

## Turning Outward – WLA presentation

**Slide One** – Good afternoon! I am Carey Hartmann, Director at Laramie County Library System. Thanks to a McMurry Grants to Individuals, I was able to attend the week-long Harwood Institute’s Public Innovator’s Lab for Libraries in October of 2018. Here is how they promote the experience –

The Harwood Public Innovators Lab, developed and tested over the last 30 years, is built to help you and your organization learn what it takes to Turn Outward – to use the community, not your conference room, as your reference point for choices and action.

In tandem with the Libraries Transform initiative, Harwood has partnered with the American Library Association and has found a marriage made in heaven. I quote from their website –

“The Harwood Institute is working side by side with libraries and is demonstrating results with libraries of all sizes—from large urban systems to suburban libraries to small town and rural libraries with few staff. Our work with libraries is our fastest spreading work in our 30 years. Over just the last few years, our team of Harwood Certified Coaches has trained over 4,000 library professionals to bridge divides by cultivating shared values and strengthening civic culture; helping them become recognized as local leaders who are relevant to the sustainability of community life. These changes have led to increased funding, more recognition, and greater relevance for the library, while also developing stronger, healthier, and safer communities.

**Slide Two** – Today we will explore what Turning Outward means, how to deepen our intentionality, how we ensure we understand the aspirations of the people we serve and how Authority, Authenticity and Accountability are the foundations of our success. Our time together will include several exercises where you interact with other participants. Our first exercise is a brief Turning Outward Quiz to see where you are at the start of your learning. The quiz relates to where you are and not your organization. This is totally for your self-knowledge, so sharing it totally up to you. Everybody done? Great. As I review each opposite expressed on the quiz, you may want to take notes to more fully express your thoughts and experiences relating to your understanding. These notes may help in exercises we will do later in the session.

**Slide Three** –

We all must turn inward and outward in our lives. The things considered inward are not bad in themselves and most are necessary for any organization to function well. Turning outward just ensures the activities of an organization meet the needs of your community at large.

- Activity is doing something; Action is doing the right thing.
- A focus on programs is a focus on our activities and how we execute them with an end that the people we service feel good about them. A focus on people is thinking first about the people whose lives we want to impact and making sure their experiences drive what services and programs we provide.
- My Organization is obviously an inward focus and we have to ensure we have efficiencies. The community is outward in that we wish to see what the community finds important which ensures we are effective.
- The people as consumers is looking for what “thing” do they “want” – a focus almost on just transactions – something it is easy for a library to collect data on. People as citizens is looking to be relevant to those we serve on a human level – thus a focus of forming relations.

- Process, how we do things, is inward. We need processes, but stopping there is not enough. Ensuring process adds up to progress, or positive change that our community wants, has an outward intention.
- Outreach is more transaction driven and delivery intent – what we do – again, this is important. Engagement goes back to that human level and forming relationships – how we connect instead of just “what we do”.
- Public Relations has a spin element – selling our positives to the people (and we have lots of positives). People’s Reality means the most important thing we can do is reflect the reality of people’s lives so that they know they are heard and then we can show how our work connects to their reality.
- Inputs are another way to stay focused on the tasks as they relate to a larger effort. Necessary for any organization, but limiting if you stop there. Impact focuses what we are doing to improve lives and our community. This consists of tasks, but includes regular checking to make sure the tasks add up to improvement and are making a difference.
- Claiming Turf means we want to “own” the results of our efforts. We should be proud of what we accomplish, but not in a manner that blocks progress that can happen when we work with others to accomplish something. Coming Together means we want to focus on finding common needs, ensures we are working with and not against others with similar goals, and seeks results to improve lives before thinking about who is getting the credit
- Feeling Good may lead to not wanting to rock the boat and to base our measures only on how well people enjoyed a program. Doing Good usually means making hard choices to do what’s right and accepting that not everyone is going to like the change our “right work” may bring. We aren’t always going to make everyone happy doing good.

Do you have any questions before we move on to an exercise. Now that we’ve looked a bit closer at what turning outward means we will do a short focusing exercise on turning outward. Follow the instructions on the handouts to see where you are already turned outward and some ideas on where you may find more opportunities to do so. The document attached to the worksheet Turning Outward Across Key Functions may be helpful. In thinking about what you may need to do differently to accomplish this, the steps you may want to take should be small and accomplishable. Changing your perspective may be as hard as getting to the top of mountain for a new view or as simple as turning your chair around. Both actions require a first step of standing up and being intentional. Take ten minutes to work through these exercises and turn to someone next to you to share your first step.

