



Skills for Community-Centered Libraries: Curriculum for All Public Library Staff

Community Connections

Presented at:

ALA Midwinter Meeting
Monday, January 27th

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Part 4: Community Connections Facilitator Guide

Community Connections: Introductions

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| <p>Total Time: 35 minutes</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants will create and practice giving a networking introduction that highlights the unique programs and resources that their library has to offer. This introduction can be used when engaging with new community members, building community relationships, or even networking across the library system. <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PowerPoint Slides loaded on computer/projected on screen ● Flipchart at front of room with ideas and comments from previous activities ● Participant Guides ● Pens ● Role cards from reproducible section (15 copies of the library staff role, 1 each of the other roles) | |
| <i>Slides to use</i> | <i>Facilitator instructions/script</i> |
| | <p>Facilitator Led Activity (20 minutes)</p> <p>SAY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We've looked at personal strengths, team roles, and the assets that exist in your community. ● Now it's time to use this information to connect with community members and organizations in order to bring about positive change and support for your community and library. ● May I have a volunteer to read the 1st page of the Participant Guide? |

Participant will read the following information:

As an employee serving the public, you will need to engage in conversations with a wide range of people in many different settings. It is important to remember that your ultimate goal is to connect with the community and other service providers throughout the city.

However, the word “connect” is often hard to define. What does it mean to create a connection? Is it simply sharing your name or business card? Is it handing out a pamphlet with a smile on your face? Or does it require you to go deeper?

Connecting, especially “Cold Connecting,” when first meeting someone, isn’t always easy. Sometimes we aren’t in the mood to make small-talk or network. Sometimes we don’t feel comfortable doing so. Sometimes we don’t feel accepted by those around us. That is all normal.

For most people, introducing yourself and engaging in conversations that lead to larger connections—or networks—take conscious effort...and it can be exhausting! It can even feel unnatural sometimes. But, like riding a bike, it comes with time and practice. You have to put yourself out there and experience these situations in order to navigate them more effectively and to feel more comfortable doing so.

SAY:

- **Thank you for reading. A part of community engagement is relationship building. All relationships start with some kind of networking introduction.**
- **Your networking introduction can connect you with people who can be part of this library**

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| <p>Slide 34</p> | <p>network’s community engagement efforts and your neighborhood library’s community support system.</p> <p>Facilitator Note: Share an example of an introduction that led to a successful partnership within your library network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let’s discuss as a group your experience with networking, the aspects you find challenging and strategies that have led you to build connections with your community on the bottom of the 1st page. <p>Discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Describe the types of networking experience you have engaged in as part of your library outreach (ex. Tabling events).</i> 2. <i>What aspects of network do you find the most challenging?</i> 3. <i>What strategies have led to new connections with your community or new partnerships?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let’s get working on your networking introduction. <p>Click to next slide</p> |
| <p>Slide 35</p> | <p>SAY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let’s look at the Networking Essentials table on the 2nd page of your Participant Guide. You will see a list of the information you need to share when you are networking for your library. <p>ASK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on the discussion we just had, what are some essential pieces of information or |

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| | <p style="text-align: center;">strategies we should add to this list?</p> <p>Participants may talk about creating mutually beneficial partnerships, promoting using the neighborhood library as a free space, engaging with Friends Groups and other community groups and using social media.</p> <p>SAY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Now it's time to organize and write a draft. I say draft because these networking introductions take some time to complete and polish, especially if this is your first time trying to talk about yourself this way. ● Take the next 3 minutes to write your networking introduction. <p style="color: red;">Set timer for 3 minutes; provide one-minute warning. Call time.</p> <p style="color: red;">Click for next slide</p> |
| <p>Slide 36</p> | <p>SAY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Before we move into practicing your networking introductions, let's go through some tips that can help you not only introduce yourself but push that conversation into a place of building a connection. ● Turn to the 3rd page in your Participant Guide, titled "Getting Started." Let's review some tips. <p style="color: red;">Facilitator to read the text below:</p> <p><u>Getting Started: Strategies for Introducing Yourself in a New Situation</u></p> <p>Every conversation is different; there isn't a one-size-fits-all formula for talking! As already mentioned, practice</p> |

makes perfect. However, there are a few strategies you can use to help you get started.

Tip 1: Prepare

You must be able to briefly introduce yourself, your role/job position, and potentially your goals/motivation for the conversation. This means you must think about this prior to an anticipated situation or conversation. You may choose to write down these bits of information and/or simply think about them—only you know what works best for you.

Tip 2: Smile

Looking approachable goes a long way.

