-up and the newsletter being on the web. We hope to encourage patrons to know what we offer @ the website.

Programs + Events

- ➔ **Geek the Library** – Everyone has something they are passionate about and the Geek the Library program is a bold publicity campaign to remind customers that we have materials that inspire and empower their life-long learning and hobbies. Geek the Library gets people talking about libraries and how libraries improve lives. The Geek campaign will be an ongoing initiative to encourage patrons to support their library in return. Our three program goals include: get people’s attention; raise awareness of the library; and encourage library use and support.
- ➔ **Winter Reading Program** - The Winter Reading Club began this month. This will encourage residents to participate in a fun incentive program at their library. This year I established a significant donation from Harris Bank as primary sponsor along with the Chicago Wolves. We thank all sponsors for their ongoing generosity.
- ➔ **Letters to the Troops** – This Spring initiative offers a wonderful opportunity for community members to write a troop letter using our form, which will then be sent on by the library.
- ➔ **American Dream Literacy Program** – We held a family day kick-off event January 22nd, which was well attended. ESL classes begin in February and go through April. This and more quality programming is through the grant award from ALA and Dollar General.
- ➔ **Volunteer Corp for Teens** – Community service hours are now required at local high schools. The library offers a variety of projects to assist teens and promote leadership.

Personnel

We welcome new page Kristen Runion to our library staff. And we wish Vicki McCann well as she leaves our employ.

In Conclusion

As we encourage residents to make Homer Library their first choice for information and learning in 2011 we will continue to review long range plans to present an attractive facility for their continued use. As always, we want to provide the best in services, collections and programs that bring value to the Homer community both now and in the future.

My report is intended to give you a good overview and pertinent information on our local and regional issues. If there is an issue that you would like information about or if you need anything detailed more fully, please let me know.

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Library Director

2/22/11