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IV. Strategic Planning: International Book Club Virtually

The Murrysville Community Library (MCL) and MCL Foundation are this year marking a centennial of years leading up to 2022, and, at the same time, seeking to shape a centennial future, or at least one for the next 5-10 years. The MCL Foundation Board, in particular, approved a Centennial Strategic Plan 2022-23 on May 24, some of which has been discussed here previously.

The Foundation Strategic Plan 2022-23 is unusual in that: (1) it spans only the back end of one year and the beginning of the next, intending to inform by input from an interview process in that time, to inform towards a targeted three-year plan; (2) it then leads to building a composite of guiding information for the three years based on that process. MCL Foundation Board Directors, including me, are now conducting interviews. Interviewees include administrators, teachers, patrons and donors, and library leadership.

Above and beyond the futuristic possibilities already expressed previously, a kernel of a totally new big idea has already emerged from one interviewee's response. She, in addition to being in the business of training teachers and librarians in standards-based STEM practices, is also, importantly, acclimated to living in another country and culture. So, thank you Gabriela.

She suggested that public libraries develop "virtual partnerships" globally "to build understanding, enrichment, empathy and learn from each other." That creative thought suggests some wonderful, specific possibilities, which I think belong in planning for the next centennial.

The framework for this would be for each local Library to establish a sibling-to-sibling relationship with another Library in another state or country, one chosen as an exemplar of significantly different culture relative to the local Library. To get started, it is probably well that the local library choose just one sibling initially. Then the two form a book club of interested people from the two states or countries, with intent to read nonfiction and fiction books that cross the two cultures. The book club participants would share their thoughts virtually, doing that on-line just as entirely local book clubs do now in person.

A related opportunity presented by the technology of virtual communication is, similarly, to structure a language club. This opportunity, clearly, is meant to serve a sibling-sibling collaboration where the other Library is in a foreign country that does not have English as its native language. Both partners might engage at least one person each who can serve as teacher of English or the foreign language. On the one hand, this can simply just be a virtual foreign language class for two culturally different groups. But it can also be an opportunity for readers from the two different cultures to read the same book, one version in English and one not in English. Then discussion about the book

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would impart an opportunity for everyone to understand the story as colored by both the translation itself and the native culture of the book.

The possibility of International Book Discussion Groups in the future is just one example of what can come out of doing Centennial Strategic Planning by interview. There will be more.

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