Tip 3: Find Common Ground

It's important to find common ground. Why? Because when you can find an interesting connection you are memorable to that person and they are memorable to you. Remembering your common ground can go a long way to establishing partnerships. Do you both have the same job position or responsibilities? Do you both serve similar communities? Are you from the same field? Do you live near each other? One easy way to find common ground is by focusing on the current situation—where are you both? Use that as the common ground. In this particular context—Nonprofit Institute for Community Providers—some questions you can use to start a conversation are:

What brings you to this event?

What organization are you representing today?

Have you found any new resources you think you might use?

Have you attended this resource fair before?

Answers to these questions can grow into further conversation that begins to pull back layers and create a more natural conversation and potential connection.

Tip 4: Use “Power” Questions

These are questions that can help you start the

conversation, shift the conversation to make sure it's two-way, and to delve deeper into the conversation, giving it the possibility of creating a platform for future engagement. These "power" questions will help you to (1) show interest in others (2) learn about others' ways of thinking (3) build trust. Some examples are:

To show interest:

How'd you get your start in this work?
What's your experience with...?
What do you think about...?

To learn about ways of thinking:

What are some of the challenges you face at your organization in terms of providing resources for the community?
How has your organization tried to tackle these challenges?
Why do you do this work?

To build trust:

Is there any way I could be helpful to you or your organization?
Do you think there are any resources I have that could be of assistance to you?

- **By a show of hands, who here is reluctant to have these small-talk, networking types of conversations?**
- **Believe it or not, that's completely normal! Most people, despite what we may think, are not "natural" at having these types of short interactions. It comes down to two things:**
- **One—these interactions are a skill that people can turn on and off. While many of us who identify as introverts might naturally avoid**

network situations, if you think of this skill as a switch that you can turn on and off it makes it easier to approach the situation.

- **Two—like I said, it’s a skill. And like any other skill that you learn, you need to practice. And with practice comes expertise and comfort, so let’s practice!**

[Click to next slide](#)

Slide 37

Introductions at a fictional event we will call the Nonprofit Institute for Community Providers (20 minutes)

Note to facilitator; the flow will be as follows:

- 3 minutes— Facilitator and one volunteer will model an interaction using two of the role play cards
- Debrief on what each person said, what went well, which ideas were used/relevant, which weren’t.
- Pass out role play cards to all participants, giving half the room the library staff role, and the other half the various other roles
- Set timer for 3 minutes, have people mingle (they’ll be all over the place, walking around, just approaching people)
- Ring bell—switch role play cards so that the other half of the group now works for the library
- Set timer for 3 minutes, role play new cards with different partners
- Come back together as a whole group
- Debrief on role play

SAY:

- **Okay, let’s see how this might go. This is the**

scenario, described on the last page of your participant guide:

- **Imagine you're at the Nonprofit Institute for Community Providers with organizations and various individuals. This is a time to meet others and make initial connections that may lead to future partnerships. Your library is hosting an information table at this event, as are a variety of other organizations. Your goal is to find a connection with the person you're speaking to. You want to share what you and your library/organization has to offer and find out if there is some cross over in your and the other person's work.**
- **Can I have one volunteer to come to the front of the room to practice their introduction with me?**

Facilitator will begin the role play as a role from a community organization; give the library role card to the volunteer; facilitator should be sure to hit on who they are, their role/team role, and what they can offer, if possible weave in what they love to do in their job/strengths.

- **Thank you for volunteering** (ask for some applause).
- **What did you see in our interaction?**

Debrief on highlights.

- **Now, it's your turn. We're going to have a mingling event at this Nonprofit Institute.**
- **You will have one opportunity to give your library networking introduction. You will also play a role from a community organization.**

- **You have 3 minutes for this first role play. I'll use this instrument to signal when time is up. For the second role play, you will trade cards with your partner, and then find a new partner. If you were a library staff member before you now represent a different organization.**

Pass out the role play cards and field any remaining questions at the same time.

- **Remember to use the “Getting Started Strategies” on the 3rd and 4th pages of your Participant Guide. Consider how you might utilize “Power Questions” or “Find Common Ground” questions to facilitate stronger connection.**
- **You have 3 minutes for your first roleplay.**

Set timer for 3 minutes; play instrument to signal end of role play.

- **Trade role cards and then find a new partner.**

Set timer for 3 minutes; play instrument to signal end of role play.

- **Thanks everyone. Let's come back together as a whole group and talk about the experience.**

For reference, the questions on the last page are:

Discuss:

1. Consider how you could create a more compelling library networking introduction by leveraging your library's programs and services when discussing the

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| | <p>specific needs and goals of the community.</p> <p>2. If you supervise staff, how might you train members of your library team to create an introduction that engages community members? If you are not a supervisor, how might you lead by example?</p> <p>Use remaining time to debrief.</p> |
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Part 4: Community Connections Participant Guide

Community Connections

Connecting personal strengths, purposes, and library team role to engage with people

As an employee serving the public, you will need to engage in conversations with a wide range of people in many different settings. It is important to remember that your ultimate goal is to *connect* with the community and other service providers throughout the city.

