

Indian Prairie Public Library

Stakeholder Interview Findings

December 2014

Dan Wiseman, Wiseman Consulting & Training Interviewer

Overview: Over a two week period in December 2014, I interviewed 18 people representing key stakeholder groups in the communities served by the Library. These included business persons (Chambers of Commerce), civic groups (service clubs and non-profits), schools, elected officials and village managers as well as two literacy organizations. The results were a picture of very diverse communities, alike on some dimensions and yet serving some very different constituents. The one thing that united them is their respect and value for the services and staff of the library. They all see the IPPL as a highly effective and innovative partner. Their hopes for the future rest on the Library continuing to be as effective in the future as in the past, finding new ways to keep their communities informed about the library's capabilities, and finding even more ways to collaborate to deliver services. Most of the organizations are slowly emerging from difficult financial times caused by the recession of the past several years. They have rather high expectations about the library. Below are the key findings for each of the communities. The organizations were asked to describe the challenges facing their community and what they are to doing to address these issues. Next they discussed their vision of the Library and how they might be able to partner with the Library to address some of the community's challenges.

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Stakeholders

1. Continue to innovate and provide high quality programs, services, facilities and technology to the citizens of the district
2. Find more ways to get the word out about the Library and encourage people to visit and tour the facility
3. Stay engaged with area governmental leaders in formal and informal settings

4. Consider creative ways to have a presence in communities outside the Library
5. Continue to partner with literacy groups by providing space, access to library resources, and staff
6. Sustain and evolve partnership with schools to coordinate collections, author talks, programs, tutoring and the use of technology
7. Consider developing more cross generational programs, checking out IPADs or other devices and increasing the use of volunteers.

Stakeholder Interview Data by Community

Burr Ridge

Tom Schneider, District 180 Superintendent; Steve Strickland, Burr Ridge Village Manager; Rita Farrell, WB/BR Chamber of Commerce; Mickey Straub, Mayor of Burr Ridge; Stephanie Palmer, Hinsdale South High School Principal

Community Findings

Burr Ridge is a largely an upper middle income district with mostly high quality residential areas. The village does have over 500 businesses and commercial enterprises. The recession caused the village to reduce staffing and services. The Village Center is holding its own with 70% of the buildings leased. The residents tend to have very high expectations of its service providers. Schools in this region have a mixture of students with some having as many as 30% on free lunches. For students in unincorporated DuPage County the school is their library. The schools are eager to build relationships not only with the library but other non-profits in the area because of the social and economic needs of their students. Schools are facing an increasing number of mandates (cost shifting, special needs, and pensions) while funding is declining. All the schools see parent engagement as a key to their success. Patience with the schools is critical. Many schools are converting their libraries to technology centers making the relationship to IPPL even more critical.

Library Partnering Opportunities

Getting key community leaders to tour the library is an important strategy. Those leaders who have taken a recent tour come away much more informed about the library's capabilities, services, and its tremendous resources. Meeting space provided by the library is a key asset as are all of the computers, adult and children's programs. Coordinating public relations and events is a critical need. All of the organizations stressed how important it is for the library to stay on the forefront of innovation and to key up its current level of service. One leader said it would be a huge plus for the library to find some way to provide service somewhere in the Burr Ridge area even with a mobile unit. They are aware of the library's resource limitations but said having a presence in the Burr Ridge area would really help the library and citizens. The library provides valuable computer access to students when their schools are closed. About 80% have home computers in one school system. IPPL does have youth services staff visiting many of the schools and that is much appreciated. Keeping parents up to date on all the library's programs and services is really needed. Tutoring at the library should be continued and expanded if possible. Continue the support and summer reading program. Doing shared author book talks is a good idea. Doing more with digital books should be considered. Doing joint collection planning is important with school libraries/tech centers.

Willowbrook

Rita Farrell, WB/BR Chamber; Tim Halik, Willowbrook Village Manager;
Tom Schneider, District 180 Superintendent; Kerry Foderaro, Cass
District 63 Superintendent; Frank Trilla, Willowbrook Mayor; Stephanie
Palmer, Hinsdale South High School Principal

Community Findings

The Willowbrook area has about 8,600 residents. They are largely upper middle class and come with high expectations. It's largely a bedroom community. Some

business expansion is occurring with new retailers coming to the community. Lots of empty nesters live in the community. No property tax is levied with income coming from sales taxes and state shared revenue. The village has lost staff during the economic recession and as result has had to outsource services. Thirty-three people are full time village employees at the moment. One leader said a big challenge for the community was how to communicate with its citizens since there is no newspaper. The strengths of the community are identified as its location/accessibility, affordability low crime rate, family centered and good schools.

