

**TO: Northern Lights Library Network Board of Directors & Executive Director**

**FROM: Cyndi Anderson**

**DATE: May 1, 2007**

**RE: Report/Discussion Summary**

Thank you for the opportunity to work with NLLN on “A Conversation for the Future.” Below you will find a summary of the day’s discussion. This summary should provide valuable input and direction for your upcoming strategic planning.

**Northern Lights Library Network  
“A Conversation for the Future”  
Saturday, April 28, 2007  
The Lodge on Lake Detroit**

**REPORT/DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

NLLN Board Member Attendance: Paul Bursik, Linda Unruh, Joyce Kalbakdalen, Joan Larson, Walt Dunlap, Brook Berg

NLLN Staff Attendance: Ruth Solie, Deb Keena

NLLN Member Attendance: Gay Galles, Peg Werner, Perry Werner, Chris McArthur, Lina Belar

Meeting Facilitator: Cyndi Anderson

Purpose of Meeting: To have a conversation and brainstorm about the future for Northern Lights Library Network. No decisions will be made at this meeting – the work done will inform the board of directors as they do their strategic planning work over the next several months.

Overview: Participants are asked to think about the future through the lens of technology and its impact on libraries and library systems.

Discussion/Focus Areas:

- Communication
- Staff Development
- Resource Sharing
- Advocacy

**Communication:**

Newsletter:

- Determine audience for newsletter
- Focus on a “truly electronic” newsletter with hard copies of newsletter available by request only
- Hard copies may be more accessible and interesting to the casual observer
- Keep an “opt in/opt out” as part of the electronic newsletter
- Have electronic newsletter interactive on web site (better than a PDF)
- Make it printable from the web site.
  
- Content for Newsletter:
  - “What’s Happening” – Events, webinars, professional development, etc.
  - Needs to be timely
  - Provide human interest information
  - Board member/new board member information
  - Professionally oriented market
  - State/regional meetings and conferences listed.

List Serves:

- General NLLN List Serve: is an effective means of communication – it is useful, fast and can reach a large number of people
- North Star Consortium: Useful at the beginning of the school year – would be helpful to let school librarians know at the beginning of the school year “how to contact the list serve”; in the future should work to increase traffic to the list serve.

Web Page:

There was overwhelming consensus that there is value to the NLLN web page. There was discussion about the home page photograph and its different meaning to different people.

Photo Gallery – very nice, has value.

Blog Discussion:

- Well laid out
- Information important to wider audience of libraries
- Self-serve

- Not directed knowledge
- People don't have time for blogs
- Blogs are an evolving form of communication.

#### Membership Database:

- Need a good MAP; click on link for URL's, etc.
- Available on web
- Provide input to the state system; do updated at NLLN
- How to make information available on NLLN website
- Maintain useable database.

#### **Staff Development:**

##### Scholarships:

- Valuable – continue to offer them to members
- Scholarships benefit more types of libraries than most things we do
- Reports posted on web are a valuable feature
- Question: Should there be match dollars?
- Look at ways in which to make the fund self-sustaining
- In the future may need to develop criteria for evaluating requests if they exceed the resources that are available.
- Should anticipate that FY08 may see very high demand for scholarships and plan in advance for a way to handle them.

##### OPAL Web Conferencing Software:

Cost to NLLN is \$500 per year with a capacity of a 25-seat room at any one time.  
Available 24-hours a day.

The group expressed strong interest in pursuing this avenue of communication and sharing the details with member libraries and library systems.

##### Specialized Topics/Specialized Staff:

- There is a role for NLLN to provide staff development on new technology and issues
- There are always going to be issues and topics on which to provide staff development training, even if already done in the past, as the staff continues to change at various sites
- Regionally – need to help schools access programs via NW-LINKS and the MN Learning Network that are available nationally (example presented: watching an autopsy)

- Need to provide education to principals and superintendents about scholarships which are available and the importance of school libraries. This issue was also referred to the area of advocacy
- A goal for NLLN should be to handle specialized topics as they emerge
- NLLN is encouraged to plan with regional systems in advance to reduce duplication of topic presentation or conflicting presentation times.

### **Resource Sharing:**

- Delivery: Need to subsidize delivery of materials to schools from regional library systems if at all possible/available
- Is the policy of giving library cards to schools available to all school libraries? The goal for NLLN should be to facilitate the discussion
- North Star Consortium – there is confusion with respect to the role of the Consortium

### **Next Level Discussion Topics for North Star Library Consortium (NSLC):**

- NSLC as a MnLINK Gateway discussion (years in the future)
- Try to find a mechanism for all 89 school districts/211 schools – do we want to expand or keep it how it is?
- Statewide users group for Destiny
- Can other libraries join the Destiny project and pay on their own?
- ? Another Region – to share the model.

### **Tribal Library Services:**

There are three Reservations in NLLN with very different and inadequate library services. What is role of NLLN on each Reservation?

- LARL Link sites – review how it was done in less populated areas
- Train the Trainer of a current Reservation Library person may be a good strategy
- Look at other Tribal models that exist in other areas of Minnesota and/or other states.

### **CAT Express:**

This is important – cannot eliminate it as a budget line item.

### **Advocacy:**

- With current level of state support for school libraries, need Ruth to be there and bring back information – Ruth needs to be able to attend lots of these meetings at the state/regional level
- Ruth should continue to participate and focus on groups that bring a rural perspective
- Ruth and the lobbyist are a good team – they are knowledgeable and can articulate the mission and needs wonderfully well
- Ruth is critical to this process.

NOTE: Direct advocacy on behalf of individual libraries is not seen as a role for NLLN or for Ruth, specifically.

### **Summary:**

As the conversation for the day begin to close, participants were reminded that NLLN has a staff of 1.75 FTE and a tremendous amount of work to be done. Participants were asked to prioritize where they felt limited resources could best be utilized in doing the future work of NLLN. Participants categorized the broad topics of:

- #1 Priority Area – Receiving 7-1/3 Votes: Staff Development
- #2 Priority Area – Receiving 6-2/3 Votes: Advocacy
- #3 Priority Area – Receiving 5-2/3 Votes: Communication
- #4 Priority Area – Receiving 2-1/2 Votes: Resource Sharing

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to facilitate this lively and enlightening discussion.

*Cyndi Anderson*  
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