



MIDWEST COLLABORATIVE *for* LIBRARY SERVICES

Building better libraries

Indiana Library Community Conversations 2016

From March 21 to March 25, MCLS, along with the help of volunteer facilitators and note-takers, conducted five Community Conversations in the southern portion of the state with 52 members of the Indiana library community from multi-types of libraries, and from August 22 to September 2, conducted six in the central and northern parts of the state with 70 participants. The conversations were based on the work of the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation and were a “deeper dive” into themes that emerged from 10 Community Conversations held in December of 2014.

The “**Community Narrative**” that was developed after the 2014 conversations was reviewed. The **aspirations** for the Indiana library community that most resonated with participants were being a library community that is inclusive and serves residents through every stage of life, being innovative and remaining relevant in times of rapid change, that multi-types of libraries will communicate with one another, that we will be able to demonstrate our impact, and that new library workers will have mentoring opportunities and the ability to expand their professional contacts. **Aspirations that would be added to the narrative** included that bright, new people will be attracted to the profession and that library science curriculum will keep up with changes in the profession and include experts from outside the field; that libraries will be the vital link for education, but also a place to find technology, enjoyment, entertainment, enrichment, and be safe places that are well-funded; that Indiana libraries will be in active partnerships with community leaders and decision makers, and will be able to accurately assess their local communities’ needs; that they will be the cultural center-point of their communities; that libraries will have a source for good advice on which technology is affordable, dependable, desirable and lasting; that library staff will not just have the right skills and abilities, but also the right attitudes; and that libraries need to be more than relevant, they need to be essential.

Other areas of the narrative that resonated with participants were the **concerns** that we need to let go of some services to remain relevant, that there are too many unserved areas, and that school librarians are continuing to be reduced. The public’s perception of the library as a nostalgic place, and telling the story of the library and its changing roles continues to be a struggle, and sometimes staff are a problem. A few expressed concern that ILL is still too expensive, while others stated that the new Statewide Remote Circulation System (SRCS) has greatly improved this. **Concerns that would be added** included that academic libraries are not as engaged in the professional community as a whole and that school librarians’ voices are nearly absent from the conversations, as they have difficulty attending. The expense of professional memberships and conferences were also mentioned as a concern.

Positive signs that the Indiana library community is moving in the right direction include the implementation of the new **Statewide Remote Circulation System (SRCS)**, which some said should **alleviate many of the concerns** regarding the inadequacies in the state involving a statewide borrowing system, knowledge of other Indiana library resources, reciprocal borrowing, and interlibrary loan. Other **signs of progress** identified were the success of **Evergreen Indiana** and the continued funding of **INSPIRE**. Others said that libraries are **embracing technology**, and that the schools have moved from a technology dead zone to 1:1 technology for students. Some said that libraries are **doing a better** job of engaging with their communities and developing partnerships in their communities. An **improvement** in the ways that the librarians and library community are communicating with one another through conversations, round tables, and various collaborations was noted. Some said the new certification rules for public libraries are **a step in the right direction**, and others noted that the School of Information and Library Science is becoming more involved in the library community. They say there are **more professional development opportunities**, and that they see **more collaboration and coordination efforts among ISL, MCLS, ILF and other organizations**. Additionally, many said that it is a positive sign that **the conversations are expanding** and also that the **State Library is attending and listening**. Others mentioned PLA Project Outcomes, and some libraries “bravely letting go” of traditional services, such as the traditional summer reading models, standing orders, and collections.

Themes

During the 2014 conversations, some said that they are concerned with **the evolving role of libraries in our local communities, and that we need to know how to develop programming and projects to meet the needs of our communities and be relevant for today and the future**.

There was strong agreement that we need to engage the community to guide the services and programs that the library provides, but that **things are getting in the way**, such as **a lack of awareness from the community about what the library offers** and often a lack of awareness that they are even using the library when they utilize online resources, particularly in academic libraries. We don't see our online-only users, and students and faculty already have information overload because they receive so much information everyday. For academic libraries serving online-only users or commuters, it is difficult to offer them other types of programming. Some said that they find it hard to ascertain what types of programming people want and will attend. Some said that staff are not experts in some of the evolving roles, and that staff are interested, but just overwhelmed, and training is difficult to keep up with. Others had staff who are not invested, or who are rooted in their mindsets. Some are concerned that the MLS curriculum is not evolving and staying relevant. Others said that even if they have the staff, it is difficult to collect the right data to help them decide what programs to let go of, and what they should keep, and the public's nostalgia and perception of what they should be doing add to this difficulty. In K-12 school libraries, para-professionals need tremendous amounts of training, there is not adequate communication between teachers and school libraries, and kids in school

that the **library is no longer necessary** due to the Internet, google, people buying their own books, and that they just don't use it.

