Woodlands Library Cooperative - A Vision Tour

Member librarians, governing board members and cooperative staff sat down with facilitator Lew Bender on August 22, 2014. Lew led us on a vision tour, where we dreamed big dreams for the cooperative of the future, and then we set goals and objectives in order to help make our dreams come true.

A visitor to Woodlands Library Cooperative circa 2019 will find:

- A larger Woodlands Library Cooperative, with more public library members, and all member libraries in business. There will be no discussions of broadband, as all of our libraries will have more than adequate internet connectivity to support library operations and patron needs.

- We are holding tight to our belief that by 2019, there will be a different form of public library funding in Michigan, and the yearly struggle for state aid and fears of losing penal fines will have disappeared.

- The cooperative and its membership will have become a force for library advocacy, not only within our region, but on the state and national levels. Our member librarians will have learned to be comfortable advocating on their behalf, and will work with the cooperative to advocate on behalf of all libraries in Michigan.

- In addition to plentiful library funding, the cooperative will be actively seeking out and exploring alternative forms of funding, whether it is through corporate gifts, foundations and/or grants. Cooperative staff will assist member libraries with their fundraising and grant writing efforts as well. The marketing and public relations arm of the cooperative's administration will have been successful – our member libraries will all report increases in the circulation of library items, uses of their databases, and numbers of active card holders.

- The administrative end of the cooperative will have transitioned from physical office space to a virtual space, with cooperative staff working from their respective home offices. Excellent levels of service to the members will continue, as the delivery of materials will continue to be a priority. Face-to-face meetings will be limited, with much of the cooperative's work being done via teleconference, web conference and other online tools. The cooperative's member-driven committees will work to provide programming, training and advocacy to and for all members. Online tools, such as forums, email lists and existing and emerging social media will be utilized. When face-to-face meetings are necessary, they will be held regionally. All member libraries will be engaged and aware of the cooperative's services.

- Woodlands Library Cooperative will keep its friendly and collegial atmosphere. Members will continue to enjoy networking and collaboration opportunities. We will seek out partnership opportunities with all compatible organizations throughout the state. Collaboration will be key, with regional, topical, systemic and topic-specific opportunities flowing.

- New forms of technology will be embraced by cooperative members, who will have ample opportunity to try things out and to learn how to use them. The cooperative will invest in tech toys and tech tools, including mobile labs, portable makerspace kits and other tools built with member input. Member librarians will be able to share their expertise with other libraries – training and collaboration opportunities will be encouraged to pop up as needed. Woodlands will help our member libraries with

their IT issues & concerns by pooling our internal people resources and offer opportunities for internal, one-on-one training and assistance for library staffs as well as the public.

- The programs and services that are working well in 2014-15 will continue, as the cooperative will always work hard to find economies of scale and bring quality products and opportunities to our member libraries to provide to the public, including e-Books and exclusive databases.

Strategic Plan – Major Goal Areas

Operations Goals

- No office
- Expand committees
- IT staff?
- Specialists
- Moving Board and Committee meetings to electronic/Skype - support in-person
- Board training/recruitment

Operations Tasks

A. Study feasibility of no office
   1. Compare current costs with replacement costs
   2. Identify libraries willing to host storage & meetings
   3. Investigate remote meeting software

B. Identify membership needs for committees
   1. Survey membership
   2. Identify committee members
   3. Investigate ways to promote committee participation

C. Identify specialists needed by members
   1. Survey Membership
   2. Review budget for funds
   3. Identify internal or external candidates

Resource Sharing Goals

- Aggregate purchasing
- Ancestry etc.
- E-resources
- Tech toys
- Paid delivery
- More shared collections

Resource Sharing Tasks

A. Negotiate with Ancestry, WT Cox, etc.

B. Explore expanding of current eResources
   - More copies
   - Alternate choices
   - More audio choices
   - Video options

C. Compile information from Co-op members for purchasing
   - Needs
   - Budget schedules (best times)

D. Survey member libraries for what resources (tech toys) they have available and can share (training, trying out, etc.)

User Groups, Networking and Training Goals

- Large/med/small library orientation
- Pool of consultants / Member library staff as experts (paid resources?)
- Identify Best practices
- Staff training support
- Different sorts portable labs/hands on training

User Groups, Networking and Training Tasks

A. Survey
   1. Capture areas of interest, expertise, use
   2. Different user groups may choose to connect in various ways
   3. Capture trainings and canvas for future access

B. Investigate
   1. Methodology options for collaboration
   2. Maintain focus on personal interaction
   3. What is Woodlands an expert in?

C. Actually do it!

D. Create a budget for paid consultants

Funding, Advocacy and Public Education Goals

- Identify friends / allies
- Best practices
- PR materials/support
- Information sharing
- Different forms of state funding
- Grants / Corporate/foundations

Funding, Advocacy and Public Education Tasks

A. Create alternate funding plans
   1. Research other funding models
   2. Identify grants and corporate sponsors
   3. Identify legislative champions
   4. Form outreach group to gain support among Co-ops

B. Explore growth strategies - identify new partners

C. Create promotional materials & explain who we are and what we do
   1. Create a marketing committee
   2. Survey member libraries to find out specifically what they can use
   3. Research alternate venues for promotion (radio, gas station)