

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
2020 MIDWINTER MEETING
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
DEAF CULTURE FORUM

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Discussion Questions - 1

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you very much, Loida, it is good to have the largest context, to see how this fits in with ALA's strategic focuses. We are not terribly behind schedule, and we have a section now starting out with just comments and questions. I want to open it up to go back to Maryland's effort and the Deaf Culture Digital Library as well as anything else that you have heard in the first part of the day today. Are their comments or questions that you would like to raise to the larger group? We will keep it in the larger group for right now. Please, stand up and then we can make sure we have.

>> RON FRIEDRICH: What is the web address for the Deaf Culture Digital Library.

>> We have bookmarks available in the back of the room. Those bookmarks do have the web address listed on them and so if you want to take the resource for now. Remember, we will have a new website and new web address. That will be MarylandDCDL. It looks like this, the bookmark in the back. So it's MarylandDCDL.org. That's the new web address. You spell out the full word of MarylandDCDL.org. But this bookmark is available to

you in the back of the room. Additionally, the information about the friends of the library, it's a small post card. That's available there as well. Hopefully that helps.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Other comments and questions? So, would you like to have a discussion with the full group or do you think it would work to have a smaller discussion at the table? We have some questions that such as is there more inclusion of the deaf community in libraries now than there was in 1979, and if so, why and what changes do you think we could be making? Or how can ALA's strategic focus on EDI strengthen initiatives for the deaf inclusion? Just a couple of things we might discuss in smaller groups or, perhaps, in this larger group. And if you want to move on to get more information, we can do that as well.

>> I think it would be much more proactive and beneficial if we could do it in a smaller group. It seems we have numerous interpreters available, so if we could have table discussions, I think that would work.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Okay. Let's see --

>> This is Al. I have to admit I feel a little awkward just because there are things that I want to say during my panel this afternoon that I think would be of benefit to the discussion here. So if I could just throw it out there to all of you that maybe deaf people can talk about their experiences in the library system and then maybe hold that discussion later so that we can have some of the deaf people that are here talk about what their experiences have been also.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: This is Joshua, I second that.

>> This is Clarence. I'm seconding what Mr. Alfred Sonnenstrahl had mentioned. It doesn't matter to us if you want to do it now or move into your next segment for this afternoon or for this morning. I'm guessing some folks might be getting a little famished at this point in time.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: The food isn't here yet probably. So maybe we have an opportunity to move on with the next part of the presentation.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: That's what I'm thinking given that we will have some discussion time definitely in the small group has been suggested by several people here. So, let's go ahead and move onto the next session and that will keep us pretty much on schedule.

Discussion Questions - 2

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: We have a section here for discussion, but we also have a big discussion time at the end. What's your pleasure in whether we keep going with the final presenters and

then sort of roll it all together? I know there is some information these presenters have that would be helpful for our discussion. So perhaps we would like to do that? Everyone comfortable with that? Okay. Then so the next part is about organizations, agencies and advocates for the deaf, and I think part of what we were trying to do here is give you a sense of the breadth and depth of organizations that you might look to reach out to in your community.

So we have first the National Association of the Deaf with Melissa Draganac-Hawk, who is the president, and unfortunately Loretta Sarro from the Delaware State Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing is ill and was not able to be join us and expected to be here, so we don't have a video. I would also like to invite Alfred Sonnenstrahl, who is the president of deaf seniors of America to come forward so we can move right along from one speaker to the next. And Anquinette Kimble-Stafford from the National Black Deaf Advocates, and Ron Friedrich. So, I think we will start with you, Melissa.

Wrapup and Summary

We have now a limited time left, and we have the choice of engaging as the larger group or going to smaller groups as we talked about. I know we had some of those conversations happening at lunch. I know some of the things that we wanted to do was to hear from people who are deaf about their experiences in using libraries, and so one of the things I thought we might do is invite people who are here who are deaf to tell us a little bit about their positive and negative experience in using libraries to give us a sense of the kinds of things we should be reaching out to listen to and to hear in our own communities about what kinds of things libraries could be doing to support and help deaf community in ways that we aren't seen thinking about.

I want to really emphasize the important message that's come here today. I think we have really learned about how important it is to listen to the people we are trying to serve. When I say listen, I know that's a bad choice of words, necessarily, but I think that it's really important that we do something that I learned from Rich Harwood from the Harwood institute and he called it turning outward, and not sitting in our libraries saying what should we do, what kind of services and programs should we have. The way we can figure this out best is to turn outward and talk and communicate with people in our communities who we are trying to serve and figure out is a signed story time once a month something that would be a

priority for them. Different kinds of things. Here are the things we might be able to offer. What are the things that are important in the community?

