

PCCLD Staff and Stakeholder Retreat Report

2015 STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE
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2015 Retreat

Background

As part of its strategic planning initiative, the Pueblo City-County Library District solicited staff and stakeholder input via two retreats. The retreats were held on Monday, May 4, and Friday, May 8, 2015, in the Ryals Room of the Rawlings Library. Each retreat lasted two hours. The Library had two goals for these retreats: 1) engage staff of all levels of responsibility as well as Library stakeholders in the strategic planning process, and 2) elicit potential avenues for investigation for current and future planning. 62 people, including members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Boards of Directors of the Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation, and staff participated in one of the two retreat sessions.

As part of the retreat, library staff and stakeholders asked themselves, "What is the best experience I've had with the library?" "What will the library look like in 25 years?" "What bold statements can we make about how to build the library we imagine?" These questions were a part of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process that facilitated small groups to co-create the Library of the future and to consider their collective contributions to the creation of that Library.

Participants developed visual images, themes, Provocative Propositions and ideas that described this shared future. The 12 groups produced nearly 20 different propositions, many of which shared imagery, phrases, and intention. Staff and stakeholders also discussed how the Library could begin to become their Library of the future, starting today. Participants documented ideas for innovating the social architecture of this Library by answering, "What would the Library be doing as the Library of the future?"

Methodology

The retreats employed Appreciative Inquiry, a social constructionist model of discussion and planning that begins with a positive core. As described by researcher Gervase Bushe, Appreciative inquiry is based on five principles:

1. What we believe to be true determines what we do.
2. Questions are never neutral, they are fateful, and social systems move in the direction of the questions they most persistently and passionately discuss.
3. Organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored. The words and topics chosen for inquiry have an impact far beyond just the words themselves.
4. What we do today is guided by our image of the future.
5. Momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding.

Appreciative Inquiry has been used by companies, non-profit organizations and universities worldwide. AI is "a model for analysis, decision-making and the creation of strategic change. Appreciative Inquiry attempts to use ways of asking questions and envisioning the future in order to foster positive relationships and build on the present potential of a given person, organization or situation. The most common model utilizes a cycle of four processes, which focus on what it calls:

- *DISCOVER*: The identification of organizational processes that work well.
- *DREAM*: The envisioning of processes that would work well in the future.
- *DESIGN*: Planning and prioritizing processes that would work well.
- *DESTINY* (or *DEPLOY*): The implementation (execution) of the proposed design."^[1]

The agenda for each retreat followed this four-step cycle. Participants were assigned seating next to an individual with whom they did not regularly work or communicate. They spent the first part of the program interviewing that person using the prompt, "What was the best experience you've ever had with the library?" The intention was to evoke stories that illuminate individual and organizational strengths, which participants then recorded on the documents provided. The second section of the retreat focused on sharing the stories within small groups and building Common Ground from the themes. Based on these themes, the groups then drew a visual image of the Library as it might look 25 years into the future. Finally, the groups wrote Provocative Propositions, bold statements of the Library of the future as if it has already happened. Beneath the propositions, the groups detailed ideas for what the Library could begin to do to become that Library of the future.

Results

Retreat participants produced Provocative Propositions, statements about the library of the future as imagined by its stakeholders, as well as visual images, themes, and ideas about co-creating the shared visions.

Themes

As part of the Dream phase of the retreat, participants shared the stories they had recorded during the interviews at the beginning of the program. They documented words and phrases that seemed to be Common Ground, or shared among multiple interviews. Then, the groups wrote Themes that pulled elements from the Common Ground exercise together. The themes they recorded:

- heart
- frontier
- connectivity
- access to information for a diverse group of people
- physical place for everyone to feel welcome and comfortable
- a place to grow and thrive
- equalizing opportunity
- open access to knowledge on both sides
- equal opportunity provider
- foster positive space
- ability to connect a diverse community in an innovative, change- and leadership-driven, inclusive, cooperative environment that fosters positivity and community support.
- Meet public needs by offering a variety of services and materials.
- free access to training
- non-threatening environment to learn
- early literacy tools and programs
- provides possibilities to enhance and improve lives
- place for children to learn, self-directed and free, and to grow
- sanctuary
- progressive -- keeping up with times and what community needs
- helping people into the future
- "more than a building -- it's a feeling"
- community -- supporting community interests/ needs by providing/ offering resources: space to meet, technology, programs, which ultimately connects people
- elements of library's strengths: people -- staff connecting community to resources, resources -- computers, meeting rooms, books, idea factory, classes, story times, InfoZone, etc., locations -- availability to all niches
- Happy employees equal happy customers!
- Libraries as a place to make learning fun, building relationships with no limits
- Spreading our joy of curiosity with the community by making learning fun. Why? Happy people.

