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## On Having Vision Part I

The Murrysville Community Library Foundation (MCLF) exists for one purpose only, and that is to raise money for support of its namesake Library. Two important ways are: appealing to you the patrons for annual support and getting grants for special projects. The MCLF does not get involved in actual day to day Library operations, nor does it set the longer-term strategic plan for the Library, But, how well it is able to function, to appeal to potential funders, depends exactly on how well the vision for the Library is conceived and articulated. The MCLF has a stake in the matter, this matter of “vision,” and therefore it is, optimally, a part of the discussion. Vision is what I will write about in this article and the next, Part I about vision in a for-profit corporate world, as a baseline, and then, Part II, about vision in our particular non-profit corporate world, the Library.

I know one corporation well from my own professional life, PPG Industries, Inc. That corporation consciously celebrates technological vision that leads to successful commercialization of products and processes, mostly meaning profitable revenue, in two enduring and public ways.

First of all, it has a Collegium of Distinguished Colleagues, since 1983, from across its many business units, most of whom, both those still actively employed and those now retired, are recognized for having had game-changing visions and for having championed them. Both “had” and “championed”! The Colleagues are typically in these professional disciplines: chemist, physicist, engineer, patent attorney, manager, director, vice president. The vision for something outstanding can come from any discipline, from any level. It should never be assumed to come from just one piece of the enterprise.

Knowing the basis on which they were made Distinguished Colleagues, the Colleagues get to pick new honorees every two years. That is one function of this body. The other is to select a product or process deserving of a President’s Award, also every two years. The Colleagues are well positioned to do that, too. In that way, this company, nominally, keeps before it the drive to reinvent itself on a continuing basis. And, I should add that the awardees for the President’s Award are not ever single individuals. Success is a collaboration of insights and skills of the several.

The Colleagues also debate the changing nature of the business and its consequences for Big Visions of the future. In spite of the informality of these discussions, they are important and are conveyed to the corporation’s management.

I do not know of a comparable rigor anywhere in the world of public Libraries. But, I do know of examples for the Westmoreland Library Network of collaborative individuals having persistently followed a big vision to its culmination, even sometimes with impacts well beyond the WLN. And I know of big visions that are currently building towards very likely overarching success.

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Next week, I will write about five of these big visions, and there may even be others, with a particular focus on how they started. What was the manner by which the original idea came to be nucleated?

In other words, I am going to focus on the process of visioning, and I want to especially show how these, at least, did not evolve out of one cloistered mind or sector, nor from traditional brainstorming that expensive consultants often peddle. So, you might want to retain Part I in anticipation of Part II. See you next time.

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