Library Director’s Report
CMLE Board
September 23, 2016

**Introduction**

As of this first meeting, I will have been working with CMLE for just over a month – and it has been a great experience! Patricia very graciously spent two weeks with me, wrapping up her work and her time as director here; and pointing me in the direction of important people, tasks, and ideas to follow. She leaves behind an organization that is well-managed, well-organized, and ready to take steps to work even more closely with our members.

In the upcoming months, we have some ideas about things to share and ideas to keep building; and we will be actively soliciting suggestions from all members.

**First 90 days**

One of the first things to accomplish is working on better communication with our members. We are revamping the website, and increasing our social media presence. We want to reach out to our members on a personal basis as well, and are beginning to organize in-library visits. We are setting up monthly book groups for our member libraries on Good Reads, one for professional books and one for fun books.

Angie and I have been working together to look at the information, systems, and services we are offering. We are coming up with some strategies for quick changes (we are now using Mail Chimp’s free weekly newsletter service, which gives us a more flexible format and also statistics on reader responses), and for making the services and materials already here more easily accessible to members. We are working out strategies to consolidate our files, for easier access and easy backups.

I am working to recruit Guest Bloggers, who are experts in different areas of library practice that might be relevant to our members. And we are going to recruit member librarians to contribute to this series, to share their experience (good and bad!) in trying new things, offering programs, trying out technologies, or anything else they want to share. I want to make the information we share more directly applicable to members, so we want to target different library types and different needs across types.

Continuing education is a priority for helping our members to get access to the information they need. I want to start scheduling sessions that are relevant to member needs, and to offer at least one training session in house each month. I am working with CRDC to use their meeting room and Go To Meeting software; and ideally every session would be offered in person here, as well as broadcast online for people who cannot make it. And we would record each session, making it available to members to review later. We are already working on ways to provide password protected pages on our website, so it can be shared with members but not with the general public. We are setting up monthly training themes, so that the program offered in a given month would also be supported by blog postings on that topic. This material will all be archived on our website, so when a member has an issue, they can easily find all the content we have created to address it.

I am attending three conferences in September and October:

* Multitype Directors meeting Sept 27-28
* MLA Annual: Sept 29-30
* ITEM Annual: Oct 13-15

I have ordered (and received) new business cards, so I can introduce myself to librarians from CMLE and around the state and be ready to connect with them. I want to get involved with library organizations, to stay in touch with the cutting edge of the profession, and also to be sure I know about the issues that are (or will be) facing our member libraries.

**First six months**

This is where some settling in will happen, and following through with the plans being made early in my first year. During this time, I will finish creating and send out a comprehensive needs assessment to all members, and start assessing the results. While we are going forward and setting up training and sharing content that is going to generally be helpful, regularly asking members what issues they are facing that will be useful to know more about or to have training to handle, will let us provide more focused material.

I also want to create and distribute a survey of our NorthStar members, to see where they are with their use of the Destiny system, and how things are going for them with it. As we are their contact with this system, I want to reach out and remind them we are a resources for this – and other good things.

Advocacy is a huge topic, and always an important need in libraries of all types. So I want to set up a section on the website where members can quickly find their assorted political officials responsible up and down the chain of funding. We will provide a series of talking points for them to share with funders, community members, and anyone else interested in their libraries, so everyone can be ready to talk about issues important in the good operation of libraries. And I would like to get started in helping people to videotape themselves giving an elevator speech (quick, focused) about their library, their library type, and libraries in general. We can set up a CMLE YouTube channel, so everyone’s videos can be gathered in one place for maximum impact; and it can be easily distributed to anyone the libraries want to share this information with in their community. We will keep building on this, and establishing additional resources for advocacy work, updating it regularly so members always have access to information and quick resources. This will also be a topic in our training cycle.

Grant writing is also a big priority for me, along with general fundraising ideas. This will also be a section in the website, where we provide information about current grants and ongoing opportunities. We will also have information for our members about writing grants that get noticed, and giving them the opportunity to work one on one with us as they write an application as well as having training programs about grant writing. In this material, we will also include information about general fundraising that our members may implement. Fiscal responsibility is not the most glamorous part of library work, but sufficient funding is a requirement for any kind of effective library operation.

During this time, I want to really focus on visiting members and talking with them about their interests and their needs. A survey is a great tool for reaching out to people and collecting data; but supplementing that with in person visits makes the things I can learn so much richer. It has been my experience in other libraries, that when I am actually there we see things that are important or that they have meant to ask about or to share – but don’t remember to do so until we are talking. I really want to get to know the members in CMLE, so we develop relationships and we can learn from each other.

**First year**

Revamping the website is a priority. I want to work on some ideas to make the site look more professional, and more organized to allow our members quick access to the content we provide there. We have already added a Continuing Education section, updated nearly daily with information. We are working on adding a Google calendar to this, so members can have access to CE opportunities without needed to click through our site. Changes will be happening all year long; but at the end of the year, the site will be updated to look professional and to provide easy access to information. We will do some user testing on it to be sure we meet some standards of good website design: nothing more than three clicks deep, accessible for people with disabilities, etc. I want the website to provide content by subject area, and also to have content that would be specific to our different types of member libraries. In the end, I want our members to think of us as their first stop for access to information of all sorts in operating a library.

As another way of reaching out to our patrons, I would also like to establish a CMLE podcast. We can interview members, other librarians and library fans, authors, politicians, community members – anyone who has an interest in helping libraries to be effective. Podcasting is an increasingly popular way to connect with people, and reasonably inexpensive to set up here in our office.

I would also like to set up some regular video interviews, to go onto our blog and our YouTube channel. The marketing material I am reading shows people are increasingly moving away from wanting to read blog entries, and wanting to have a more audio and visual experience with their information. This would let us move beyond our blog content, and to provide information in a variety of formats, so our members can find a way to connect that is best for them and their own learning style.

**Conclusion**

Although I have not been here for long, working at CMLE has already exceeded my expectations! I have met many interesting people, and look forward to continuing that. Angie and I have worked together to follow on the systems already in place, and to think about ways to keep improving them for quick service and great content sharing. As I spend this first year getting to know the libraries, the people, and the systems in Minnesota, I anticipate I will be able to make a greater contribution in helping the members to serve their communities. For me, the thing that makes library work special is connecting with people and providing great service. CMLE is giving me a chance to make that happen.