Many said that the words from the people who **use the library are increasingly positive**, and that the library being seen as more "cool", "welcoming", and "friendly" seems to have increased and **improved over the past**, and that the library is regarded as positive in the community, even by those who don't use it. Others said that, overall, the words people use to talk about the library are no better or worse than they ever were, they are just different. The **non-users** are the ones with questions, and who **don't know what we do**, and don't see the value. Infrequent or new library users are overwhelmed and afraid to ask for help. Some said that **some of the negative words, such as concerns about the homeless and safety, are words that have grown** over the years, and that the library is not being seen as a place to conduct research.

We discussed examples of **how libraries are embracing new roles**. Many discussed that **changes in the school calendar and family life are driving public libraries to find new ways to serve school age children**, from changing the dates/times of programs, to finding new ways to deliver traditional programs, such as taking story times to daycares and schools, rather than just holding them in the library, and providing more all-ages and family programming, which breaks down traditional staffing barriers of youth services vs. adult services. Other changes in schools, such as 1:1 technology for students, has led to more public library support for students during e-learning days, and forced them to increase bandwidth capacity and wireless printing solutions. Having staff dedicated to teen services has become the norm. Others are creating new twists to traditional programs such as summer reading to move away from prizes.

Some said there has been a culture shift **to library as an experience** and that there is more of an emphasis on making the library a "fun" place. This emphasis was expressed across multi-types of libraries: public, academic and school. All types of libraries expressed the emergence of "**passive programming**" as a growing role, from having puzzles on the tables in academic libraries to coloring sheets in school libraries. Some academic libraries said that supporting and encouraging recreational reading has been a new role for them. Some academic libraries specifically discussed the need to **use their spaces in new ways** as more resources go online and they are competing with other departments for use of the space. Consolidation of campuses are driving changes in the libraries of some academics. As academics are serving more off-site students and day users, the library is one of the only spaces on campus for student productivity. Both public and academic libraries are entering into partnerships, sharing spaces with other departments and organizations, and utilizing flexible space, rather than scheduled space, and enabling creation in the building through maker spaces and dedicated teen space. Some said that libraries need to find a balance between fun and functional.

Some said that public libraries are increasingly **providing social services**, such as summer meals for children, serving as after school child care, spaces for supervised parent/child visits, and simply being seen as a safe place in the community for children to be. They are also providing more and more government and e-government services, as well as helping with

unemployment. Some are issuing passports. These types of services mean that library staff are dealing with more and more of people's private information in order to help them.

Some said that the **digital divide continues to drive evolving services** and they are providing more technology assistance to library users for devices, such as phones and e-readers, and serving as experts on digital tools. They are circulating mobile hot spots, and providing devices to kids to play Pokemon Go. There are more remote users, and e-resources are meeting people's needs where they are. Public libraries are supporting the needs of school students more after hours for students who have been given technology at school, but have no access to Wi-Fi. Librarians in all environments said they are taking on more of a teaching and instructional design role.

Some libraries said there is more of an emphasis on **outreach** to the unserved, **engaging and partnering with the community** (library as the community hyper-linker), and **finding new ways to promote services** beyond the traditional newspaper and media, such as social media and school outreach. Many said that **a climate accepting of risk taking and failure** is becoming more the norm in libraries.

Others said evolving roles include the **collection and circulation** of "things", such as cake pans and park passes, while others mentioned **changing staffing models**, such as hiring outside of the MLS, as new roles require new skills that the MLS cannot provide, such as social work, marketing, etc.

