**Library Volunteer Leaders - Notes**

**3-9-22 1:30 EST**

Host: Wendy Johnson, Indianapolis Public Library, wjohnson@indypl.org

Meetings will be held every Wednesday at 1:30 EST for an hour until further notice. We’ll use the same Zoom link each week. Please share the link with fellow library volunteer leaders. All are welcome.

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85199850785?pwd=WHorb3h2ckgvZjhZT1BOVWxEMzhlZz09>

Meeting ID: 851 9985 0785

Access Code: Volunteer

# **Topics Discussed**

**Mobile Tech Lab (Jessica L.)**

Does anyone have a mobile tech lab unit? Here’s the blurb about ours: “Instead of a traditional bookmobile, the Cedar Rapids Public Library’s new van is fully loaded with all kinds of technology, from laptops to 3D printers to Ozobots.” I’m wondering if anyone utilizes volunteers to assist with these. If so, how? I’m also wondering if anyone has standard operating procedures for their mobile tech lab. We have a Vista developing procedures and protocols.

* Example
  + Van with 20 laptops
  + It’s used for programming
  + Managed by staff (no volunteers)
  + Summer staff preference is for teachers on summer break
* Mobile lab is parked at employment fairs to polish resumes, obtain references, help with job search preparation
* Future – combo bookmobile/tech lab – no policies/procedures at this time
* Most would love volunteers to help, but liability/insurance prevents a volunteer from riding in the van. Volunteers are turned-off by the request to “meet us at the fair/festival/etc.”
* Our outreach van can only carry two people (driver and one other person) because it is SO packed with stuff there are only two seats. Because of that, our volunteers are told they have to meet the van at the venue. With the pandemic, it's been easy to explain that away....since outreach relies on the Teens pretty much exclusively, so far it hasn't been too much of an issue. But we'll see how that plays out this year....

**Staff & Volunteers: tips, not tricks**

What has worked (or not) when encouraging staff to embrace volunteers in their day-to-day workflow?

* Watch the words we use.
  + “Your volunteers” [volunteer resources] vs “My volunteers” [staff] vs “Our volunteers” [organization]
  + “Use volunteers” volunteers are not a thing to be used and tossed aside. We “engage volunteers”.
    - From Liza: Having trouble finding the recording of my conference talk about "using" volunteers, but here are the slides: <https://www.slideshare.net/lizajdyer/15-ntc-ignite-liza-j-dyer-45573328>
    - And the blog from Rob Jackson that inspired my talk: <http://robjacksonconsulting.blogspot.com/2011/12/volunteers-stationery-supplies-and.html>
  + What if the library belonged to the community (including volunteers, patrons, etc.) instead of volunteers belonging to the library?
  + Here's another article about language in volunteer engagement: <https://engagejournal.org/WordsWeNeedToStopSaying>
* Staff Day presentation about volunteers in the library: history, mission, community needs, teen service hours. This was well received and brought positive attention to volunteer engagement.
* Volunteer coordinators: get to know them. Have they volunteered? Why? Use this to set the context for the volunteers they will lead.
* Volunteers are community advocates
* We’re on the same team. Volunteers are not a program, volunteers are an integral part of the culture
* Be aware of staff rules that should also apply to volunteers: i.e. dress code, use of earbuds
  + Can staff wear earbuds/be on their phones in public spaces? If not, then you can say the same rule applies to volunteers. If they are in a staff-only space, that might be a different story.
  + Put that [no earbuds] in writing or your orientation! I've found it works to reference their safety, public perception, and why they want to volunteer in the first place. I often mention "You shared some really great reasons about why you wanted to volunteer here during our interview. None of those were about being on your phone. And being on your phone will be a barrier to you accomplishing those things."
  + I think it depends on the type of service. For instance, Bookstore and Computer Lab Assistant volunteers shouldn't wear them, but those who work in Archives and Book Mending are welcome to wear them.
  + I think staff/volunteers can only wear earbuds in non-public spaces (several agreed with this)
* Offer lots of kudos publicly when staff engages with volunteers in a positive way.
  + Marcia even sends candy when a staff member refers to the volunteers in their department as “my volunteers” [taking ownership].
  + OR I have a staff member who refers to volunteers as "her volunteers." We have to remind her that they are library volunteers, not hers.
* For us, we've found the greatest success with the staff just spending time with them, learning about them, getting to know them on a personal level - quality time.
* Our biggest challenge normally with the staff has been with teen volunteers. Staff feels like they don't really want to engage and they're always on their phones or have earbuds/earphones..
* Upper management support is essential for success
* When I first came, I did a couple of training sessions on “Succeeding with Volunteers” for all staff. I now have it on the staff onboarding Niche academy and will be transitioning it to the Learn platform we're moving to.
* It also helps that I have a very firm line in the sand of how much "training" and oversight, beyond volunteer orientation I'll do. Most have figured out that I'm serious when I tell them taking care of the day-to-day is their job.

**Court-ordered volunteers (Leslie G.)**

Does anyone accept them? In a time of inclusivity, diversity, and equity awareness, should we welcome these possible volunteers? Some staff at Sacramento have told me that these volunteers are not accepted because of concern for staff safety. However, we recently revamped our internship program to include paid and re-entry folx, so this reason may no longer be applicable.

