

COLAND Summit: Literacy Resources

By Michael Bahr, COLAND member

There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years about the relevancy of libraries. We've heard it over and over again.... "Libraries are a white elephant!" "Everything I need is on the internet." "I get what I need at Barnes and Nobles." or <shudder> "I watch "The View" - why do I need a librarian?"

This issue appears in subtle ways whenever two or more librarians gather. When more than one hundred came together at the 2008 COLAND Strategic Visioning Summit the issue became an underlying context of many of the discussions. COLAND has been busy since the summit expanding on the issues raised identified as important to the future of Wisconsin libraries. One of those issues, twenty first century literacy, was a focus of COLAND activities during 2010. We learned about programs being used by several Wisconsin Librarians to proactively address patron illiteracies, and also learned about tools available for use by any library to assist learners in their quest for improvement...

Literacy number one: Health Literacy

July 9, 2010

Jan Kraus, MLS, Library Manager & Volunteer Community Faculty UW Madison, Dr Joseph F Smith Medical Library, Aspirus Wausau Hospital provided COLAND an overview of the issues surrounding health literacy, which is *"The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic information and services needed to make appropriate decisions regarding their health."* Jan outlined correlation between a patient's NALS level (National Adult Literacy Survey) and their ability to meaningfully participate in discussion about their healthcare. Some surprising statistics:

- 26% of patients did not understand the date of the next appointment.
- 44% did not understand the exact nature of the operation they were about to have.

Jan explained that this issue impacts us all and the correction for it involves communication appropriate for each specific patient. Jan has worked with a group within her hospital system to develop several types of interventions meant to address the issue:

- Developed non-print methods of communication.
- Rolled out several new opportunities for staff / patient interaction such as:
 - Aspirus Medication Mondays
 - Health Literacy Tracers
 - Aspirus Health Literacy Ambassador Program

- Geriatric Health Literacy

Further information on Jan's work and resources can be found at

<http://www.aspirus.org/contactUs/index.cfm?catID=5&subCatID=54&pageID=789> and
<http://aspiruslibrary.org/literacy/literacy.htm>

Literacy number two: Financial Literacy

July 9, 2010

Sandra Melcher, MLS, retired from the Milwaukee Public Library, provided COLAND an overview of AKA Money Camp for Kids. This program is co-sponsored by Upsilon Mu Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and the Milwaukee Public Library, and is a one week-long "camp" at the Washington Park Library, the newest branch of Milwaukee Public Library. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated is 102 years old and has over 260,000 graduate and undergraduate members in the United States, the U. S. Virgin Islands, the continent of Africa, Japan, Korea, and Germany. Milwaukee Public Library was established in 1878 and is the largest public library in the state of Wisconsin. Since 2007, over one hundred youth from twelve to fourteen years of age have participated in the AKA Money Camp for Kids.

Workshops occurred throughout the week to teach the kids about:

- Budgeting
- Banking
- Investing
- Saving
- Money management
- Leadership skills
- Career choices

Youth also had opportunities to participate in an interactive Mad City Money workshop to learn about money management, had several field trips to area banks and businesses, and practiced presentations skills.

Participants who complete the camp were awarded money for starting a savings account or adding to an existing savings account. Successful teams who were selected for their business plan and presentation were awarded additional monies. Feedback from students, parents, presenters and library staff has been positive and supportive for continuing the camp each year. The project is an example of a successful partnership between the public library and a community service organization.

Third Literacy: Adult Reading Literacy

July 9, 2010

Peggy Meyers, Adult Education Director for the Wisconsin Technical College System, provided COLAND with an overview of the STAR adult literacy program available via our Technical Colleges. STAR – Student Achievement in Reading is a federal program meant to address the many adults who read in the 4th to 8th grade level. The program utilizes evidence based learning in a series of learning experiences shared between a certified trainer and individual adult learners seeking to improve their skills. STAR is not a scripted series of lessons or a specific computer program, but is a professional development package meant to assist providers by delivering a framework for student improvement. The framework includes emphasis on strengthening abilities in four key areas:

- Alphabetics
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Trainers are assisted by use of an online toolkit. The majority of technical college campuses have trained instructors and Peggy is hoping to gain awareness of the program in literacy councils, community programs, and libraries.

Fourth Literacy: Student Literacy

May 14, 2010

Certainly, literacy in all its forms is an ongoing concern of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Several professionals from DPI provided COLAND with information on programs and materials available through their department. Donna Steffan provided COLAND with a presentation in May that covered the many literacy resources available through DPI including website links as well as formal printed information developed by, or available through, DPI. Examples of the printed resources include the Information Literacy white paper (developed by LITAC), Standards for the 21st Century Learner from the American Association of School Librarians, and Handouts about the Digital Information Fluency Project from CESA 12.

Also at the May meeting was Marta Bechtol, Director for School Services for the Educational Communication Board (ECB), a Division of Public Broadcasting who provided COLAND with an overview

of the ECB and special programs available through their over-the-air service called VideoLink, which uses an antenna and receiver to download programs information to local computers. The service is provided as a statutory requirement in which public broadcasting must work with DPI to deliver programs to fulfill current student needs. Examples of programming include courses on civics literacy and financial literacy. The full range of programming is available from the “ECB VideoLink” selection on the ECB homepage at www.ecb.org.

The four presentations outlined above represent the work of dedicated professionals in their quest to address literacy issues within Wisconsin. Each illustrates the vision of a small group of people and their personal energy targeted at improving the quality of life of their patrons. If that isn't relevant.... I don't know what is.

The presentation materials for each of these programs is available on the COLAND website at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/coland/>, under the heading “Literacy Presentations” and summaries of the presentation are available within the minutes for the six COLAND meetings of 2010. The information presented on student literacy issues can be found in the May 2010 COLAND meeting minutes.

As always, COLAND is interested in your feedback. Visit <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/coland/members.html> to see if you know any of the current COLAND members and reach out to them. Or feel free to contact me directly at mbahr@prarch.com to share your opinions and questions.