Another **theme** that was discussed from the 2014 conversations was that some have said that **with the changing role of libraries, it is difficult to tell our stories to decision makers.**

We want decision makers to know about the impacts of the library in the community. We want them to know that the library is essential to the community, libraries change lives, and that libraries make a difference in their communities and campuses; that libraries are a place where ideas live and a trusted resource for community information; that we serve more than the people who check out books. We want them to know that we provide virtual use, as well as basic services residents can't get elsewhere, such as faxing, photocopying, and use of a computer; that libraries support economic development and entrepreneurs and can be a selling point for potential students when choosing their college; that libraries are a neutral place, serving diverse people. Some said that they specifically wanted decision makers to know that libraries are a safe haven for children, and that we support homeschooling and tutoring and that library facilities are used for other supports for children, such as supervised parental visits, and Internet access for students to be able to do their homework when they have been issued a device, but have no access at home. Other impacts that we want decision makers to know are that we provide services to the recently incarcerated, such as providing computer training, and job search assistance that may lead to recidivism and reducing crime. Some said that it is important to let decision makers know how much INSPIRE would cost libraries if it wasn't funded by the state, as well as how valuable state-wide consortiums are in saving libraries money. Others said they need to know that libraries save people money.

Some have said that **what is keeping us from telling our story** is that our story is different in each community and that our **statistics** are working against us. Circulation count, door counts, meeting room uses, etc. don't convey the true value of the library. However, these are the statistics we are required to collect for state reports. We should be measuring the impacts of library service on people's lives, but **it is difficult to share anecdotal information**. It is difficult to know how to combine data with stories. Trustees need to be hearing about library impacts instead of just building and funding issues so they can spread the word back out into the community. Some said **that money and time** are barriers. Staff are already wearing multiple hats, and community engagement and marketing are both full time jobs. Libraries don't know whose job it should be to tell the story. Some said that libraries have not historically valued marketing. In academic libraries, there are faculty misconceptions about what the library provides. Our **online users are difficult to connect with** and collect stories from, and library service is so seamless that students don't know that the information they received even came from the library. Trying to explain why a library is necessary when there are free databases is difficult.

We discussed **why this is important** and what needs to change in order for libraries to be able to tell their story. Some academic libraries said that anything that helps tell the story is important **because budgets continue to get reduced**. The library is an easy place to cut because the academic institutions do not know or understand why they need a library, and the library does not make them money. Some school librarians said that they must constantly be out there proving their worth or **risk their library being closed**. The library's impact needs to be communicated to teachers and school administrators, and they need to know that we have a professional voice. Several had **ideas for what needs to be changed in order for us to tell our story**, including using PLA Outcomes or other outcomes measures, using entertainment to educate about what we do (IHS hot pepper history), empowering all staff to tell the story and be at the table by inviting them to lunches, meetings and conferences, and participating in the library's social media presence. Some suggested the need for an elevator speech or sending a weekly email blast to staff with talking points. Staff need practice in telling the story. Staff need to believe in the library, not just work there, and making it a part of staff job descriptions to be a part of other community groups would help to put a "face" on the library. Some said libraries should be collecting quotes and testimonials and pairing emotions with data. Training on how to share data in a compelling way was suggested, as well as opportunities for practicing telling the story. Another suggested participating in Story Corp as a way to connect with your community. Some said the help of professional marketing staff and a commercial grade marketing campaign to help change the image of libraries is necessary, and that libraries need to be featured more in the media. Some felt that we should be working together through professional associations to do more to tell our story. They have said that we need a statewide narrative, and more statewide action, and that legislators need to hear from community members, not from librarians. Some suggested that making YouTube videos in-house about how the library helps students can be effective in academic libraries. For school libraries, presentations to the school board on new spaces and student engagement were suggested. They also suggested having vendors demonstrate databases to students and faculty rather than

including being open-minded and non-judgmental, liking people and being able to create relationships, having compassion, empathy, good listening, and communication skills. They should be passionate and engaged. These were considered by some to be character traits, and difficult to teach. Problem-solving and good decision-making skills were often cited as well. It was noted that most of the words were not ones that we would have used in the past to describe the skills for librarians. Some said that no one person can possess all of these qualities, but a smart organization can assemble a team with all of them. It was noted that it is difficult to hire or train for these skills with part-time employees. Academic librarians added teaching and being cross-disciplinary as important. **Many questioned whether these skills were being included in library school curriculum.**

If grading library staff on how well they are doing on this list, most said they had staff at all grades, with the lowest grading being in a willingness to embrace change.

