

## Indiana World Café Conversation Report

In March 2018, staff from all types of Indiana libraries were invited to three conversations held around the state of Indiana at the Lake County Public Library, Greensburg-Decatur County Public Library, and Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library using World Café as the method of engagement. World Café is a method of engagement that is highlighted in ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities initiative.

### What is World Café?

World Café conversations are a method for creating collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in service to real work. The World Café is built on the assumption that, "people already have the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges; that the answers we need are available to us; and that we are wiser together than we are alone."

World Café is based on Seven Design Principles:

1. *Set the Context* – Pay attention to the reason you bring people together and what you want to achieve.
2. *Create Hospitable Space* – Create a space that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening. How does the physical space contribute to a welcoming atmosphere?
3. *Explore Questions that Matter* – Knowledge emerges in response to compelling questions. Ask questions that are of real-life concern to the group.
4. *Encourage Everyone's Contribution* – Most people want to participate, but also want to actively contribute to making a difference. Encourage everyone to contribute their ideas and perspectives while also allowing those who wish to participate by listening to do so.
5. *Connect Diverse Perspectives* – One of the distinguishing characteristics of the World Café is the opportunity for participants to move between tables, meet new people, actively contribute their thinking, and link discoveries to ever-widening circles of thought.
6. *Listen Together for Patterns and Insights* – Listening is a gift we give to one another. By shared listening, each participant pays attention to themes, patterns, and insights to begin to sense a connection to a larger whole.
7. *Share Collective Discoveries* – The last phase of the Café is the "harvest." The harvest involves making the patterns of wholeness visible to everyone in a large-group conversation. Give participants silent time to reflect on the patterns, themes, and deeper questions experienced in the smaller groups, and ask them to share with the larger group.

## Indiana World Café Conversations

The theme for the Indiana World Café Conversations was, “Barriers to Library Service.” This theme was chosen because we believe that it is a timely topic as libraries look to remain relevant in changing times, and barriers to service can cover a wide range of topics from physical to organizational to legislative.

To achieve an authentic representation of Indiana libraries, we wanted input from libraries of all types, sizes, and geographic locations. A total of 116 people participated in three World Café Conversations in Indiana: seven from academic libraries, 81 from public libraries, 12 from school libraries, and 16 from special libraries.



Participants were split into groups of three to five people per table. There were four rounds of conversation, and for each round of conversation, the participants moved to a new table and joined a new group to ensure that ideas were shared widely among participants. Each round of conversation was framed around a unique question that was designed to lead participants deeper into the topic of barriers to library service. At the end of the World Café Conversations, the whole group came together for “the harvest,” or large group sharing of thoughts, ideas, themes, or insights gathered throughout the day.

Questions for each round of conversation:

1. Leave your library role for the moment and imagine you are the patron. What would you want your experience of library service to be?
2. What barriers exist to providing these services?
3. What opportunities do you see for removing barriers?
4. If success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose in removing these barriers?



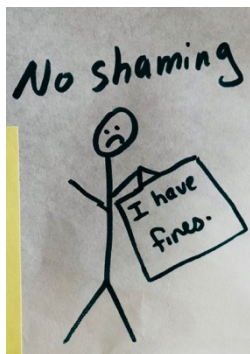
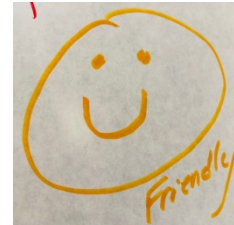
From each round of conversation, important concepts and themes were recorded on large sheets of paper and sticky notes for each group. These sheets of paper were placed on the wall for participants to view during transition and break periods. All of the comments, thoughts, ideas and drawings/doodles from the sheets of paper and sticky notes were transcribed, and then organized and categorized.

## What experiences would users want in our libraries?

During the first round of conversation, participants were asked to leave their library role behind and imagine being the patron, and discuss what they would want their experience of library service to be.

Overwhelmingly, participants said that their experience should be **Welcoming** and **Friendly**, where library users are

greeted, acknowledged, feel safe, and feel like they matter. Users should also feel that staff are approachable, focused on users' needs, genuine, helpful, positive, authentic, flexible, respectful of privacy, non-judgmental, patient, and trust the patron.



