Facilitating Constructive Contributions
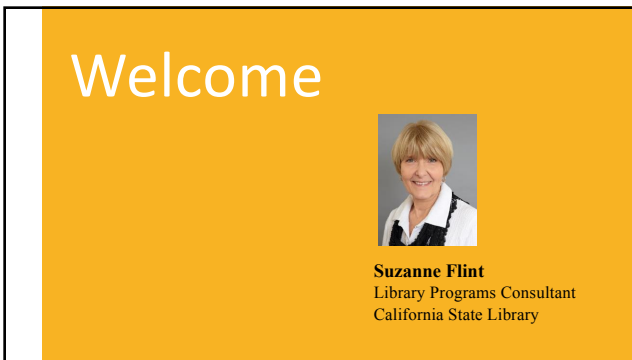
Dealing with Difficult Behaviors, Helping People Share from a Better Place

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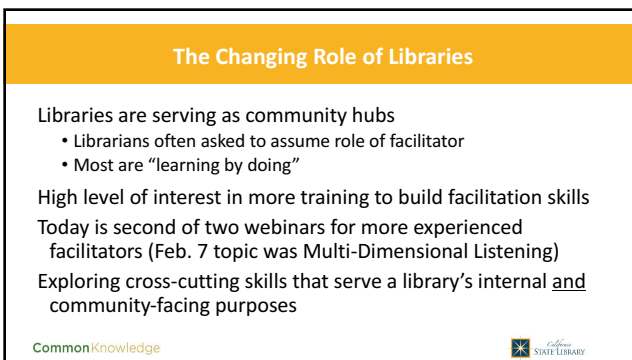
Welcome

Suzanne Flint
Library Programs Consultant
California State Library

The Changing Role of Libraries

Libraries are serving as community hubs
- Librarians often asked to assume role of facilitator
- Most are "learning by doing"

High level of interest in more training to build facilitation skills

Today is second of two webinars for more experienced facilitators (Feb. 7 topic was Multi-Dimensional Listening)

Exploring cross-cutting skills that serve a library's internal and community-facing purposes

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Lead Presenter

Susan Stuart Clark
Founder & Director of Common Knowledge Group (www.ckgroup.org)

- Community engagement trainer, consultant, researcher
- Research Deputy with Kettering Foundation
- Board member National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (nccd.org) which is leading Libraries Transforming Communities project with ALA
- Recently designed and conducted Libraries Lead the Way community engagement and facilitation skills program

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Poll Questions

- **Question #1** *Which common behavior in meetings do you find most challenging as a facilitator?*

a) *Dominates, won't share air time*

b) *Rambles; wanders off topic*

c) *Negative about everything*

d) *Silent*

e) *Other*

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Poll Questions

- **Question #2**
What is your experience facilitating difficult behaviors in community meetings?

a) *I'm pretty comfortable with what comes up*

b) *I've had a mix of good and bad experiences*

c) *I'm too nervous to try*

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Facilitating Constructive Contributions

I Shifting your perspective

II Designing for inclusive participation

III Preparing to facilitate

IV Supporting the dialogue

Then: Q&A about specific examples

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What many of us are afraid will happen

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Shift Your Perspective

~~Difficult people~~

Difficult behavior

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Shift Your Perspective

~~Difficult people~~
~~Difficult behavior~~

Fearful or frustrated contributor

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Foundational premise:

Everyone has something valuable to contribute

Featured Librarians

Eileen Labrador, San Diego Public Library
• Supervising Librarian, Area III
• System-wide lead on Harwood Community Conversations, San Diego STEM Ecosystem and Out of the Shadows Program
• Chair, Emergency Operations Committee

Patrick Remer, Contra Costa County Library
• Senior Community Library Manager
• Facilitating community process for new Pleasant Hill Library building
• Advisor to CSL's Early Learning with Families (ELF) Initiative and Touchpoints in Libraries Community Level Trainer

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Examples of collaborative learning

- "Harwood"-style community meetings
- Libraries Lead the Way
- Touchpoints training sessions
- Informal group encounters in the library

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Facilitating Constructive Contributions

Meeting design	• Purpose/Framing • Structure
Preparing to facilitate	• Understanding your role • Understanding your audience
Supporting the dialogue	• What you do • What the group does

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"Recipes give us confidence, but we have to cook with the ingredients we have." Patrick Remer

II

Designing for Inclusive Participation

- Purpose/Framing
- Structure

Comparing Debate and Dialogue

Debate	Dialogue
Two Sides	Multiple perspectives
Listen to enhance position	Listen to learn and connect
Winners and losers	Exchange for mutual understanding
Stressful; can easily trigger reactivity	Opens path to new possibilities

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Today's focus: Planning & facilitating

Group generated learning experience that develops shared understanding about a situation of common concern

Designing for Constructive Contributions

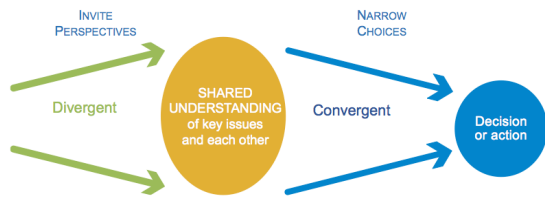1 – Framing the conversation as an inclusive dialogue
- Set expectations that the <u>purpose is to learn</u>
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Jointly developing a shared understanding about the situation

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The "Arc" of a Conversation

INVITE PERSPECTIVES

NARROW CHOICES

Divergent

SHARED UNDERSTANDING of key issues and each other

Convergent

Decision or action

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Designing for Constructive Contributions