#### **Slide four**

Thank you. What were some of the “aha” moments you’ve had so far relating to turning outward? Good. Learning to turn outwards is a process – a way of viewing the world – a way of connecting. You choose to take time to see & hear – open your eyes in a way you may not have in several years; do the work to walk in others shoes; check in with others in the community to see if your services and programs are pertinent; work on community relationships. All of this leads to working to understand the aspirations your community has for itself.

#### **Slide five**

Do you understand the aspirations that governmental entities, community groups and everyday citizens have for their community? Getting to a place where you are in tune to the heartbeat, indicators of change, and indicators of deadlock in your community can take work. The best place

to get to this understanding is with the people of your community. Listening to them will ensure you know what hopes and dreams are realized and what hopes and dreams are being dashed. You will see patterns and gain knowledge you can't get from experts. Most of us build our knowledge and wisdom through learning that relies on experts. This is important and necessary to master anything in your area of expertise. What you are looking to build in turning outward is knowledge and wisdom that comes from the public. They are closest to the reality of how policies and actions taken or not taken by leaders impacts those living in your community. They experience first-hand how silos of expertise can mean communication break downs, duplication or lack of service and misunderstandings about need. The first step is to choose to attend public meetings on things that don't appear to be related to your work at the library. Attending a county commissioners meeting or town council meetings. Sitting in on a school board meeting. Making sure you are at the county fair or farmer's market to hear what is being said by citizens is important. Hosting meetings in your library on issues in your community so the people have a safe place to express their views. All of these are ways to gain public knowledge.

#### **Slide six**

I am going to use building the library in Cheyenne as a good and bad example of how we did or didn't use public knowledge. What we did right came totally from seeking public knowledge. Staff reviewed designs for ease of use and efficient work processes (even shelvers helped us ensure cart flow). Since opened the library in 2007, all employees have completed an exit interview if they resign. One thing we ask everyone who resigns is "what do we need to change physically to improve working condition?" We regularly hear that the Café doesn't have enough space, but every other exiting employee has said "nothing". We got great functionality for staff by seeking their input. The public had input into what site was chosen (56 sites were reviewed) and meetings let them express their concerns. We heard their concerns in their words first hand at 28 meetings. We brought in a variety of seating to be used at tables and let the public vote on what was most comfortable. We had 20+ focus groups (4 year olds, business people, and senior citizens) that came up with three top things they wanted in their library - more meeting rooms, a café and a quiet place to read.

#### **Slide seven**

When the building opened, the community felt it was theirs. Those who had been against it came in and apologized for not voting for it. What we did wrong, however, is huge and mostly unfixable. We had the experts - architects, contractors and library building experts. They had all built libraries before. We had a citizen facility advisory council as well as the library board, library administration and library employees taking a look at everything. We did not have a person with a disability represented. We did not take advantage of the Mayor's Council on Disabilities to review our plans. We made a huge error that is not correctable without exorbitant cost. Our handicapped parking is too far away from either entrance.

#### **Slide eight**

The east side has a sloped entry,

#### **Slide nine**

but people with disabilities have to go clear to the corner to access it – even in horrible weather.

#### **Slide ten**

The west entrance is too far away from all parking and has a steep incline

### **Slide eleven**

Or has stairs where there is closer parking – both are very difficult for people with breathing or heart issues. Seeking public knowledge may have prevented this error.

### **Slide twelve**

Understanding the aspirations of your community and building public knowledge takes the development of some skills and attitudes. Through years of research and practical application, Harwood has developed some key elements necessary for someone to be successful in turning outward. Authority, Authenticity, Accountability - Develop these and turning outward is second nature. We are going to take these one at a time and do some group work on them. So find a partner. All set?

### **Slide thirteen – authority**

Harwood defines authority in this manner:

Authority

- Hold a deep knowledge of my community
- Know people –their lives, their hopes & desires
- Actively apply that knowledge in my community

I found this somewhat difficult to wrap my head around. He is taking our concept of “being expert” as authority and turning it around to say that “being steeped in public knowledge” creates authority. I like this. I like that the time I take to know people in my community, understand other peoples’ lives and dreams is what I need to be able to do my part to move my community forward.

### **Slide fourteen**

Think about this statement. In the next five minutes create the first step you need to take to increase your authority. Remember, when you get back to your libraries, this is a process. Be persistent, but be patient with yourself. You may find it easier to apply some of these to your personal life first. For introverts who may find getting to know people not an easy task, setting yourself a goal when you are in a networking situation can be helpful. “I am going to talk to two people today who are farmers and ask them about how they use technology in their work.” “I am going to talk to two moms at the library and ask them if they have heard anything about housing issues in our community.” (Back together – Anything you would like to share?) Thank you for engaging with each other on this. Connecting to the authority in another – to the things they know most deeply and intently - is a great way to learn and develop your own authority.