Some said **that they would believe things are improving if** library directors and managers led the way by modeling the skills they want to see, and incorporating these skills into the organizational values. Leaders also need to create an environment where staff can use these skills by empowering staff to make decisions, and not letting the library's rules get in the way, giving staff positive reinforcement, talking about the skills in the workplace, and supporting staff taking chances on creative and innovative ideas, including soft skills in training and orientation of new employees, and coaching library workers to always assume the best of patrons first, and not to take things personally. Some suggested small groups of staff trying new things and inspiring others. Developing cross-departmental work groups, rotating staff assignments to give them a broader perspective, giving staff time away from the public to prevent burn-out and cynicism, emphasizing the importance of the customer, and expressing enthusiasm for changes would be an improvement. Structured approaches to assessment to be able to effectively evaluate staff and set benchmarks would help. They believe there needs to be an organizational focus on reminding staff that these skills are important. Many said that implementing technology competencies would help, such as those available on WebJunction. Leadership training and intergenerational communication styles training would help. Conversations with library science faculty were suggested as well.

In addition to discussing 21st century library skills, we discussed the **theme of mentoring new librarians and emerging leaders.**

Many said that mentoring is important, and is **needed at all levels of staffing**, not just with librarians, and that even experienced librarians need mentoring when they change jobs or roles. Some said that there are formal mentoring programs that exist in the state, such as the ILF's mentoring program and the Indiana State Library's Indiana Leadership Academy as a resource for mentoring new leaders. Some added that they feel that mentoring is a misunderstood word, and that mentors need to fully understand what it means to be a mentor. They feel that we need to educate mentors and provide a framework for the mentorships. Formal programs should also ensure that both parties get something out of it, and that reverse mentorships are just as important. Others said that **mentoring should be organic**, rather than

through a formal mentor matching process that often doesn't create relevant matches, and that there are many opportunities for mentoring at the Director level, but not many for other staff levels. Some suggested that the move to online library education has made it more difficult for new professionals to have a peer network in place when they enter the field. Some were concerned that library schools don't teach real life skills, and that curriculums are not keeping up with the real world.

The areas staff most need mentoring in are: leadership skills, conflict management, partnerships, engagement, personnel management, staff development, building issues, library funding, library laws, working with the media, policy development, letting go of services, self-care and avoiding burn-out, and how to deal with customers in crisis (social work).

Participants **defined a good leader as:** inspirational, energetic, passionate, and humble, with good communication skills and interpersonal skills. Leaders have the skills they want to see in their staff, and model them, leading by example. They see the big-picture, have a vision, set the direction and articulate the vision. They are strategic, confident, and not afraid to raise others up with them. They coach and inspire others to improve. They are engaged in the professional community and are invested in the library.

Many offered **specific suggestions as to how mentoring can be accomplished.** Some suggested that it is important for Directors to remove barriers for other staff to find mentors, by supporting staff serving on professional organizations, partnering new employees with veteran staff, actively seeking mentors from other libraries for staff, growing leaders from within our own organizations, or having a neutral person on staff they can turn to for advice. Social media can also serve a mentoring purpose, through such sites as ALA-ThinkTank. Some suggested a mentoring program to match professional librarians with library science students.

The **last theme** we discussed was the **concern that some have about the erosion of the information literacy skills and critical thinking skills of students in our state and the reduction of librarians in our schools.**

Most said their local K-12 librarians have been replaced with non-librarians and many of the school librarians have been "repurposed" so they are not in the library as much. Although it is still required that there be a librarian in the school corporation for accreditation, some said their schools still didn't have one and the state of the school library included out of date collections as well as staff without library skills. Some school libraries have parents serving in the library, and it is difficult to teach them. Others said their paraprofessionals care and try, but they just don't have the training. The few school librarians present stated that they must constantly prove their worth or risk the library being eliminated. They stated that this is difficult as teachers don't bring their students to the library. Some said the situation has gotten worse, that the library used to use club time at schools to sponsor book clubs, and now, too few schools have club time built into their schedules. There are so many competing after-school offerings that book clubs can't compete in that time slot. Librarians are not sure how to educate parents and decision makers about this issue. One school librarian in attendance stated

that it is difficult to make the connection between school librarians and information literacy skills because there are so many things going on with schools that may be contributing to it, such as teachers not assigning research projects, teaching to the test, and funding issues. They said schools are focused on teaching content, not critical thinking and research skills. Some said that teachers are assigning outdated projects, such as “locate 6 print books on a topic.” They state that, in theory, teachers and parents should be their best partners. School libraries need parent support and the influence of parents. School librarians do not want the public libraries to provide services in the school that they can provide themselves, but they do want the students to go to the public library to use their technology and want to find other ways to work with the public libraries.