Users would also want policies that are consistent, adaptable, compassionate, and empathetic towards people. They would want interactions where the answer is YES more frequently than NO. Library service would be free, and available to everyone in Indiana, and would easily satisfy their needs.

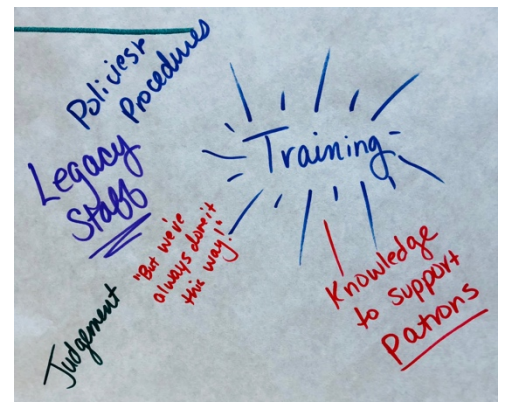
They would experience buildings that are easily navigable, accessible, clean, comfortable, well-lit, and attractive, where they can find what they're looking for quickly and easily.

Library space and programming would be available for everyone across the lifespan and would be flexible and adaptable to users' needs. Users would feel empowered, and easily discover new things. They would have access to new, exciting, and relevant materials and services. Users would have access to technology at the library and in their homes, including new and exciting technology such as virtual reality and AI (artificial intelligence).

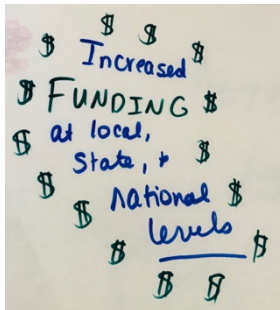
## What barriers exist to providing the service users want?

The second round of conversation asked participants to identify barriers that exist to providing the type of service identified during the first round of conversation. The top three barriers identified revolved around **Staff**, **Policies/Regulations**, and **Funding**.

Barriers identified around library *staff* included staff that are not engaged and not focused on customer service, are unapproachable, are not keeping their skills relevant, are resistant to change, and are lacking the initiative to change.

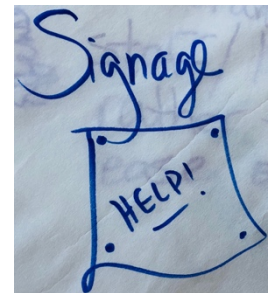


Barriers identified around *policies* or *regulations* included not trusting staff and users, inconvenient hours of operation and programming times, out-of-date policies that don't keep the user front and center, and fines and fees that prevent access to materials and services. Insufficient trustee training or accountability, or trustees with differing agendas, can also create a barrier to service. Statewide regulations can also create barriers through outdated state laws that allow the existence of unserved areas of the state, resulting in library service that is not free and open to everyone. This also leads to confusion about library district boundaries.

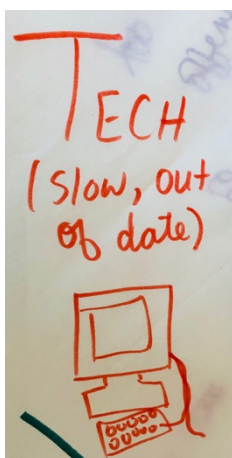


*Funding* was identified as a barrier to providing library services. Funding is often not adequate to properly staff libraries, both in terms of the number of staff members, as well as the number of qualified staff members, and the ability to provide competitive pay and benefits. Insufficient funding was also identified as a barrier to providing adequate training opportunities for staff. Funding issues also impact the quality of materials and programming and the ability to improve the safety and accessibility of library buildings.

Geographic and physical building challenges were also identified as barriers to service. Access to transportation is a reality that many users face, making it difficult for them to use the library's services. Library locations that are physically landlocked cause issues with expanding the building to meet the needs of the community. Many library buildings remain a challenge to physically access with ease because of building layout and limited space.



Additional barriers identified were insufficient technology resources for users in the library and at home, as well as inadequate communication and marketing, and the public's perception of libraries.



