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2020 MIDWINTER MEETING
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
DEAF CULTURE FORUM

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Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library

So now we are ready for presentation about the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library so if I can ask the three presenters to come up to the front table here and we will make microphones or interpreters available as needed. The three presenters, and you have more biographical information in your handout, are Irene Padilla, who is the Maryland State Librarian, Susan Cohen who is the coordinator of the Maryland DCDL and Ricardo Lopez who is chair of the Advisory Board. So, I will turn it over to the three of you.

>> IRENE PADILLA: Thank you. We have some slides. Again, I'm Irene Padilla, Maryland State Librarian and have been integrally involved in establishing this library. We started in 2013 when a bill was brought forward to establish the Deaf Culture Digital Library of Maryland and I had not heard much about this issue, and was surprised that we were responsible for the establishment, so we coordinated together and decided that the best thing to do was go back to the drawing board and have a task force that would look at the whole issue and then move it back to the General Assembly. So, we did that in 2013 and that's when I first met Susan. I had met Alice previously, and she is

quite a force to be reckoned with, as we all know.

Her passion is incredible. Our first meeting with her officially was at the library for the blind and physically handicapped and she took great umbrage at that just as a warning to all of you that we met there. She did not feel that these services should be incorporated into that service.

So, we moved on from there. We had the task force and brought it back to the General Assembly for a vote. The vision that we have for the service was developed by the task force and it's there on the screen for you to read. All customers should have equitable access to deaf cultural information through the Deaf Culture Digital Library in a centralized location in the State of Maryland.

Further, the next slide, we established the mission so that we would be clear about what we were trying to do, offering resources about Deaf culture, acquiring and preserving an excellent collection of deaf resources in digital formats, furnishing access to information regardless of location and providing highly competent assistance to Maryland residents and library staff and local Public Library systems, Academic Libraries, colleges and universities and other libraries in the State of Maryland.

So that task force really established the beginnings. We did have a law that was adopted in 2014, and that's spelled out even further what the responsibilities of the Deaf Culture Digital Library were. We changed it from Deaf cultural to Deaf culture. So that was one of the first refinements we made. So, we as the State Library Agency were responsible for establishing this, and I was aware that Montgomery County, Maryland, the Montgomery County Public Library system had some real expertise in this area. So, I worked with Parker Hamilton who was the director at the time to see if we could coordinate this service through their library system, and she was more than happy to oblige that. We are very pleased to be able to work with Susan Cohen and you will hear from her in a few minutes.

The first thing, well, first of all, incorporated into the Bill as part of a fiscal note was the funding for the library. It was set at \$235,000, primarily for staff and for resources. Montgomery County does not charge us any rent or overhead at all. This funding has stayed the same for years, and at some point, we may go back and ask for that to be increased. What we found ourselves doing at the very beginning is trying to work between the two bureaucracies of the State of Maryland and Montgomery County to try and figure out how we were going to move forward. So we had many, many, meetings, and we then Susan and I worked closely together to establish board membership criteria, the bylaws for the board and communication methods,

because we had a very slow startup, and Alice was very aggravated with us because we didn't move faster, but we, there were a lot of details, so we would be happy to share a lot of that with you so that you could start up faster., but we are up and running and we are very pleased.

The actual legislation required us to conduct a needs assessment, work with the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing so develop and provide sensitivity training, develop a website, develop deaf-related programs, develop partnerships and this is the primary area we have been working on too. We work with the governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the county library systems, Veterans groups, state and local arts councils, senior citizen organizations, and deaf and hard of hearing organizations including the National Association of the Deaf, the Hearing Loss Association of America, and the Maryland Association of the Deaf. We are to encourage partnerships and collaborations with service providers so that we can provide virtual access to information and research. We formed the Deaf Culture Advisory Board as I mentioned, and that had specific groups that needed to be involved in that. So we also have been working hard to develop a friends of the library, and we are not quite there yet, but we are working on that. Part of the issue is finding people who are willing to step forward and be part of the friends and not everybody has time for that. So that's definitely something we are continuing to work on. And then the requirements for the lead employee of this DCDL library are that they would be a deaf or hard of hearing individual, and someone knowledgeable and experienced concerning issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

So, you know, I think that this is a bill that is very well written. It has been our guiding force and Alice and Alec have been involved every step of the way, so we appreciate that. Now, I will turn it over to Susan Cohen who will tell you more about the library.

>> SUSAN COHEN: Thank you so much Irene. Irene covered a lot of the basic questions about the DCDL and we have the roles of the DCDL. Now the Montgomery County Public library -- can everyone see me? I will stand. That's fine. I know, I need to stand. Okay. I'm very short anyway, but I need to stand.

So, the Montgomery County Public Library was selected by the Maryland State Library to host and develop and manage this program and services. So, we are the first state in the country to provide this type of service and it is difficult to be first because you are really starting from scratch. There are some different groups that are a part of the team, the Maryland State Library as Irene explained, and we also work with the governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Additionally, we have a

network of libraries that are liaisons, library liaisons and they are from 23 different county library systems including the Baltimore City Library System. So, we have a relationship with each of those libraries and we are able to share information and communicate, provide updates and resources from our program to theirs.

And we work very well together partnering for programs and various other events. We are able to help them to serve their consumers from their catchment areas. Can we go to the next slide.

I'm sorry, go back once more to the slide before. We do have the DCDL Library Advisory Board which Irene mentioned as well. And we are working on forming the Friends of the Library. I do want to turn it over to Ricardo to talk briefly about the Advisory Board and I will continue from there.

>> RICARDO LOPEZ: Okay. Sure thing. Hi, everybody. Thank you, Irene and Susan for what you have said. They haven't said everything, but I do have a little bit more to talk about the Deaf Culture Digital Library Advisory Board in Maryland. As I was recently saying, connecting the community with the library is mutually beneficial.