I would love to have the opportunity, and, again, I don't know whether others feel the same way, but I do want to hear some of the ideas and some of the things that people who are deaf and have been using libraries would like to tell those of us who are not deaf about your experiences in libraries. Is that acceptable to people here?

>> ALFRED SONNENSTRAHL: One thing that we haven't mentioned yet is about the deaf blind programming. And I think that's something to consider. The biggest access to the world for them is through Braille, and it's sad to say Braille is vanishing because hearing people, blind hearing people are depending on audio. And Braille has been used much, much less. And because of that deaf blind people suffer. So, we need to preserve Braille for our deaf blind people. That's one thing.

Secondly, DSA does have a magazine that we print. It comes out four times a year, and NAD comes out three times a year. You can subscribe to those magazines and I think it would be nice if libraries had that on hand, these kinds of deaf related materials in your local libraries so that the local deaf people can come and access that. It's informative for hearing people as well. My wife will kill me if I don't mention this.

She wrote a book it's called Deaf Identities. This was printed by Oxford University Press or Oxford press, and it's in the exhibit area where you have different types of deaf people, all kinds of people, and it will help you learn more about the deaf population. I think that's all I have.

>> Can I respond to some good news. Hi, Pat Herndon with GLASS, Georgia's Talking Book and Braille Library, part of the NLS Public Library. I think you may be pleased to know that the director of NLS is very devoted to getting Braille materials out and distributed freely in the community of people that need them. And even better, for someone who can deal with a digital refreshable Braille display, NLS is, last I heard, putting out for bid for the contract to actually produce machines that we can lend to people that qualify for our service. So NLS does focus on services to deaf blind, but Karen Kenninger is doing everything she can to make sure that Braille access is available to anyone who needs it.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you, I think I saw other hands here.

>>Carol Finkle: It's your fault. I have been yelling all

my life. Okay. Hi, so [as] hearing parents [we] started raising deaf kids in 1968 and now they are in their 50s, they have children, I'm a grandmother of two CODAs, anybody in here doesn't know what a CODA is? Everybody know? So, a CODA is a child of deaf adult. CODA or a CODA with a K, kid of deaf adults. They are a sub subculture of the deaf community cultural experience. They have their own camps, their own theaters, their own communities because they all were raised with American sign language as their first language, very big part of Deaf culture history, but related to libraries, as a hearing parent of deaf kids in the late 60s, 70s, 80s, et cetera, until I figured out what I was really supposed to do with my kids, contrary to the misguidance and misinformation I got from the Audists, I want to emphasize the word because someone came up to me and said what is the word you said, what is Audism, I never heard of it. And that's the problem at the base of every nuance of discrimination, ignorance led policies and practices whether it's the arts and cultural community and the hearing world of which the libraries are, of course, an essential core part and my whole life was replete with being eyewitness to total discrimination, total inaccessibility, as if there were invisible sign everywhere I went every day of my life that said for hearing only. And every time something is inaccessible, and you don't have to be a parent of deaf kids, you just have to be a human to know if your kids are left out, you are left out. Period. The end. Let me see, let me get the Friday weekend section to the newspaper and flip it. Nothing for my family. Academy awards time, what movies? Couldn't go to those movies. Completely unaware, but living, working and existing in every aspect of life within the hearing dominant society.

You have heard of sexism, you have heard of ageism, you have heard of racism, antisemitism, homophobia, ableism, yes, you have heard of all of that, you never heard of Audism. That is what you take away today. You talk about it. You explain it. You make analogies with it, because every ism that has oppressed any group of people in the history of human, woman mankind exists to the hilt if you add Deaf culture to it. Today we live in a schizophrenic scenario. At the same moment in history where miraculously Broadway, Hollywood, and the whole television industry can't find deaf talent fast enough, it's fabulous. At the same moment, the power and -- I'm finishing, the power and the propaganda machine run by the Audists has never been more influential. They are crushing the languages, crushing the cultures and still 140 years after it all began by AG Bell, that AG Bell in 1880, it continues to move toward ethnic cleansing, wipe out the culture and the languages of the people we are talking about improving their lives. Thanks for listening.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: The gentleman here at the center table. I think you had your hand up. You contributed earlier.

>> Hi, everybody. Just to make things clear, my name is Clarence Taylor, and I am coming here, I have listened to all of the information that you have presented today. Wow! I'm thinking this should apply to younger people and people, people that have been released from prisons, what are they going to do with the rest of their life's journey. Libraries could help them to connect. And then that would make, that would change the world. Just like finances and employment, resources, books, access to print, following their dreams. If we leave them out of the picture and they come out of jail and they don't receive any of that help and they linger, most of them are just going to be recidivists and so we are trying to reduce that and give them a second chance at success. So, they need guidance, and libraries are very essential. You as librarians, you are teaching me and what we learn that will help everybody be successful and you will be proud of us later. So that's my plan of action. So, I support you, support me.