### **Slide fifteen – authenticity**

Harwood definition of authenticity is not too different from how we would normally use this word. However, in turning outward, it ensures we focus on others and not ourselves. To be authentic we need to bring it back to how we are reacting inwardly and acting outwardly. Authenticity is how we start, build and retain healthy relationships. Active listening, working to see and then overcome our biases, seeing every person as a human that deserves respect just because they are another human like us. These relationships are ones we are developing in our public life, so that is different than how relationships may work in our private life. Communities work differently than organizations and if you have been turning inward and feel comfortable working in your institution, this may take some getting used to. There is a lot more chaos in forming relationships in community and our public life. “Who’s in charge” is not always who makes things happen and who makes things happen is not always doing it in a sustainable way.

## Authenticity

- Reflect the reality of people's lives in what we say and do – example, homeless people or people experiencing homelessness – if you were homeless, which would you prefer?
- See and treat people as citizens (member of a large community) rather than only as consumers (patrons, donors or members)
- Deeply listen to the community in an on-going way

## Slide sixteen

Think about this statement. In the next five minutes create the first step you need to take to deepen your authenticity. (Back together – anything you would like to share?) Authenticity requires that you know yourself. If you haven't taken a Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory or another professional personality or preference test (sorry, what Disney princess you are doesn't count), go online to take one or do it as a group with those you work with as a way to understand yourself in the context of how you and others prefer to work. Being true to yourself is key, but being respectful and open to others is just as important.

## Slide seventeen – accountability

Harwood looks at accountability in that the buck always stops at you. Living the kind of accountability that turning outward requires means it is never "someone else's job". You learn to see what you are able to contribute, honestly evaluate your time commitments, and do what needs to be done in a realistic way. No superman complexes here – just a human living up to a standard.

### Accountability

- Set realistic expectations about potential impact of the work and promises made to people in the community
- Pursue actions that are meaningful to people – avoid window dressing
- Build on what came before, and create a foundation for what might follow

## Slide eighteen

Think about this statement. In the next five minutes create the first step you need to take to strengthen your accountability. Make sure your word means something. Build a reputation of being a person who delivers on promises. Put to work your research in networking to gain authority and make decisions or take actions based on the public knowledge you are gaining and honest self-knowledge. What your community wants may not always align with your needs or desires, but what you can give must always be attainable from your resources or those of your partners. (Back together – anything you would like to share?) So, we've done great work on understanding authority, authenticity and accountability. Thank you!

## Slide nineteen

Sometimes just changing your mental model is helpful in making a change in perspective. Many of us have had training or experience in being advocates. ALA has entire training programs on advocacy and there are even specific trainings for the difference of advocating as a school librarian, public librarian or academic librarian. Advocacy is important work, yet turning outward grows your ability to be an activist. Walking with others in your community to reach a common goal. Knowing your community well enough to see where there are common goals. Utilizing richly developed relationships as a way for you and your partners to have a positive impact on your

community. “With” is such a powerful word. It conjures up many true old phrases “strength in numbers” “stronger together” “teamwork”. Turning outward means being active in your community as a partner-leader.

### **Slide twenty**

To embed turning outward in yourself and your organization, you must become **more intentional** in the choices that shape your actions. Take ownership of your judgement. Take ownership of your choices. Find your own sense of purpose. Find your own course of engagement. **Seek a path of possibility and hope.** Be authentically engaged. Especially for us who have lived in our communities a long time, **we need to consciously be attentive to our surroundings**, who are we **now** as a community, what do we want to become, and what kind of change do we seek. This ties into wakefulness – **Be present.** Open your eyes; open your hearts; be willing to hear; be ready to engage. Take a look at where you are in terms of **moral accountability.** Recognize the power of negativity or positivity to impact people. Think about how small efforts have a ripple effect. Be actors and not spectators, shapers not bystanders, builders not complainers.

### **Slide twentyone**

Today we explored a method to change your perspective, to turn from an inward focus on your organization or the area where you work in your library to turning outward. Turning outward places your focus on the aspirations of your community and learning to listen to understand. To grow in the depth of your public knowledge. Deeper connections come from doing the work of having authority, authenticity and accountability. Turning outward seeks a deeper look at shared values and goals and what we can accomplish together. Shared work to reach a common goal. Shared work to exponentially increase the positive impact you and your partners can have on your community. It was a pleasure working with you today.

### **Slide twentytwo**

Questions