Director’s Report

September 19, 201 (Meeting #1 FY19)

CMLE Board Meeting

The past three months have been busy, as we always are, and we tried out some new things. It was a time of connecting with members, and getting caught up on some of our other work.

* Tuesday, Sept 25 we will be hosting another in our Postcard Party series! From 11:00 to 1:00 we will be at the Munsinger Clemens garden visitor’s center, with postcards and addresses – ready to help people contact library stakeholders to keep spreading the message of the importance of libraries!
* We offered our Summer Library Boot Camp training series. Our attendance numbers were small, but we had some people who were very interested in training, and in working with the wider library community. It was great! I conducted seminars on Copyright, Collection Development and Weeding, and Programming/Connecting to the Community.
* I marched in the Granite Days parade with the Great River public library; and I volunteered for their library comic con event.
  + It is great to spend time with our member libraries! Please be sure to tell your members that we are available for other projects – especially when they are as fun as these were!
* I attended the quarterly meeting with the other six multitype library system directors. We also had a joint meeting with the public library system directors, so we could share information across all library systems. Carla Lydon, from ECRL, and Karen Pundsack, from Great River, were also there. (I am the Chair this year for the multitype systems; Carla is the Chair of the public library systems.)
* I did a phone call discussion with a consultant helping to put together a strategic plan for the Minnesota Library Association (MLA), as a representative of the multitype systems.
* I attended a meeting of library people from across the state who are interested in coordinating providing continuing education to libraries. This was organized by Minitex (https://www.minitex.umn.edu/), and we will meet again in October at the MLA Annual Conference here in St Cloud.
* I was part of the group of library people from across the state who reviewed LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant applications, for the State Library Services. (For more information, you can read about Minnesota’s implementation of this national program here: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/Lib/sls/LSTA/>)
  + These funds are from a federal department: the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). <https://www.imls.gov/> This is an important advocacy need we have, as this program provides about $3 million in funds to libraries in Minnesota – but it is constantly threatened in budget talks. As the federal budget is being assembled, we could really use your support in emails, phone calls, and/or personal visits to your federal legislators to let them know how valuable this money is to the libraries in our state. We will give you suggestions on ideas for wording, and postcards, and any other help you can use to help support libraries!
* The Board Finance Committee and Personnel Committee met August 22. They each will discuss the topics they discussed; and each have motions to bring forward from their work.
* We have recorded several episodes of Linking Our Libraries podcast – our library training podcast. We are recording Season Four right now, and episodes started dropping Thursday Sept. 6. We have had several new guests, including Valerie Horton (Director of Minitex) and staffers from the State Library Services. The episodes this season focus on leadership competencies, for libraries and for other nonprofits.
  + These episodes can be downloaded to any podcast app, or streamed right on our website. We are working on strategies to market them not only to libraries, but to anyone who wants to develop stronger leadership skills.
  + Content is based on my research, so should be more useful to our members, and to other learners, who want to build their skills. Much of the current leadership training programs are based on just the ideas of the instructor, not on research that can be proven to be helpful to leaders.
* We have started a third podcast! (Yes, it’s starting to be a lot…) This one is called Book Bites. Each episode is about five minutes long, and is introduced by Angie or I, and one person talks about a book (or maybe two). It can be a book they love, or one they are reading at the time.
  + We are dropping two of those each week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Right now, they are appearing on our website, and in the feeds of subscribers to our book group podcast: Reading With Libraries.
  + We wanted to maintain our audience, and this podcast is on hiatus for 15 weeks while we produce our Linking Our Libraries episodes. When LOL is over, we will switch the Book Bites over to that podcast feed, so those subscribers will get books
  + We would love to have you record an episode or two!! This is very quick and easy, just an opportunity to chat about a book you like!
* We wrapped up Season Two of our book group podcast, Reading With Libraries. As we discussed at the June board meeting, we are now using a much better hosting site – Libsyn. This lets us put each episode right onto our website, so people can just hit play instead of clicking through a couple of links. This has really pushed up our listener numbers.
  + We have increased the first-week listener numbers from about 30-40 up to 60-70! The average podcast gets about 50 – 60 downloads (and these numbers are fuzzy); so we are doing fine.
  + We want to work on some marketing to expand the reach of our podcast episodes. If you have any marketing experience, or ideas, I would love to talk with you!
* I hired a contract employee to help us with the work backlog we are never going to finish. Lydia Godfrey is currently working part time at Great River library, and will be putting in a few hours with us each week. We had $1,000 in the budget for a contract employee, and we are paying her $10/hour; so we plan for her to work 100 hours for us. Primarily this will mean building an actual member database, but Lydia has already been a guest on our podcasts and has radio experience, so she will also be doing some podcast sound editing (both tedious and difficult, and currently occupying much of Angie’s time), and doing a little writing for our website. We worked with the HR person at cmERDC, and our billing person, to be sure all paperwork is in order; and we followed the models from prior contract employees. Her first day was Sept 12. Welcome, Lydia!
* I have been answering member questions, helping with planning and policy work, and generally being available for cheering their work, and helping them to get past issues they are facing.
* I am finishing up the template book we will be distributing to all our school libraries, with policies they can implement in their libraries. This is part of our work to provide education and professional guidance to members, particularly in libraries where the staff do not have much (if any) experience as part of the library profession. We want to help them provide the best service and materials to the communities they serve, and to do so in the framework of the best possible library service and standards.
* And finally, I am running for office in the Academic and Research Library Division (ARLD) of MLA! <https://www.mnlibraryassociation.org/page/2019ARLDCand> I am running for Communications Officer. I am running to promote better communication across libraries – which meshes right with the work I am doing every day. My “opponent” (that’s not the best word – this is a very friendly contest) is from St. Catherine University, and would also be good at the job. So ARLD should be in good hands, no matter what happens.
  + We have two other CMLE members running for the Member-At-Large position: Cindy Gruwell, Professor/Research Librarian at St. Cloud State University, and Rhonda Huisman, Dean of University Library at St. Cloud State University.
  + It’s great to see CMLE members sharing our experience and skill with the larger library community.

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.