Director’s Report

September 20, 2017 (Meeting #1 FY18)

CMLE Board Meeting

We have had our standard busy and exciting work here since our last Board meeting!

* Our final budget number was approved and distributed. We will be receiving $175,098.25. The Excel chart listing the total budget breakdown among all the multitype systems is included in the financial reports.
* We recorded all fifteen of our Season Two podcasts for our Linking Our Libraries podcast! They are dropping every Thursday morning, from August 10 (Community Engagement) through November 16 (Library Impact/ROI). Our bonus episode for this season will drop December 7 (just before finals week at the local schools!) and will be on Stress in the Workplace. These have been a popular strategy for communicating with our members, and other library people. (It takes each of us many hours to create and publish one episode; so we really worked to get most of the work done over the summer when we were less busy with other projects.)
  + We want to slowly move toward building our brand as a center of library/archive educational expertise, and to reach out to our members in all kinds of ways. Between social media, blogging, weekly newsletter, and this podcast, we are making good strides in that direction!
* I attended the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Meeting (June 23-25) in Chicago. It was great to see some members there, and I talked with many vendors. Their information is (slowly) going up onto our website, to make it easy for our members to find vendors for all sorts of library information. I also brought back a lot of material to distribute out to our members: books, pins, handouts, and all sorts of vendor items.
* I attended the quarterly multitype system meeting in July in Morehead (July 18-19). As always, this is a great way to keep in touch with the library events happening across the state, and for me to learn more about different types of libraries and what they do in Minnesota.
* Our Personnel Committee had a preliminary meeting July 20, to start getting organized for work.
* We held one of our regular CMLE social events on July 20, at the White Horse restaurant. Turnout was small but powerful in their library interests! We are currently working to schedule the next social event in October.
* Angie and I attended a session from the Red Cross on CPR/AED training (July 27), through cmERDC. We are now fully certified to do CPR! And we were impressed by the AED devices, and may do a survey across our members to see who has one of these, and who may need to do some fundraising to get one. Administering quick electric shocks to someone was easy to learn, and potentially a quick way to save lives!
* Our annual audit fieldwork day was August 8. Things went smoothly, and Angie and I spent many hours organizing files, and work with Nancy to get the appropriate paperwork. We have reorganized our office filing system to put paperwork into files that can easily be used in next year’s audit process. (Ben, from KDV, is at this meeting; and his preliminary audit reports were distributed to members prior to the meeting for review.)
* I attended the Minnesota Legislative Day learning session Aug 9, along with Karen Pundsack (Great River) and Carla Lydon (ECRL). It was a great learning experience, and we are going to work on some networking opportunities and strategies to better help serve library communities!
* Karen Pundsack, Valerie Horton (director of Minitex) and I met with the new Dean for Library Services from St. Cloud State Library. She was very gracious, and CMLE is really looking forward to working with her!
* The Board Finance, Policies/Procedures, and Personnel committees all met (at different times) on Friday August 18. Committees will each give a short report at the September Board meeting; but in general, we spent time accomplishing things that needed to be done quickly, and starting to organize our work plans for the next year or so. (I have said this before, but it is so helpful to have people working on things with us, and to have this kind of input as we are working to get things done! Thank you to all our Board members, and an additional thank you to those of you serving on one – or more! – committees.)
* We held a “Welcome Back to School/Fall is Here/Solar Eclipse” party on Aug 21! We provided SunMaid raisins, Starburst candy, Milky Way mini bars, Sun Chips, and more! It was too overcast here to see much of the eclipse, but we streamed it on a laptop here as people dropped in to snack and watch it live as viewing moved across the country! We distributed eclipse facts, and library advocacy postcards.
* I have resumed regular visits to our member libraries! I have five scheduled right now, and hope to dramatically increase that number. This is a great way for me to see what is actually happening in libraries across our system, and to talk with our members and see what kind of needs they have and how we can help them in their work. I write up these visits, with many photos, and put them on our blog and in our weekly newsletter – and they are some of our most-read materials! One of our goals is to help connect members across our system, and this is an easy way of letting people know what is going on in all kinds of libraries.