Be.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you for that comment. I would like to get you recorded about that because.

>> Me.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Yes, because what has happened to you here is exactly what happens to many people when they discover something that they really need to do, and we talk in libraries all of the time about how we can be more helpful in the communities we try to serve. And there are many states and Public Libraries that do a lot of services to prisons and jails and incarcerated men, women, everything. But there is so much more that we can do, and I think you have raised the issue about how can we think about people coming out of prison, and what libraries might be able to do, not just when they are in prison, but when they are coming out of prison, so thank you for bringing that up. Incarcerated children as well. There are some incredible programs going on around the country which I would be glad to talk to people afterward, but just so you know, use this contact information that is here so that if you have questions or you want to follow up with somebody, even if they don't know the answer themselves, lots of us who are librarians here know people who are doing this work elsewhere in the country, and we could open a door for you and make some contact for you.

>> Okay. By all means, I will be around, and I want to be in contact with many of you.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Right. So maybe one more comment. I don't know if they are going to come kick us out of the room, but we are past time, so we should be prepared that that may be the case. There were two hands up back here. So, let's say two more comments because I don't know who is here.

>> ANQUINETTE KIMBLE-STAFFORD: I just want to encourage libraries to really buy books by deaf authors, specifically black deaf authors. There are just not a lot of information out there about black Deaf culture, black deaf American Sign Language, and most libraries only carry books about maybe just regular American Sign Language or about Helen Keller or something like that, and there is so much more, maybe something about Gallaudet, but there is such a rift history in our culture and we just don't find it in our libraries, so I would like to see more libraries displaying books about culture, black Deaf culture and all of the varieties of identities that are a part of Deaf culture, people of color and other identities as well.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you, and I think there was one other

>> AUDIENCE: I just had a quick question. So coming from a library that currently has no resources really that reach out to the deaf community and I think we have got some really good ideas for how to make steps in the future for like buying books, making displays that feature Deaf culture, but without having ASL interpreter on site, if we have somebody come in who is deaf tomorrow, what is the best way that we can make them feel welcome and cultivate a relationship that will have them coming back to the library?

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Susan, I saw you raising your hand and she would be a great person to respond to this because she is definitely doing this now.

>> SUSAN COHEN: I want to make sure that I 100% understand your question. You want to make sure you make a deaf person feel welcome if they come into your library, correct? Okay. Now, the best way is how you start to communicate with the deaf person. Just ask the person how you can communicate with them, potentially you can use paper and pen to write back and forth, that's one way. And just build a relationship with that deaf person. Find out if there is a deaf community in your area. If so, connect that person with that deaf community or other deaf organizations. Get some ideas yourself as the library from members of the community about what kinds of programs they might want. It's really not up to us to decide which programs the community needs. We have to start with the deaf community and

have them identify their needs and what it is that they would like.

I would say maybe start with like a Deaf History Month program. That's from March until April is Deaf History Month. It starts March 13th and continues until April 15th. That's Deaf History Month and you could invite a speaker, a deaf author. That's a good way to pull people in, to see who comes to the program. That won't just be the deaf community or just deaf people, but you will find hearing people that will come as well and incorporate the whole community. So that would be a good place to start.

Also, connect with sign language programs. Deaf clubs, there are a lot of different ways if you are looking to get people into your library, we can always talk more and I'm sure there are other folks here who could add to my list of suggestions, or feel free to contact us at the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library. We have some resources that we can provide to you, perhaps.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you, Susan.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: What I would like to do is wrap up a little bit. I'm sorry. Excuse me. I'm sorry. I didn't see you there.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: Just to add onto that answer, often generally deaf people are self-reliant, and we can do things on our own without even asking for help. Oftentimes people just don't have patience to have the interactions, so they just look for things independently. But if we get frustrated, we will often come to you and ask for help. Will and just we can either text or write back and forth, we can gesture, but it very much depends on whatever the content is that you need to find. Be friendly, provide good customer service, and that's all well and good, but sometimes there is miscommunication, and so I guess just wait until we ask for the help that we need, and then the other thing is that some people think deaf people are illiterate, that's not true. There are some people that don't write well. That doesn't reflect on their intelligence. They have other intelligences. So, keep an open mind.