Common Ground phrases are listed in Appendix A. Images are included in Appendix B.

Provocative Propositions

Retreat participants produced Provocative Propositions, statements about the library of the future as imagined by its stakeholders. Several groups wrote multiple Provocative Propositions, a total of 19 in all, on the large pads within their small groups:

"The library is a garden -- we nurture the seeds of curiosity and watch our community blossom."

"The library is an apple tree."

"The library is a world of possibilities."

"The library is a common ground for the community as a whole."

"The library is like a wild field of flowers, trees and grasses that are nourished by a life-giving sun that provides for the winds of change for the diverse community of plants, seeds and grasses. The sun provides leadership and direction in which all forms of life grow to serve each other and to support each other in their roles in the community."

"The library is in the clouds."

"The library is the heart of our community."

"The library is a portal to the heart of the community -- its past and its potential."

"The library is like a box of chocolates... you NEVER know what you're going to get!"

"The library is dynamic."

"The library is flexible."

"The library is not afraid of change."

"The library always serves the information poor."

"The library unites the community."

"The library is open opportunities, open knowledge, open to everyone."

"The library is a cultural hub."

"The library is an open book."

"The library is an educational center."

"The library is an empowering place."

Ideas

While the two-hour retreat allowed for time to Discover, Dream and Design per the Appreciative Inquiry four-step process, the agenda was somewhat aggressive. As a result, there were fewer specific ideas than Common Ground phrases or Themes for bridging the current Library experience to that of the future, as described by the Provocative Propositions. However, several common elements from the Design phase did emerge, including the library card, the Library's relationship with the community, and the Library's ongoing growth and development. A full list of Ideas is in Appendix C.

Conclusion

Many of the groups' Common Ground phrases and themes re-occurred at both retreat periods and within multiple small groups. 'Connections' and 'relationships' were predominant terms recorded. Descriptions of the Library as a welcoming, happy place were also popular. Ideas of enhancement, improvement, and growth within Library customers were also frequent within the discussions, as were learning and curiosity, though to a lesser degree. Themes within the visual images included flying books and drone delivery of library materials and services; hearts, both physical and metaphorical; and trees and flowers.

The retreat had two goals: 1) engage staff of all levels of responsibility as well as Library stakeholders in the strategic planning process, and 2) elicit potential avenues for investigation for current and future planning. As described in feedback provided by participants, the experience was a positive one and they signaled that they felt engaged. Participants also indicated that they would have liked more time for large-group iterations of the

Design portion of the retreat as they enjoyed talking with their groups and imagining the future. Based on this feedback and the materials produced, the retreat could be considered to have met the goals stated.

[1]. Bushe, G.R. (2013). [The Appreciative Inquiry Model](#). In Kessler, E. (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Management Theory. Sage Publications.

Appendix A – All Common Ground Phrases

- community
- family
- staff
- desire for connection
- engagement
- explore/ expand/ experiment
- diversity
- discovery
- openness to change
- thirst for learning
- participation (staff, public)
- enthusiasm
- inclusive
- passion
- caring environment
- diversity/ melting pot
- supportive community
- dedicated staff
- acceptance
- creative expression/ freedom
- library as a place
- community center
- access to info/ programs for all
- encouragement
- openness
- cater to individuals
- resources
- community engagement
- caring/ integrity for staff and customers
- service/ commitment for customers and staff
- empowerment for staff and customers
- futuristic
- customer service
- training for employees
- outreach
- positive environment
- relationships - community and staff
- key to knowledge
- literacy
- trust - relationships
- positive experiences
- personal experiences
- serving/ helping community
- community support
- sharing
- connecting
- friendly staff
- access to information
- community collaboration
- new technology
- people will always be here
- responding to change
- people are innovative
- everyone welcome
- helpful
- approachable (open-minded)
- building positive relationships
- assure continuing financial viability
- curiosity
- learning
- opportunity
- challenges
- team-oriented
- computer access and help
- childhood literacy
- relationships
- diversity community support
- inclusiveness
- leadership
- positivity
- services
- innovation
- change
- cooperation
- literacy
- employees
- family
- enjoyable
- possibilities
- importance of reading
- imagination
- diversity
- welcoming
- community
- enthusiasm
- synergy
- participation
- information/ learning/ knowledge
- escape/ dream
- happiness
- diversity
- education
- customer service
- openness
- education
- welcoming environment
- meeting space
- exchange ideas/ thoughts/ hobbies
- fun
- values: positivity, kindness, curiosity, helpfulness
- free and open access
- lifelong learning
- make learning fun

Appendix B – Visual Images of the Library of the Future





The library is a
Common ground for
the community as a whole.