Library Partnering Opportunities

Willowbrook's leaders are strong proponents of the library and consider it a powerful resource. They want the library to continue to seek out volunteers. Coordination among all the area taxing bodies is a key need. Collective information sharing is critical to keep citizens informed. Early literacy programs are critical at the library and with the various groups such as DuPage Literacy Society and the Community House Organization. One idea generated was to have a community founder's day to celebrate the history of the village. Several of the leaders had toured the library recently. Several said fewer than 5% of the people really know much about the library in spite of all the information put out by the library. The library's meeting space has been really helpful.

Darien

Ray Jablonski, President Darien Park District; Bob Carlo, School District 61 Superintendent; Bryon Vana, Darien Village Manager; Clare Bogiovanni, Darien Chamber; Kathy Weaver, Darien Mayor; Anne Brennan, President Darien Woman's Club; Chris Gerrib, Darien Rotary Club

Community Findings

Darien has a population of around 22,000 people. Strong subdivisions and home owners look out for each other. The community has some retail business but no industry. Many community groups have blended boundaries with other neighboring villages/cities.

The area has 3 school districts. A city center is slowly being created which will lead to the beginning of a sense that there is a downtown. The city has a Neighbors magazine (of which the library provides information to also). The city recently remodeled its website. Argonne Laboratory is a huge community asset. The Darien Woman's Club played a major role in creating the library in 1970. The Club continues to play a vital role in funding a variety of charity projects. The community itself is largely middle class with low income apartments. The Rotary Club covers both Darien and Willowbrook. Some schools have as many as 40% of their students on food subsidies. The area's unemployment is around 6%. The community's demographics continue to change as residents are aging and the income levels become more diverse. The school system does recognize the value of school libraries. Schools are facing funding challenges as they have aging buildings without air-conditioning. Keeping parents connected is a big challenge for them. Adapting the curriculum to conform to the "Common Core" is also an issue. Village's priorities are centered on safety, infrastructure repair, and supporting the business community. The village, as has other governmental bodies, has had to streamline its staff and services because of the economic downturn.

Library Partnering Opportunities:

The library should continue to play a key role on the Initiatives Group. The group is formed from the elected officials of the Darien taxing bodies. They coordinate and inform each other on their key priorities and events. The library needs to be finding new ways to get the word out. The library's recent remodeling was quite good and helped keep it updated. The library needs to keep its technology up to date. Participating in the community recycling program is a good thing. Several

persons encouraged the library to find ways to get the older residents to volunteer more. Residents, who use the library, like all aspects of its programs, services, computers, movies, mentoring, games, and book groups. The Library is seen as a pillar of the community. The food for fines program should be kept. Having IPADs to check out would be nice. More cross generational programs would be useful to help people stay connected with each other. The library staff is seen a quite helpful and knowledgeable. All participants encouraged the library to reach out to people who might not be its normal customers. Getting all kids library cards was mentioned as a key goal. Several people want to see E-books continue to be expanded. Collaboration between the schools and the library was emphasized. Avoid collection duplication was mentioned. The Parks Department helps with plowing of the parking lot. The Darien Chamber is seen as the area's matchmaker for finding opportunities for various groups to collaborate. Several people wanted the library to expand its computer offerings outside the building.

Literacy Groups - The Community House and DuPage Literacy

Both groups have long histories of providing free tutoring to area residents with literacy needs. Both appreciate the critical role the Library plays in providing space for tutoring, discussion groups and training of volunteers as well as access to the library's collection and computers. The scope of the need for literacy services remains very large-100,000 or almost 10% of the population of the county. Getting access to ESL classroom training is a barrier because of transportation issue for many residents. Both groups have waiting lists of people wanting tutoring. Classes for volunteers for the DuPage organization have had to be canceled recently because of low enrollment. Both groups have around 400 tutors. Both groups stressed the need to continue to inform area citizens of what the library is capable of doing for them. Many people receiving tutoring have little ideas about what a library can do for them. Some are fearful of any governmental body. Both groups want to continue to be active partners with the library and are exceedingly grateful for pivotal role played by the library in their ability to deliver services to its customers.