2 – <u>Structure</u> with multiple occasions and multiple formats for sharing
- When people walk in the room
- Icebreaker; get people talking with a few others as soon as possible
- Mix of large group and small group
- Provide chances to reflect and write solo before sharing
- On sensitive topics, comments can be drawn out of a box

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III

Preparing to Facilitate

- Your role
- Your audience

Librarian Service versus Facilitation

Familiar Roles

- *Enforce rules of conduct*
- *Moderate tightly scheduled programming*
- *Teach a class*

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Librarian Service versus Facilitation
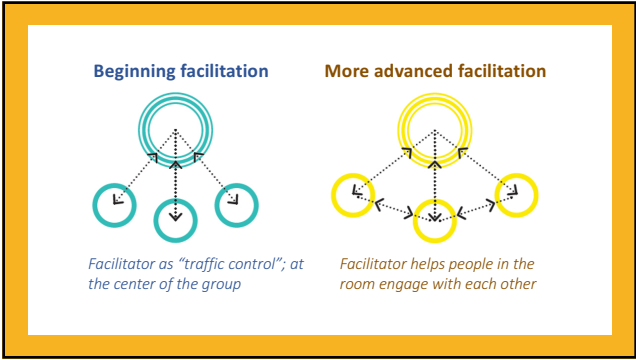
Familiar Roles

- *Enforce rules of conduct*
- *Moderate tightly scheduled programming*
- *Teach a class*

Different Role

- *Create a sense of shared purpose*
- *Enlist the whole group in the learning experience*
- *Encourage contributions from all kinds of participants*

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Beginning facilitation

More advanced facilitation

Facilitator as "traffic control"; at the center of the group

Facilitator helps people in the room engage with each other

Understanding Yourself & Your Role

What is your starting point?
- Mindset of authentic facilitation
- Vulnerability and transparency
- Touchpoints: "Recognize what you bring to the interaction."

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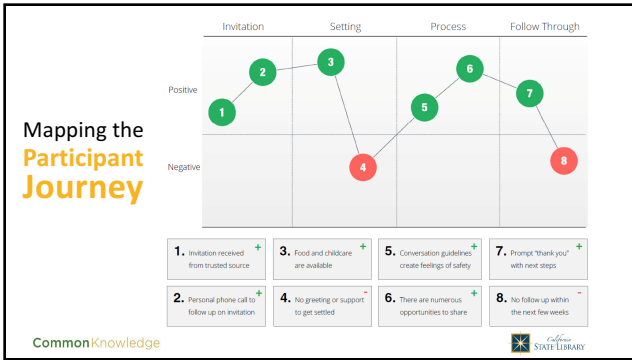
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Understanding Your Audience

Be Curious About Your Participants
- How many will know each other?
- Will they bring more positive or more negative experiences with past meetings?
- What cultural and generational variables do you anticipate?
- Are there recent developments to be sensitive to?

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Mapping the **Participant** **Journey**

	Invitation	Setting	Process	Follow Through
Positive				
Negative				

1. Invitation received from trusted source +	**3.** Food and childcare are available +	**5.** Conversation guidelines create feelings of safety +	**7.** Prompt "thank you" with next steps +
2. Personal phone call to follow up on invitation +	**4.** No greeting or support to get settled –	**6.** There are numerous opportunities to share +	**8.** No follow up within the next few weeks –

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IV

Supporting the Dialogue

• What you do
• What the group does

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Sample Conversation Guidelines

• Treat each other with respect
• Listen to learn
• Help make sure everyone has a chance to share
• Assume good intentions
• Your questions are valuable

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Key practice: Aligning group expectations

- Recognize that we all bring a variety of expectations
- Clarify meeting purpose; create space for people to adjust their expectations
- Create early opportunities for people to contribute
- Consistently model inclusion

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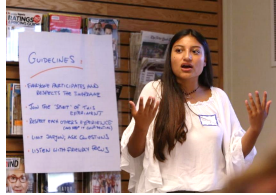
Key practice: Navigating uncertainty together

- Encourage persistent curiosity
- Embrace the messiness of the process
- Create opportunities for participants to share reactions
- Allow the group to drive the meaning-making

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Modeling Authentic Facilitation

Someone dominates?

- Give them a different way to share (e.g., via worksheet)
- Find out what they feel has not been heard so it can be captured
- Refer back to the guidelines and the benefits of learning together
- Make the challenge transparent: "What I'm struggling with is wanting to hear what you are sharing while also needing to hear multiple perspectives to get to shared understanding"
- If needed, suggest a separate conversation after the meeting or have a "designated listener" take them out in the hall.

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V

Question
& Answer

Resources for Facilitators

•**Recording of Feb 7 webinar: Facilitating Multi-Dimensional Listening** vimeo.com/254771490

•**Habits of Mind** elf2.library.ca.gov/how/resources.html

•**Harwood Public Innovations for CA Public Libraries** www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/harwood/

•**Libraries Lead the Way** northnetlibs.org/libraries-lead-the-way/

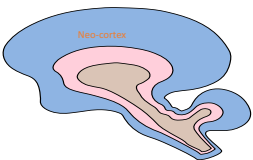•**Libraries Transforming Communities -- ALA & NCDD:** www.ala.org/ltc-models

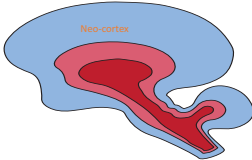**Common**Knowledge — California STATE LIBRARY

Thank You!

Create the conditions for learning

Calm: Ready to listen, learn and participate

Flooded: Anger or fear, fight or flight

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