- Plant the seed^{ed} - Community driven
direct programs, spaces, services, information &
???

- Library admin cultivate creative
expression of staff and the community

The Library is

A cultural hub

Like an open book

We reach out

An educational center

An empowering place

- makerspace
- rooms
- programming
- study space
- Always open
- Connected.
- electronic media
- Virtual libraries
- flying book delivery
- apprenticeship
- degrees
- internships
- job placement
- information access
- technology
- expert advice
- Knowledge in community

The Library is...

Open Opportunities

Open Knowledge

Open to Everyone

1. Develop awareness on accessing ever changing information
2. Become a portal to the community with

The library is dynamic.

- The library is flexible.
- Not afraid of change.
- Always serves the information poor.
- The library unites the community.
- Reading is the core.

The library is like a
box of chocolates...
you NEVER know what you're
going to get!

- Free and open access to information
- a leader in community development
- welcoming, friendly place for ALL people to come
- cutting edge technology
- Lifelong learning

The library is like a wild field of flowers, trees and grasses that are nourished by a life-giving sun that provides for the winds of change for the diverse community of plants, seeds and grasses. The sun provides leadership and direction in which all forms of life grow to serve each other and to support each other in their roles in the community.

continually inspiring & growing

Provocative Proposition

The Library is a garden - we nurture the seeds of curiosity and watch our Community blossom.

- Encourage staff to get involved with the community by giving them time ~~away~~ away from their chair.
- Create opportunities to learn & try new things by rewarding curiosity.

The Library IS an Apple Tree

- The seeds plant inspiration to grow. Focus: Equity, Access to Emerging Technologies. Library crisis are integrated technology divides.
- The trunk is rooted in history. All history available in all formats.
- The branches reach for the future. member's gathering place.
- The leaves evolve with the seasons of change.
- The apples feed the hunger for knowledge.
- The shade provides a place to gather!

The library IS a world of possibilities

- Where children learn to love to read, ~~read~~ explore, and imagine. (Infiltrate the schools)
- Is a place for community activity and engagement. (There will be more places)
- Will continue to provide what the community needs and will grow with us
- Will be the solution (Every 6 months asking public, gathering employees and stakeholders for feedback)
- Every child will have a library card.
- Every school in Pueblo County will have a library liaison to provide teaching, resources and technology.

Appendix C – All Ideas under the Provocative Proposals

- re-brand
- create new, effective information sharing strategies
- embed
- plant the seed now -- community-driven direction, programs, spaces, services, information...
- library admin cultivate creative expression of staff and the community
- makerspace, rooms, programming, studio space
- always open, connected
- electronic media, virtual libraries, flying book delivery
- apprenticeships, degrees, internships and job placement
- information access, technology, expert advice, knowledge in community
- develop awareness on accessing ever-changing information
- become a portal to/ with the community
- a leader in community development
- welcoming, friendly place for ALL people to come
- cutting edge technology
- continually improving and growing
- everybody in Pueblo has a library card and with a card comes a stake in the library
- Wi-Fi for everybody
- makerspace that serves - providing technology and services that spark innovation and are cost prohibitive to most.: 3D printers, recording studio, other current technologies
- adapt services and programs to reach the broadest audiences possible
- make employment at the library a world-class job/ career opportunity
- professional development, career planning
- where children learn to love to read, explore, and imagine (infiltrate the schools)
- is a place for community activity and engagement (there will be more places)
- will continue to provide what the community needs and will grow with us
- will be the solution (every 6 months asking public, gathering employees and stakeholders for feedback)
- every child will have a library card
- every school in Pueblo County will have a library liaison to provide teaching, resources and technology
- everyone uses library eResources (ebooks, music, databases, video)
- everyone has a library card/ account, issued at birth!
- the library has a presence everywhere (mobile access, virtual shelves, virtual librarian, drone delivery)
- the library building is a creative, community space (events, classes, making, tools, studying, playing, game systems/ learning games, workshops, kitchens)
- embedded daycare/ preschool
- just hanging out - people coming together to share knowledge and skills
- something is offered to everyone (technology, programs, resources, services, sanctuary, forward thought, global community, continual adaptation)
- community starts within (library is a role model, teamwork/ idea sharing/ collaboration, values, sharing strengths, synergism)
- the seeds plant inspiration to grow: free and equal access to emerging technologies; library cards are integrated technology devices
- the trunk is rooted in history: all history available in all formats
- the branches reach for the future: inventors' gathering place
- the leaves evolve with the seasons of change: working with community leaders
- the apples feed the hunger for knowledge: education institution
- the shade provides a place to gather!
- encourage staff to get involved with the community by giving them time away from their chair
- create opportunities to learn and try new things by rewarding curiosity