Academic librarians see a lessening of critical thinking skills and writing skills and good research habits in incoming students. Academic librarians have said that faculty also don’t assign research. They are assigning thinking, feeling, and journaling-type assignments. Some, but not all, colleges require students to take an information literacy class. One said they used to have a mandatory information literacy class, but there was a very low pass rate, so the class was eliminated.

We discussed what **supports** academic and public libraries might provide to students or to the school librarians. **Sharing resources** was the most mentioned support. Many public libraries said they are helping their school libraries and students by **providing digital access cards to students to allow them to access the public library databases and downloads**. They also have an icon on the student iPads to access the e-material. Others offer teacher cards. Some public libraries have a **shared ILS** with their schools or **shared platforms**. Others provide **remote collections** at the school with books that belong to the public. Most provide **interlibrary loans** to school and prepare materials for **school loans**. Some suggested that publics can help schools with **cataloging** so they don’t have to purchase MARC records. **Joint school/public libraries** could be an option.

Some specific suggestions regarding help with information literacy skills were that public and academic librarians can work with local schools to **provide information literacy instruction**. Some said that public libraries can **embed information literacy into fun activities**, using gamification and badging, and that they try to have a focus on literacy in every single event. Some public librarians **build relationships** with individual teachers, get school curriculums, and help their classes with research and citations. **Field trips to the library** were suggested and some have students visit the library to learn the path of a book from acquisitions to cataloging to processing to shelf. Some arrange “back to school nights” with the schools or **go to the schools** and book talk or bring books.

Other ways that public libraries help are by offering life-long learning and summer learning during the gaps, promoting Summer Reading at the schools, engaging with kids through the use of iPads, teaching “soft skills,” giving hungry kids foods, listening to them, being a safe space for them that is open year-round, providing an in-person connection, and providing programming for students that extends what schools do during the day. One said they “**try to make a**

difference for the kids that need it.” Some said that public libraries can focus on the parents. If parents possess information skills, they serve as good role models for the children. Some said that public libraries can get to the kids earlier. The public library can also focus on home school students at the elementary level.

Some said that we need to **build trust**—we have the same clients, and we need to be working with teachers and superintendents, not just school librarians. They say we need to **express to decision makers that students need critical thinking skills** because people don't realize that these are skills that must be learned. Some felt that we need to communicate and define what information literacy is to the general public in a way that they can understand and explain why it is important, and that a statewide media campaign could spread the word. Public and academic librarians can **vouch for ESSA and be advocates for schools**. Some suggested that public and academics can provide support, but shouldn't overstep boundaries, and only step in when there is a true need. Some said that we can find relevant partners in the community, such as pediatricians, to help spread the word. Lastly, we need to **look at models of successful school/library collaborations**.

Some were concerned that it is difficult to get into the schools and it is hard to work with them. Some have seen their teacher cards used by only a few dozen teachers, even though a hundred applied. Some said the right leaders need to be in the right place to create positive collaborations, and that a change in superintendent can improve or dismantle cooperation. Others said that sometimes the principal or librarian is not interested in collaborating. Some school librarians fear that outside help from academic or public libraries could further jeopardize their position. Many public libraries are stepping in to assist schools without librarians, but some feel this causes a contradiction between advocating and filling a need. Many stressed the importance of being careful about not replacing what school libraries can do. Some concerns/barriers were identified, such as having limited time with kids, staff time to go to schools, territorialism, fear of a perception of duplication of resources, and concerns of students accessing adult material with digital access cards and student cards. Some public libraries expressed concerns that even their own staff don't see the value of the work that YA librarians are doing. There was an expressed need for more school librarians' voices included in the conversations. School librarians said it is very difficult for them to participate in the professional community, and it is hard to get away from the school. Some suggested we send an online survey to school librarians.

Conditions

As we thought about the various topics discussed, **some things that would provide a sense that we are making progress or moving in the right direction** were identified. Some said that they would like to see a real commitment to **lifelong learning in staff** and that more **affordable and localized training and free networking opportunities** would help. They would like to see staff being open to change, and perhaps see some pilot projects on how libraries are instilling lifelong learning in their staff. There would be an emphasis on preparing new people in the

profession. They would like to see more **libraries collaborating**, and a greater **awareness of what multi-types of libraries do**.

Some state they would like to see **increased funding for libraries and removal of the tax caps**. Many said the community would be more aware of their services and there would be a **statewide media plan** to change the image of libraries and let users know that libraries are different now. There would be funding available for innovative projects. There would be more attempts at working across boundaries, and collaborating with other community members. There would be more professional advocacy for state-wide issues. We would know how to communicate our metrics and have more resources on how to advocate for libraries.