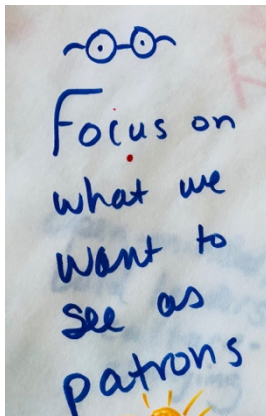
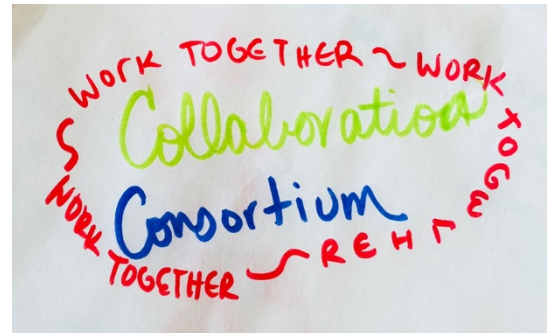
Additional barriers identified specifically for school libraries included too few available school librarians or qualified library staff, not enough time with students (which limits their ability to teach the basics of research and using the library), mandated state testing for students, outdated materials, lack of access to databases, regulations from school districts that limit services provided for students, teachers' limited knowledge of INSPIRE, and students having access to devices distributed from the schools that allow them to avoid visiting the library. Additional barriers identified specifically for academic libraries included lack of time to interact with students, students resenting the requirement to do research, and students not understanding what services the library or librarians can offer.



## What opportunities do you see for removing barriers?

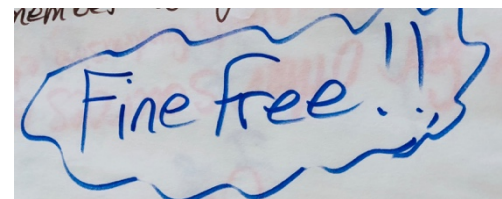
During the third round of conversation, participants were asked what opportunities existed for removing barriers to service. The top two areas identified as opportunities to remove barriers were **Community Partnerships** and focusing on the **Users' Point of Need**.

In focusing on *community partnerships*, participants identified that libraries should involve community leaders, decision makers, and the community itself in deciding what is available and offered at the library, as well as helping to advocate for and promote the library in the community. Community partnerships could provide other sources of funding or support, and provide opportunities to improve available technology or infrastructure by partnering with local technology companies. Opportunities could also develop from providing the platform for open conversations to occur that allow for input from the community, not only for library services, but on topics of importance to the community.



In looking at the *users' point of need*, policies should benefit the library user and make it easy to use services and find resources. Administration should evaluate policies to remove the barriers of fines or fees, and look for ways to make getting library cards easier and less restrictive. The library community should be advocates in lobbying the state to provide access to libraries throughout the entire state, and in the creation of a true statewide library card which would provide full access to any library in the state (public, academic, school, or special). Libraries should be proactive in recruiting members of the community to

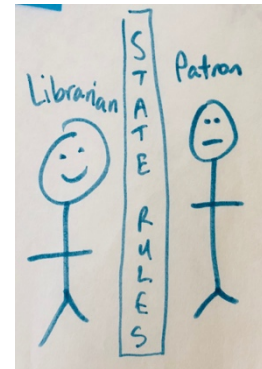
their library boards, and the state should require ongoing trustee training.



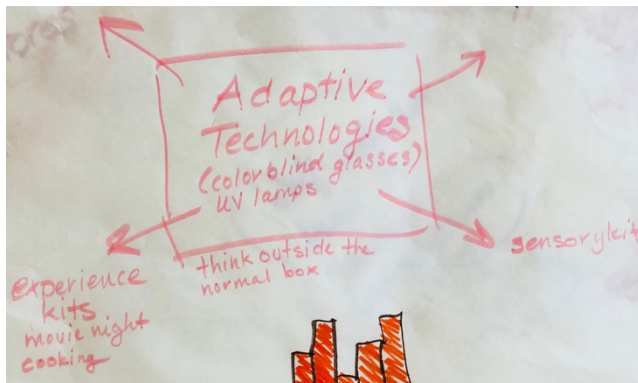
Staff should be focused on the user first, by having a friendly and welcoming demeanor, and providing help that goes above and beyond. Staff training should be a priority, including providing a structured staff-wide training program that includes a focus on technology.

