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III. Centennial Strategic Plan Approved: What Now?

At its regular monthly meeting on May 24, the Board of Directors of the Murrysville Community Library Foundation unanimously approved a Centennial Strategic Plan 2022-23. The “trunks and branches” of it are described in a mid-April The Magic Library Card! article (archived at <https://www.murrysvillelibrary.org>).

The sense of the Plan is that in this, the centennial year of the Murrysville Community Library, the Foundation Board recognizes two things: (1) since 1922, Libraries have changed in ways unimagined, especially in that they are now both paper and electronic-based, and catalogued entirely electronically with Integrated Library Systems; (2) that nothing will be as it is now 100 years into the future, maybe not even 5-10 years on. Corporations, for-profit and non-profit, do not survive if they do not anticipate as change comes.

The Board is trying to anticipate. And that is the crux of the Centennial Strategic Plan, to anticipate, with your help. It is only one year long purposefully, to force a conversation on which basis a longer Plan may be written, perhaps of three years length.

The root of the Plan lies in one teaching from the National Science Foundation, specifically from a grant project that is called I-CORPS L. “I” is for innovation, and “L” is for learning. One of the things that three-person I-CORPS L teams learn is to do efficient interviews of stakeholders: to usefully gather information to guide commercialization of a particular idea in education. The exercise is meant to foster entrepreneurship among education professionals, who are not usually inclined to such an overtly product-driven act.

The stakeholder interviewee questions in our case are along these lines:

Are you a Library user or staff member, and, if so, what changes over the last 20 years do you recognize and value most? If not a user, what changes would you value enough to make you become one, or make you a stronger supporter?

Are you a teacher? If so, does your school have its own Library? How have you used it? How have your students been encouraged to use it? Do you address summer slide by directing students to public Libraries between semesters? Do you teach teens, and, if so, how do you perceive their view of Libraries? If passively or negatively, how can that be changed?

Have you thought about Libraries as places of education in the more formal sense, as K-12 educational centers that conform to PA Department of Education standards? Do you see value in being standards-based, as are K-12 schools? In particular in the context of Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts and Next Generation Science Standards?

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Have you thought about Libraries offering services in unconventional spaces, such as outdoors or at remote locations as either physical or electronic hot spots? Can you imagine such options improving Library usage for children, young adults, or older adults?

Do you have any additional thoughts as a result of this interview that you think might be helpful to the Centennial Strategic Planning discussion?

We, the Board Directors, are doing selected interviews, but we pose these questions to all of you readers too. We would like to hear from you.

Charles B. Greenberg
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