* We have been holding regular Office Hours for members. In a poll earlier this year, we asked members how they would best like to connect with each other and with us. One of the most-requested strategies was to have some unstructured time to talk with us here at CMLE HQ. So we have these every odd-numbered Wednesday from 11:00 to 1:00, and always make point of saying we can meet at other scheduled times that fit into member schedules. (Lady Grey, Angie’s greyhound and Official Office Dog, has been a frequent attendee – and people stop by our office just to pat her! She graciously takes it as her due; and is excellent at attending meetings, checking to be sure we are working – or if there might be treats or walks in her near future, and taking inspirational-level naps.)
* I will be attending the quarterly multitype meeting in Rochester Oct 3-4, and the Minnesota Library Association (MLA) Annual Meeting, also in Rochester, Oct 5-6.
* I distributed our survey on working with English Language Learners to some national listserves, to get more information and ideas from different types of libraries around the country. Our response rate is not large, but I think we have collected some interesting information to share. I will be giving a presentation on this at the MLA conference. And it is already leading to some ideas we want to roll out over the next couple of years to help our members serve their populations. This is an area where most libraries, of all types, are struggling to do good work; so hopefully our data collection will be useful!
* Angie will be attending the Information Technology Educators of Minnesota (ITEM) Annual Conference in Minneapolis, running from Oct 5-7.
* Angie and I have been holding weekly staff meetings, to keep track of our projects and to make plans for the future. If you visited our office are this summer, you saw our big sheets of paper with tasks broken down into monthly schedules. We think this kind of planning helped us to accomplish a lot of work this summer; and we are currently working on the same tactical planning strategy for the fall work to accomplish. (Drop in after the Board meeting to see how things went!)
* We keep working on adding content to our website. The changes we made were much more work than we anticipated (our general rule of thumb for all projects now!); but I am so pleased every time a member – or someone else – sends us a question we can quickly and easily answer from our website!
* We have revamped our blog articles and weekly newsletter. We are always evolving this process, to try to share the information our members want to read. Right now we are focusing on providing more original content, with less emphasis on reprinting library news links. We continue to share those, now in one collected blog article. Other weekly content includes a weekly holiday our member may want to celebrate, a book review, a look at a professional organization, Reading Across Minnesota (complete with map locating Minnesota books), CMLE resources (to help members identify all the things we have for them), a library app from AASL, a library program, a training tip, and any CMLE events we have upcoming.
* We are working on implementing our next phase of providing information and instruction: webinars and online learning courses. We are currently scheduling topics, looking for instructors, and designing the templates for these monthly classes.
* We also are rolling out our plans for recording videos of members (and Board members, if interested!) to give 30 to 60 second elevator speeches on the value of libraries to their communities. We want to put together a collection of these videos to start using in our advocacy work, and to provide and archive our members can use in their own advocacy work. One value in being part of a multitype system is the opportunity to see just how varied library and archive service really is! Most of the work done in libraries is similar across all types; but everyone focuses on different things, and meets different community needs. Putting all those stories together will help people to see both our commonalities, and the unique service and materials, we provide.
* We are still working on finalizing a marketing plan, as ideas quickly grew to be much larger than anticipated in the beginning! (It is a consistent theme, especially when you are working to accomplish BHAGs: Big Hairy Audacious Goals – as we do here every week!) We are working on advertising plans, procedures for charging non-regional members for service (including letting them buy in as subscription members), and other potential ideas. We are moving on this slowly, to be sure we start with a good foundation of procedures. All of this will come to the appropriate Board committees as we finalize it.
* We are working on continuing the strategic planning process we began at the June board meeting. Right now, we are working to organize a few focus groups, and writing up a survey to distribute to members (similar to the Needs Assessment we did last year). We want to be sure we are moving in a direction that meets the needs of our members, and that we can position ourselves to build CMLE resources to provide increased levels of service and materials to truly be useful to all our members.

As always, if you want to discuss any of our activities in more detail, or want to work with us on assorted projects, please do not hesitate to contact me any time! I truly value your contributions to the CMLE mission, and appreciate your input and energy.