

Twelve vision statements came out of the Future Search Conference held in July 2009. To keep the vision alive and developing, the Regional Library Systems are highlighting the visions in their newsletters with the purpose of encouraging continued discussion among librarians, library staff, boards and their communities.

Vision statement:

Libraries embrace the richness of a global community

From the Library Bill of Rights: V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

The American Library Association (ALA) stresses the importance of both access to information and equity of access.

Libraries are major sources of information for society and they serve as guardians of the public's access to information more generally. The advent of the digital world has revolutionized how the public obtains its information and how libraries provide it. Libraries help ensure that Americans can access the information they need – regardless of age, education, ethnicity, language, income, physical limitations or geographic barriers – as the digital world continues to evolve. Core values of the library community such as equal access to information, intellectual freedom, and the objective stewardship and provision of information must be preserved and strengthened in the evolving digital world.

Equity of access means that all people have the information they need-regardless of age, education, ethnicity, language, income, physical limitations or geographic barriers. It means they are able to obtain information in a variety of formats-electronic, as well as print. It also means they are free to exercise their right to know without fear of censorship or reprisal.

www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/access/accesstoinformation/index.cfm

Regardless of the ethnic breakdown in your community, access and communication happen on a global basis, in school, at home, or wherever our wireless takes us, on the internet via email, facebook, chess or canasta playing or other gaming sites, etc. We are no longer living life just within our living room, or neighborhood, or city – our reach often on a daily basis extends outside. Are we meeting the needs of the diverse population that has become Nebraska?

- ♦ Do a community analysis. Look at the census data for your community. www.census.gov will allow you to look at the current and projected statistics for your community. Look at the school data <http://reportcard.nde.state.ne.us/Main/Home.aspx> Do a needs assessment by handing out a questionnaire or sending one home with the electric bill. Know your community and what materials and access to information users need. Then do what you can to provide materials and services in their language, at their reading levels, on your website, wherever you can.

Become observant.

- ♦ New language programs are being developed and marketed to libraries. These programs are very user friendly and something to consider purchasing for your users if this is a need in your community. One company who offers a quality product is called Mango. You can try it for free. It offers training in 12 languages and plans to rapidly expand. www.mangolanguages.com/

Become outward focused.

- ♦ Do you offer programming in the language or utilize the diverse culture of the population in your community? Celebrate the holidays of the cultures in your community. Don't be afraid to ask about traditions, what the group would like the library to offer. Use members of different groups to offer the programs, display objects from their home country, or any other event that allows you to work together.

Become collaborators.

- At NLA/NEMA several years ago, Mary Pipher, Nebraska author, spoke about the importance of libraries for people new to the United States and new to Nebraska. Her book, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community*, is a great primer in providing services to individuals new to the U.S. Ask what other information is important when moving to a community, especially if you aren't a native English speaker. Get Nebraska maps and driver's license books to give to your patrons. You can print off the driver's license books at: www.dmv.ne.gov/examining/index.html or you can download the audio at the same site. Nebraska guides and maps are available at: www.visitnebraska.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=206&Itemid=313 or call 877-NEBRASKA.

Become the welcoming place.

- ♦ Some computers allow the user to change to the language of their choice. Google has a translation program: <http://translate.google.com/?hl=en#>. Let the user change the language, let the user send e-mail, and don't block places that allow connections to family, to culture, to important services for one's life.

Become indispensable.

Questions to consider:

Do you know the make-up of your community? Are you providing services to all people regardless of language or ethnicity?

Is the library one of the first places people new to the community come for information and services regardless of their nationality or language?

Do you offer programming that is appealing to different segments of your community throughout the year?

Is it possible to collaborate with diverse members of your community to offer experiences which celebrate all cultures and experiences?

Do you provide access to computers and on-line information in multiple languages?

-Sherry Houston, Republican Valley Library System Administrator

Please feel free to share your comments and feedback from these discussions and exercises. Nebraska Regional Library Systems will be posting bi-monthly discussions on system email lists, newsletters, and websites. There is a Nebraska Libraries Future Search wiki hosted by NLC where we can post discussion information and feedback: www.nlc.state.ne.us/wikis/fs/Whats%20Next.ashx