Supervisors should empower staff to remove barriers by trusting users and making decisions without having to ask for permission. Libraries should have a culture of change where staff innovate and have space to try, fail, and try again. Libraries should provide opportunities for cross-training, and staff should attend training and conferences outside of the library field.

Staff should be involved in service to the community outside of library roles and look for opportunities to educate the public about libraries. Communication with the community can remove barriers, as can providing space for open conversations to happen.



Libraries should have more up-to-date and advanced technology. Local technology companies can be approached as partners and grant funders to help provide newer technologies. Libraries should look for alternative ways to serve users by exploring options such as 24-hour access, drive-up windows, better e-Book services, collaboration with schools and universities, materials in non-traditional places in the community through book lockers or vending machines, and non-traditional book return options such as at grocery stores, schools, etc. Marketing, including social media, should be a priority, so communities know what libraries have to offer.



Administration and library staff should look at physical spaces and remove or diminish physical barriers that exist to services and staff. Create floor plans that are flexible and can be changed to meet a wide range of needs. Invest in spaces or furniture that can be changed or moved easily.

## Bold steps in removing barriers

In the final round of conversation, participants were asked what bold steps might be taken to remove barriers if success was completely guaranteed. Participants wanted to be bold, be brave, have no fear, be bigger and better, be creative, and be flexible. The top three categories that participants identified were **Physical Spaces**, **Staff**, and **Policies/Regulations**.

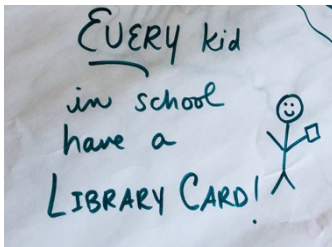
Bold steps for *physical spaces* could include:

- Make services more accessible in remote or outer lying areas by building more branches or providing access through book lockers/vending machines.

- Redesign spaces with users in mind.
- Provide cozy seating areas.
- Make spaces more accessible in the buildings.
- Remove or reduce the size of service desks.
- Provide bigger, better spaces.

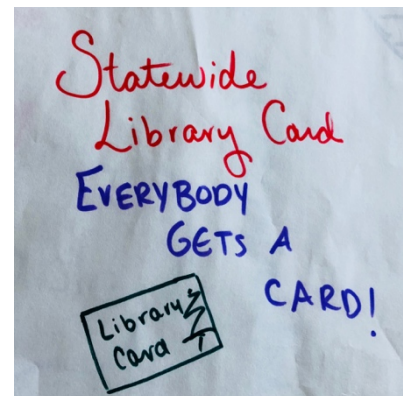
Bold steps for **staff** include:

- Hire people who want to be at work and engaged, are personable and have a customer service attitude, are accountable for excellence of service, and are immediately responsive to users.
- Hire outside of comfort zones.
- Pay staff good wages.
- Hire enough staff to be in the building and out in the community.
- Recognize and celebrate differences.
- Empower staff to make decisions and know how to respond to situations. Empower risk-taking and failure.
- Have specialized staff that allow for outreach to users of diverse languages, and social services staff.



In looking at **policies and regulations**, bold steps include:

- Provide free library service for everyone in the state with no unserved areas.
- Provide a free statewide library card that could be used for all materials or services at any library in the state.
- Hold political decision makers accountable for continued and increased funding, where tax caps will not affect library services.
- Mandate that there be a librarian, media aid, and library space in every school.
- Provide training in library board recruitment and offer continual training for library trustees.