>> SUSAN COHEN: This is Susan, I wanted to add one more thing if that's okay. 35 years ago, I never thought it was possible for me to become a librarian, and I have to thank Alice Hagemeyer. She is the person who told me about the job opening at Montgomery County Public Libraries, and I went from serving just the deaf and hard of hearing community there to a mainstream library.

And I was so nervous because going as a deaf person to work with hearing people too made me nervous, but it's possible. A deaf librarian can work in any Public Library. That could be

another way for the deaf community to connect. Because if we have a person in the library who is already fluent in American Sign Language, not all deaf people use American Sign Language. There are deaf people who do utilize either lip reading or oral communication, just be aware that there is a diverse population within the deaf community. I know I don't want to take a long time. This is just one cute funny story. I remember when I first started working at the Public Library.

I saw two women approach the front desk to the information desk and I knew they were deaf. I just had a gut instinct that they were deaf. So, this woman she took out a piece of paper and a pen right out of her own pocket. She was ready. She was going to write to me, and I said, don't worry, I sign, so instantly we had a connection.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: If you also, I'm going to piggyback on Susan's story, because Susan's story I experienced when I was in one of the branch libraries where I worked and we had Spanish speaking staff that were Latino. So they had shared culture as well as language, and when a couple of teenage boys came in to register for library cards, and the librarian started speaking in Spanish to those boys, the next thing we knew, like two hours after they got their cards, and they left. And two hours later they brought friends back to the library to get library cards. It sends a really powerful message, even if not everybody knows how to, in this case speak Spanish, it sends a message that we are trying to ease communication for you when you come into the library. So, I think Susan's story is one that probably rippled throughout the community of deaf people that those two women knew that that experience they had in the library can send a powerful message.

So I would like though just close a little bit with a few thoughts that I hope -- first of all, I can't believe anyone who came here saying I would like to learn something today is walking out of here saying I didn't learn anything. I mean, there was so much richness in the presentations, and the topics that came up. So, I hope you learned things, and what you didn't learn that you think about now or later, please use the contact list to follow up with people if you have questions or concerns.

But I think about this and I spent years in Washington, D.C., and we kept having all of these conversations about all politics being local, that it's really at the local level that it makes a difference, and sometimes we want to jump to the national level, but when we jump to the national level, sometimes it's just too high and too hard to get to where we want to be. So if you look at the local level where you are and try to figure out how can you make connections in the deaf community where you are, they may be very small steps at the

beginning, but they are steps, and once you start making them, things start to move forward. And then you all have states that have State Libraries, and state chapters of NAD and other kinds of resources, organizations that serve the deaf.

So, you have statewide things as well, but you also have libraries in general. As you can hear, there are a number of libraries that are doing really good stuff in this area. And one of the things I love about being a librarian is that I always describe it as being the most generous profession I can imagine because if you are in some professions and you discover something that works really well, you sell it to other people in the profession. You make money from it.

Libraries consider copying their programs to be a great compliment, they want to share programs. They want to help you figure out how to do things in your own community. So, take advantage of those places, some of which we heard from today, that might be able to give you some ideas just to seed your thinking a little bit.

And then national can be very good for resources and for learning, but also, they can sometimes point you back to something in your state or your county or your city that may be very helpful to you. So I hope you have gained a number of new ideas to take back for those of you who said you are pretty new and you want to figure out how to do things, I hope we have given you a lot to think about and to take back and I hope this group can keep contributing to each other's advancement in this area. We worked really hard to try to bring lots of information.

The result was we had a lot less discussion time than we had hoped to have, but when we figure that you have come a long way, some of you, but you have devoted time to do this, the information seemed more important to get across, but don't let this network die.

Don't go back and just try to do everything yourself. Reach out and get some help and assistance and advise from someone of the people that you heard from here or people you may have talked with at lunch or met and talked with.

>> CARRIE BANKS: One very quick thing. I was a member of the committee that helped get this together. I did very little for that, I want to say, but the person who did the most of the work and the person who we would not be here without today is Jeannette Smithee. I want to make sure that we thank her, and let's give her a big round of applause, because, seriously, without her and her patience and her negotiations and her persistence, this never would have happen and we also need to thank, acknowledge Mary Ghikas, the outgoing Executive Director of the American Library Association who has been incredibly supportive of this. Thank you.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: You stole my thunder, but I'm very happy to have it come from the grass roots. So, Jeannette has been invaluable to me through this process and I really appreciate her support and advice through the whole planning of this. So, thank you very much. One more.

>> AUDIENCE: Thank you so much to all of the interpreters for facilitating the discussions and conversations and making this all accessible for everybody. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you for that too. Don't forget the opportunity to do the "My ALA video on Sunday if you are here.
(Concluded at 3:20PM).
