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

Welcome

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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
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 (ncdd.org) which is leading Libraries Transforming Communities project with ALA
• Recently designed and conducted Libraries Lead the Way community engagement and facilitation skills program

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

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
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

What many of us are afraid will happen

Shift Your Perspective

Difficult people
Difficult behavior
Shift Your Perspective

Difficult people
Difficult behavior
Fearful or frustrated contributor

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
Examples of collaborative learning

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

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

“Recipes give us confidence, but we have to cook with the ingredients we have.” — Patrick Remer
Designing for Inclusive Participation

• Purpose/Framing
• Structure

Comparing Debate and Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debate</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Sides</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to enhance position</td>
<td>Listen to learn and connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winners and losers</td>
<td>Exchange for mutual understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressful; can easily trigger reactivity</td>
<td>Opens path to new possibilities</td>
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</tbody>
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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 purpose is to learn
   - There are no right or wrong answers
   - Jointly developing a shared understanding about the situation

The “Arc” of a Conversation

Designing for Constructive Contributions

2 – Structure 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
Preparing to Facilitate

- Your role
- Your audience

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
Beginning facilitation

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

More advanced facilitation

Facilitator helps people in the room engage with each other

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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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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?
Mapping the Participant Journey

Supporting the Dialogue

- What you do
- What the group does

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
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

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

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.
Facilitating Constructive Contributions

- **Meeting design**
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  - Structure

- **Preparing to facilitate**
  - Understanding your role
  - Understanding your audience

- **Supporting the dialogue**
  - What you do
  - What the group does

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**Question & Answer**

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**Resources for Facilitators**

- Recording of Feb 7 webinar: Facilitating Multi-Dimensional Listening [vimeo.com/254771490](vimeo.com/254771490)
- Habits of Mind [library.ca.gov/how/resources.html](library.ca.gov/how/resources.html)
- Harwood Public Innovations for CA Public Libraries [www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/harwood/](www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/harwood/)
- Libraries Lead the Way [www.library.ca.gov/libraries/lead-the-way/](www.library.ca.gov/libraries/lead-the-way/)
- Libraries Transforming Communities -- ALA & NCDD: [www.ala.org/ltc/models](www.ala.org/ltc/models)
Thank You!

Create the conditions for learning

Calm: Ready to listen, learn and participate

Flooded: Anger or fear, fight or flight