- Include non-traditional coursework in Library Science curriculum, include internships, and promote a diversity of career choices. Offer more focused career training determined by career path.
- Continually evaluate and update policies, making policies with the user in mind, with less red tape and more trust.
- Remove fines and other fees.
- School administrators trust and support school libraries and librarians.
- Restructure library organizations from top to bottom, changing staffing levels and responsibilities to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries.
- Provide continual training on literacy in all forms, diversity education, and intellectual freedom.
- Invest in staff by providing multi-day staff retreats that allow opportunities for real change in libraries.
- Administrators provide daily face to face interaction and communication with staff.
- Be bold in marketing and advocating to build awareness and educate communities on what libraries can do and have. Build awareness of library resources with orientation videos on websites and through social media.
- Build beneficial community partnerships by getting out into the community rather than staying in the buildings.
- Increase opportunities for community outreach by providing programming in non-traditional locations, providing remote, non-traditional, and mobile access to materials.
- Build awareness for investing in libraries and explore more creative funding options.
- Provide advanced technology and internet access to everyone in the community by offering adequate wireless access in library buildings, providing remote hotspot access in locations around communities, and circulating mobile hotspots to provide access in homes.
- Utilize technology in non-traditional ways that could include using Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality to allow users to sweep devices across a shelf of books and immediately see information about the books, roaming technology access and support (library geek squad), loaning technology outside of the building, and using artificial intelligence (AI) and API (Application Programming Interface).





- Provide non-traditional resources such as technology, makerspaces, a tools library, or other non-traditional items.
- Eliminate the Dewey Decimal shelving schema or be creative in user-friendly ways to organize and shelve collections.
- Provide creative solutions in programming by providing free meals, provide daycare or child care services during school holidays and during programs.
- Explore options of being open 24/7, either in building access or other services available outside of open hours.
- Explore utilizing drones for delivery of resources.
- Provide creative options for transportation for library users by creating a public transportation option to the library (or remote services), ride-sharing options, reimbursement options, or the option of free shuttle service.
- Ask library users what they need or want rather than making decisions without input.
- Provide a safe space for difficult conversations to happen.

## The Harvest

After the rounds of conversation, the whole group came back together to share thoughts of the day, something they had learned, or any insights they had. Parting thoughts included:

- We need to continue having conversations with each other to gain ideas, to hear what others are doing, and to interact with those that work in all types of libraries.
- We need to continue to think outside the box, keep asking questions, and empower staff.
- It's important to create space for innovation, spaces that are welcoming, inviting, and flexible, and we need to remove the barrier of service desks.
- Transportation can be a huge barrier and opportunity for libraries to be creative in providing services, whether by providing remote access to materials either virtually or physically, by providing ride sharing vouchers (Uber, Lyft, etc.), making the library a bus stop, or partnering in other ways to provide free transportation so users can take advantage of library services. We need to look for non-traditional ways to provide access to materials, more Amazon-like service, drone delivery, materials lockers or vending machines, or return drops at remote locations.
- Technology is also a barrier with important opportunities to provide service to those without access. There are opportunities for partnering with schools and technology



companies to provide internet access at home, especially for students with devices from the schools. We need to explore library technology systems that work for libraries and users, where libraries have more control over licensed resources, and the flexibility through APIs to integrate more services and advanced technology such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence. We also need to look for opportunities to partner with schools to provide easy access to digital resources.

- Lobbying for statewide service is a priority, and then lobbying for a free statewide library card that will work in all libraries in Indiana no matter the library type.
- We need to be bold in creating positive partnerships with political decision makers to benefit libraries in lobbying and recruiting for library board members, as well as providing ongoing board training.



- We need to redefine our vision of success. It should be a shared vision with administration, the library board, staff, library users, and the community.
- Libraries need to be better advocates in building awareness, telling our stories, and all aspects of marketing, and we need to work on building mutually beneficial partnerships that can advocate on our behalf. We need to be building positive relationships and partnerships in the community and in our schools, as well as looking for unusual partnerships.
- All staff should be out in the community and involved in the community.
- Staff should be held accountable for excellence, they should feel inspired, share ideas, and have a space for creativity and innovation.
- We need to look at non-traditional methods for funding and take more risks for funding.
- Fines and fees were identified as large barriers. In removing fines, feelings of shame, resentment, or anger can be removed and provide a clean slate to have access to library materials. Removing fines and re-evaluating policies helps foster an environment of no-judgement and trusting people.