The board was established to provide feedback to the programs, and it's important to know the history. The board selected representatives from various communities to be a part of the task force membership and staff membership. So, we brought together the dynamics from various communities, and we are very excited to have all of these people as stakeholders. We meet quarterly and provide feedback and talk about issues that impact our programming and how we can improve services.

So, we want to establish initiatives and collaboration with NAD and other agencies. We want the Advisory Board to be restricted to people that just live in the State of Maryland that have experience with Deaf culture personally, and so we talk excite a bit about issues that affect us and recently, we have rolled out a new website with community programming. And Susan has helped us with that to design that. And we have contractors who are able to help us with that, with the web design.

So, we have had a lot of conversations around that, and hopefully we will be able to see that implemented very soon. The Friends of the Library initiative, our biggest challenge has been really having the deaf community be familiar with what we provide. And so, we are working on really sharing that with the community and how we can improve their library experience. Friends of the Library work with the library in various ways. We help them with the various activities, and then we bring together money so that we can have people come out and do

activities for us to provide workshops, presentations, and different things like that, and so it's mutually beneficial for them and the library, and that's the board advisory role on how we work collaboratively to support the libraries with the mission of really continuing those services.

At the same time, we hopefully are a model for other states to replicate what we have done, and so we are hoping that word will spread, and we are looking forward to that. I'm almost out of time, but I do want to share if you want to learn more about the Friends of the Library and you want to be a part of it, we do have a little card here with our resource that you can take with you. We celebrate Deaf History Month and other things. The Friends of the Library are a key part of working with these libraries.

>> SUSAN COHEN: Thank you so much Ricardo. If we could go to the next slide. Thank you. So, the DCDL is open to everyone. The resources are available to everyone, to library staff, to library consumers. I don't know if you can see it there listed on the slide. It says ASL and deaf study students, the general public, high school, colleges and universities, parents as well, quite a diverse group of people, anyone who is interested in learning about Deaf culture and resources available for the deaf community.

In order to better identify the needs for our new website, which we are developing, so it's, we are collecting details of the training programs that we have and the DCDL staff and Advisory Board have two different surveys because we are trying to find out what our consumers' specific needs are, and we want to do that in order to prioritize which things or which things we should tackle first.

We have received over 400 responses from library staff statewide. And over 300 responses from library consumers across the state as well. So, it's been an amazing response. We were able to get a lot of good information and feedback to help us start our planning. We took a copy of the analysis of each of those surveys and it is available online. We have provided that information for you to access as well. So, here are just a few of the quick takeaways from the survey. Library staff need tools. Like, for example, they may need a statewide list of ASL storytellers for their programming. So that's one easy example. And there are others that were listed as well.

Library consumers said that they need an open source, peer-reviewed journals for research. And they also need online courses in American Sign Language across the state that are available for residents statewide. A Maryland deaf history file where maybe there can be sharing or retelling of deaf history and culture in stories that can be passed down.

So, these are just a few examples of what we learned from the surveys. Next slide.

I wanted to mention the positive outcomes of the DCDL. We do have a website. It's an interim website, and so we have our new website developed. We are working together with a contractor at this point to develop that website. Our current website has brought over 5,000 visitors. And that was just this past year. And it continues to grow.

We have eBooks available in regards to Deaf culture and history and those are available through Maryland's digital eLibrary. It's called the online consortium. And that is a resource that is shared throughout the entire State of Maryland. So, any library can go, any library card holder can go ahead and download those eBooks through that resource. We have classic children's stories, and those can be downloaded through video by the consortium as well.

We have culture and history programs statewide. We have deaf speakers at one library system, and we have a black deaf history speaker at that library. We also have another group that came in to do a performance, someone 2.0. That's a theater group, a deaf and hearing theater group that came together to perform from Rochester, New York. So, these are just some examples. I'm not going to go through all of them. They are all listed on the slide for you.

Just some general observations from our experiences to date. Consumers are extremely appreciative of the services. As you know, many consumers think that Google is the be all and end all, and that's one of our significant challenges. We want people to know that libraries can bring together tools that have been evaluated for their reliability and their trustworthiness, so that has become one of our challenges as well. Also limited access to open source information or any digital resources, and eBooks. eBooks do need to be compatible with Maryland's digital eLibrary consortium. Also, partnerships with historical societies and museums, universities and libraries, digitizing their basic services and that really is essential in order to help us develop the content that's available for our website.

We don't want to duplicate our triplicate resources. Our goal is to pull together the resources currently available and to house them in one centralized location. That way consumers have easy accessibility.

There are also limited options for video streaming or downloads regarding Deaf culture. For example, there is Kanopy, which is a video streaming service. Many library systems do subscribe to Kanopy. Unfortunately, Kanopy has a very limited library or selection of Deaf culture materials. So, there are areas we need to look at improving. These are just a few

examples. I can't go through all of them today, but they are listed on the slides.

And I'm really looking forward to meeting with everybody here in the room today, sharing information and resources and answering any questions that you might have as well. Thank you so much.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you all. That was very informative, and given that this is a major part of what we hope will come out of this forum to see more examples of what Maryland has done, I really wanted to make sure you had enough time to say that, but as you said, there are some things on the slides we didn't have time to get to. And you all have the contact information for the speakers as well as the attendees so there is lots of opportunity to follow up as well as what ASGCLA will be doing and making available all of this online after this forum is over.

So, I think when I hear this, what I really hear is this is a real proof of concept. This is an idea that started decades ago, but Maryland is actually showing us how it can work. So that's very important to us going forward.

(Applause).