* Yes. Have to get service hours so the volunteers were motivated to stay. Still had to fire a couple, which got staff’s respect. Didn’t disclose to staff who was court-ordered. Followed screening protocol of state (Pennsylvania). Many stayed after hours were completed.
* No. Always connect to another organization that does accept court-ordered. Provide a list of options for staff to have as a reference.
* We have so few short-term volunteer opportunities that it’s hard to place court-ordered folks who need a lot of hours.
* Yes. Clearly tell them this is a dusting/cleaning job. Dust all shelves (a branch map is provided), wash CD/DVD jackets and board books, landscape weeding & trash pickup, remove stickers (goo-gone), etc.
* Could offer take-home projects – trust then to track hours or set up a “project = hours” arrangement.
* Be aware some courts require the hours to be done in the county of offense. Be sure to ask the volunteer!
* Yes. Pending the background check results
* I have to say I have a personal bias against the Court ordered from past experience but am slowly making my peace with it. Since we're a library that highly values patron privacy, I wouldn't be sharing they were court-ordered anyway. They'll have to have a background check and anyone with red flags (assault, theft, etc) would be flagged and I can deny them.
* We allow court-mandated service workers but only for certain offenses (no offenses against people or property). We do the same background check for them as we do for staff. They are placed in our Facilities Department. Some are better than others but overall my experience has been good. I know that a while back a community service worker did become a staff member
* Virtual opportunities: <https://www.zooniverse.org/>

**Staff as Volunteers**

* A High School aged staff member can volunteer for school credit. Teen advisory or other tasks.
* Staff can volunteer, but not for anything that relates to job tasks. For example, Liza the volunteer-guru volunteered to help with a Knitting Program.
* Staff have to sign paperwork with HR and have direct supervisor’s approval
* Volunteer Time Off (VTO) – staff volunteering outside of the library on paid work time. The city offers 16 hours of VTO. Staff can only select from an approved list.
* Our city has paid staff to volunteer post-natural disasters.

**What’s on your plate?**

* Onboarding 3 Summer Vistas – they’ll train volunteers for the Summer Reading Program tables, and do lots of outreach by going to fairs & festivals
* Summer Reading Program
* Seed Library – repackaging seeds
* Exploring Virtual Volunteering
* “Lunch at the Library” this summer
* Engaging teen volunteers
* Little Free Stick Library – a box of sticks for doggies sponsored by the library
* Vaccination Verifications
* Presenting to the Board next week
* Developing portions of our Holds Hunter training for Niche Academy
* Summer reading, our Collaboratory (Maker Space) has reopened, volunteers being trained as maker mentors again. In process of ordering the volunteer tee shirts/aprons and upgraded badges.
* Working on monthly outreach to Meals on Wheels, Food Pantry and Sr. Plaza folks.
* Starting a volunteer leaders program and working on a new volunteer coordinator handbook because I am embarrassed to admit that we do not have one
* Our diversity and inclusion apprentice program is currently interviewing for 12 paid interns

## **Training Opportunities**

* Visit [GetInvolved ClearingHouse](https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/) for FREE volunteer leadership-focused training (and resources, too)!
* Building Back Better: Assessing Needs & Identifying New Opportunities with Beth Steinhorn, March 17. Free! Register here:<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/666021892123506703>
* I just don’t have time: Prioritize your way to productivity with Becky Lunders, March 31. Free! Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3735565886781018383>
* Social Media and Volunteer Engagement with Jennifer Bennett, April 14. Free! Register here:<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4516859057848416016>
* Pushing Back on Privilege in Volunteerism with Sue Carter Kahl, May 12. Free! Register here:<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/950485341438249229>
* Understanding the Multi-Gen Mix with Faiza Venzant, May 26. Free! Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/956562342205268748>

## **On-going Educational Resources (just a few)**

* Volgistics National Peer Group – online – 2nd Tuesday of the month – free!
  + FMI contact Jessica Link, [linkj@crlibrary.org](mailto:linkj@crlibrary.org).
* Better Impact User Group – online – 1st Tuesday of every other month – free!
  + April 5, and June 7, 2022, 2p EST/11a PST<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86131303138?pwd=RlBWN2U4SWpZZEdXNEhOem9uTUZJdz09>
  + Meeting ID: 861 3130 3138
  + Passcode: 240307
* Join the GetInvolved listserve by emailing Carla, [at clehn@califa.org](mailto:clehn@califa.org). Fabulous resource with samples, weekly news & updates.<https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/>
* VolunteerMatch. Free sessions (and recordings) on many of the topics we discuss in this group: <https://learn.volunteermatch.org/>

## **Future Topics**

* How to deeply establish library values across the system (especially volunteers)
* Impact vs. Output (possible guest speaker)
* Burnout: How to put out the fire. (Marcia will present! Yea!)
* Volunteer Orientation/Training: formats (in-person/virtual), content, do you train all “jobs” or hand off to a staff member, etc.
* Opportunities without onboarding barriers? Pop-up volunteering, Informal Volunteering
* Our leadership role, what new things are we doing? Resources to share? (encore)