

MPL Board – Spelman Presentation Summary
1-4-19

The service philosophy that I embrace with respect to adult services is informed by the Aspen Institute and by Harwood and focuses on turning outward to find out what is important to our various communities and to try to address those needs based on conversations and community engagement. Our role shifts from expert to listener and we leverage our resources to support meaningful initiatives or change that are driven by the communities we serve, with special emphasis on vulnerable communities. One feature of the Central Library is that we have more staffing capacity which helps in developing a coordinated response across several locations which could be neighborhood libraries or external organizations. An initial example of this approach was the Library Takeover project, which this year is focused on building a toolkit to share with other institutions, rather than on a new cohort of participants. Two examples of new projects in this spirit are the Living History Project and Coop 101.

Madison Living History Project

staff contact: Laura Damon-Moore/Michael Spelman

The Madison Living History Project is a place to share stories and images related to Madison's history. These are snapshots of Madison neighborhoods, places, people, and events conveyed through conversations with and stories from community members. The Living History Project is made possible with support from the Madison Public Library Foundation and Marvin J. Levy.

The goals of this project are to:

1. Create an accessible digital platform where community members can share family and neighborhood history
2. Help to digitally preserve individuals' and neighborhoods' historical artifacts*
3. Educate community members about preserving their own historical artifacts

*The focus of goal #2 is on individuals and neighborhoods that are historically underrepresented in the conventional local history narrative of Madison.

Impact

To date, seven interviews featuring a total of eleven participants have been published on the Living History Project website, with more on the way. Currently there are 10 neighborhood associations and institutions that have expressed interest in getting a community history project under way with their neighbors, classmates, and colleagues. Two workshops on preserving family history documents and artifacts took place in the Fall of 2018, and there are plans to assemble five Living History Kits to allow community members more time and equipment to dedicate to their own local history projects. The Living History Project was also at the Municipal event at the MMB in December where we gathered stories related to the rich variety of experiences that occur there.

The website for the project is here: <https://www.madisonlivinghistory.org/>

It feeds into the Recollection Wisconsin portal, which is a part of the Digital Public Library of America. This way the histories we gather are broadly available to interested parties and researchers regardless of geographic location.

Coop 101

staff contact: Martin Alvarado

Coop 101 is a workshop MPL hosts in partnership with the Madison Cooperative Development Coalition (MCDC) which held its first public outreach talk to inform members of the public about cooperative business values, opportunities for technical support, and micro grants for those interested in starting a worker cooperative. (MCDC) is an initiative funded by the City of Madison to form worker cooperatives that address income inequality and racial disparities by creating living-wage and union jobs.

We had a well-attended first session at the Central Library, with the next sessions happening on January 9 and February 15. These sessions are informing the public as well as staff from business-development community organizations and helping build a cohort for classes on different aspects of cooperative business.

This program is designed to help provide equitable entrepreneurship opportunities for underrepresented groups. A worker cooperative differs from a traditional business in that a) it has a social orientation and responsibility to the community, b) provides a model for prospective members of limited resources to leverage access to support that would be difficult for an individual to gain, c) targets sectors of the economy that tend to be low-wage to provide higher incomes, d) as it is community-oriented it has the potential to stabilize neighborhoods by providing stable employment.

One initial success is that we hope to soon announce the incorporation of a health services coop led by women of color, where the library was instrumental in providing the link to this opportunity, starting with the relationship developed by a GSMB Librarian who referred the person to the Central Library. At the Central Library she had an orientation about the cooperative model, available library resources, and a referral to MCDC, who have been working with her team to launch the business. We hope that the Coop 101 series can help cast a wider net to connect more people with these opportunities through the library as a trusted community partner.

In addition to classes, we are continuing to develop the library's collection on the cooperative business model to serve as a resource to cooperative entrepreneurs and developers. We are in the preliminary stages of working with the Northside Planning Council to begin outreach in that area, taking advantage of the Lakeview Library's status as a community hub, which speaks to the central library's role in helping to coordinate services across locations and potentially elevate our response. We are also hoping to have an informational fair showcasing different coop development organizations and coop businesses.