However, this word “*connect*” is often hard to define. What does it mean to create a connection? Is it simply sharing your name or business card? Is it handing out a pamphlet with a smile on your face? Or does it require you to go deeper?

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Discuss:

- Describe the types of networking experience you have engaged in as part of your library outreach (ex. Tabling events).
- What aspects of network do you find the most challenging?
- What strategies have led to new connections with your community or new partnerships?

Networking Essentials

The information you need to share in order to build strong community connections

Directions: Consider what information or strategies you can add to the list below to strengthen your networking introduction.

- Name
- Current position and library home
- What you and your library can offer the community, including space
- A goal, interest, aspiration for your library
- Your purpose/why you enjoy work
- Social media your library uses
- Other key points?

Begin to craft your library networking introduction. Use the list of networking essentials as a framework for your introduction. Be sure to highlight the unique resources and programming that your library offers.

Getting Started

Strategies for Introducing Yourself in a New Situation

Every conversation is different—there isn't a one-size-fits-all formula for talking! As already mentioned, practice makes perfect. However, there are a few strategies you can use to help you get started.

Tip 1: Prepare

You must be able to briefly introduce yourself, your role/job position and, potentially, your goals/motivation for the conversation. This means you must think about this prior to an anticipated situation or conversation. You may choose to write down these bits of information and/or simply think about them—only you know what works best for you.

Tip 2: Smile

Looking approachable goes a long way.

Tip 3: Find Common Ground

It's important to find common ground. Why? Because when you can find an interesting connection you are memorable to that person and they are memorable to you. Remembering your common ground can go a long way to establishing partnerships. Do you both have the same job position or responsibilities? Do you both serve similar communities? Are you from the same field? Do you live near each other? One easy way to find common ground is by focusing on the current situation—where are you both? Use that as the common ground. Some questions you can use to start a conversation are:

- What brings you to this event?
- What organization are you representing today?
- Have you found any new resources you think you might use?
- Have you attended this resource fair before?

Answers to these questions can grow into further conversation that begins to pull back layers and create a more natural conversation and potential connection.

Tip 4: Use “Power” Questions

These are questions that can help you start the conversation, shift the conversation to make sure it’s two-way, and to delve deeper into the conversation, giving it the possibility of creating a platform for future engagement. These “power” questions will help you to (1) show interest in others (2) learn about others’ ways of thinking (3) build trust. Some examples are:

To show interest:

- So how’d you get your start in this work?
- What’s your experience with...?
- What do you think about...?

To learn about ways of thinking:

- What are some of the challenges you face at your organization in terms of providing resources for the community?
- How has your organization tried to tackle these challenges?
- Why do you do this work?

To build trust:

- Is there any way I could be helpful to you or your organization?
- Do you think there are any resources I have that could be of assistance to you?

Networking Role-Play

Creating connections with potential community assets

Directions: *You will engage in a role-play activity based on the scenario described below. You will be given a specific role card that will determine your function in the role-play. If time permits, rotate through the roles so you have the opportunity to engage in a variety of ways.*

Scenario: Imagine you're at the Nonprofit Institute for Community Providers with organizations and various individuals. This is a time to meet others and make initial connections that may lead to future partnerships. Your library is hosting an information table at this event, as are a variety of other organizations. Your goal is to find a connection with the person you're speaking to. You want to share what you and your library/organization has to offer and find out if there is some cross over in your and the other person's work.

Discuss:

1. Consider how you could create a more compelling library networking introduction by leveraging your library's programs and services when discussing the specific needs and goals of the community.
2. If you supervise staff, how might you train members of your library team to create an introduction that engages community members? If you are not a supervisor, how might you lead by example?

Part 4: Community Connections

PowerPoint Slides

NETWORKING

1. Describe the types of networking experience you have engaged in as part of your library outreach, such as tabling events.
2. What aspects of network do you find the most challenging?
3. What strategies have led to new connections with your community or new partnerships?

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NETWORKING ESSENTIALS

Things to consider in your introduction:

- Name
- Current position and library home
- What you and your library home can offer the community
- A goal, interest or aspiration for your library
- Your purpose/why you enjoy work

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YOU'VE INTRODUCED YOURSELF...THEN WHAT?

- Prepare
- Smile
- Find common ground—create memories!
- Use “power” questions
 - To show interest
 - To learn about ways of thinking
 - To build trust

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NETWORKING ROLE-PLAY

- **Scenario:** Imagine you're at the Nonprofit Institute for Community Providers. This is a time to meet others and make initial connections that may lead to future partnerships. Your library is hosting an information table, as are a variety of other organizations. Your goal is to find a connection with the person you're speaking to. Share what you and your library/organization have to offer and find out if there is cross-over in your and the other person's work.

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