

Michigan libraries 2016 community narrative

As a professional community, Michigan librarians and library staff of all types want to provide meaningful contributions to our local communities, be it town, campus, or school, in the revitalization of our state. We want our libraries to be dynamic and meet the communities' needs in real time. We want to be at the table when important decisions are made, and a sought after, fully-utilized partner, and resource in community projects; playing a pivotal role in all stages of a Michigan citizen's life. We want consistent and uninterrupted library service across the state, no matter the patron's hometown or affiliation.

We want our library community to be innovative, supportive of risk taking, and one which celebrates small successes, works collaboratively, and shares information. We want to work in an environment where all have easy and affordable access to the training, tools, and information required to stay current and meet our unique communities' needs.

There are signs of progress. However, we believe the library community, the major organizations, and institutions could do a better job of working in concert. We believe this fragmentation also exists by library type, library size, and geographically. We want conspicuous demonstrations of collaborative partnerships among the traditional library leadership organizations and institutions, as well as grass roots efforts. We want to feel connected and knowledgeable about what is going on in the library community and who is leading on initiatives. We are cognizant there is a need to identify and mentor emerging leaders, and that many of the skills needed for 21st century library staff are not being taught by MLIS programs.

We are increasingly concerned about the loss of School librarians. We believe the drastic reduction of school librarians in the past decade will steadily erode the information literacy and critical thinking skills of Michigan students. We have identified some pockets of hope, and means that public, academic, and special libraries can help, such as providing technical support. We recognize that coordination and buy-in alignment across the community would greatly increase the chance to actualize any initiative.

Additionally, we are concerned about the evolving role of libraries in our local communities. We want to know how to develop relevant programming and projects to meet our communities needs in the 21st century, and then how to measure the impact and share that information with our community. We are concerned that some library staff's resistance to change and territoriality is limiting the library community and contributing to the perception by some that libraries are irrelevant. We want to know how to tell our story, and connect that story with community impacts to demonstrate the real value libraries bring to their communities.

If the Library of Michigan, MCLS, MLA, MI-ALA, MAME, the Michigan Library Cooperative Directors Association, and other library service organizations worked in collaboration and strategically with non-library groups/organizations, and kept us informed of these partnerships, we would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward to help.