Others would like to see **everyone in the State having access to library online resources**, even the underserved, and they would like to get advice from those already offering digital access cards for students. Some would also like to see reduced PLAC fees. They also want to see **all school libraries open with librarians on staff**.

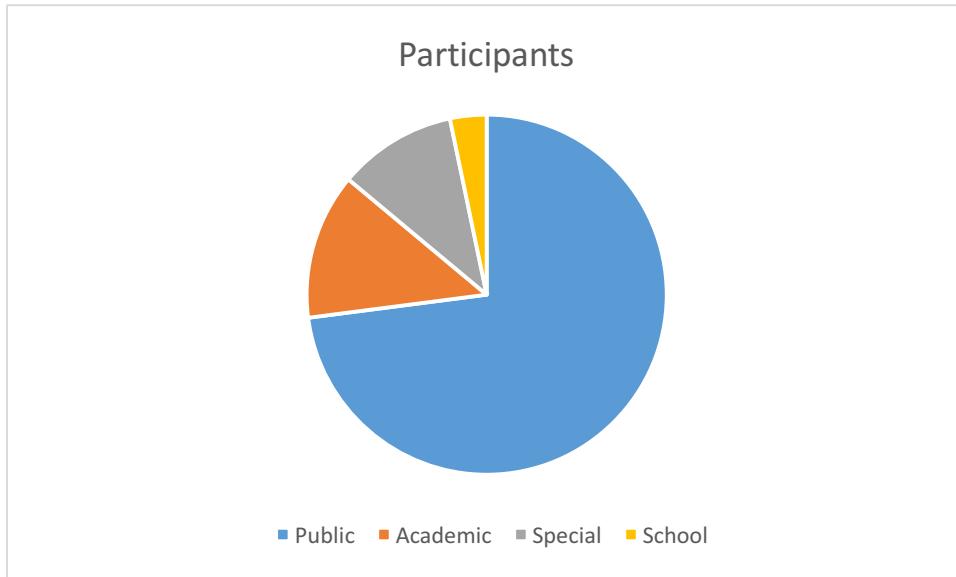
Some said “keep trying and don’t give up.” They suggested that we should have this conversation again in a year, and see if anything has changed. In the library community, we should communicate more with multi-types of libraries, and share our successes and failures. People would like to have **more conversations** with more representation from academic librarians, school librarians, rural libraries, and library science faculty. Some suggested continuing the current conversation topics in other forums, such as a Facebook group, roundtables, or Twitter chats, and some were particularly interested in continuing the conversation on how libraries are changing. Some would like to continue to connect with library cohorts, not just by geographic region, but by other shared similarities. People were glad to see ISL/MCLS and IPL working together for conversations and feel that we have been reducing silos in the Indiana library community. There was an expressed appreciation of the State Library being present at conversations and listening and acknowledging issues. And lastly, our libraries would eliminate fines for students, provide internet access to all kids, and respect and trust our communities to use the library’s resources.

Conversation Dates/Locations

March 21,	Putnam County Public Library, Greencastle
March 22,	Monroe County Public Library, Bloomington
March 23,	Ohio Township Public Library, Newburgh
March 24,	Jefferson County Public Library, Madison
March 25,	Greensburg-Decatur County Public Library, Greensburg
August 22,	Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne
August 26,	Indianapolis Public Library-Library Services Center, Indianapolis
August 30,	Hussey-Mayfield Memorial Library, Zionsville
August 31,	Lake County Public Library, Merrillville
September 1,	Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library, Mishawaka
September 2,	Indianapolis Public Library-Library Services Center, Indianapolis

Participants by Library Type

Public-89
Academic-16
Special-13
School-4



Conversation facilitators:

Kimberly Andersen, Indianapolis Public Library
Michelle Bradley, MCLS
Monica Casanova, Monticello-Union Township Public Library

Note takers:

Megan Bauerle, MCLS
Michelle Bradley, MCLS
Monica Casanova, Monticello-Union Township Public Library
Jennifer Clifton, Indiana State Library
Reena Evans, Bloomfield-Eastern Green County Public Library
Andrea Ingmire, Greensburg-Decatur County Public Library
Vincci Kwong, Franklin D. Schurz Library, Indiana University South Bend
Amber Painter, Indiana State Library
Pamela Seabolt, Jeffersonville Township Public Library
Trista Smith, Ohio Township Public Library