

MSC Partners discussion

Themes

What do you value about Partners?

Conceptual value:

We embrace the concept that Partners is, in essence, one single library in Montana, with shared materials, shared patrons, and shared goals.

Partners can serve as a pilot group for new ideas (courier, WorldShare, single-use library cards, centralized acquisitions)

Patrons appreciate the consistency across libraries

Networking value:

Learning from other librarians is a great value of Partners

Partners provide assistance to one another

Collections:

Access to a huge shared collection saves money, physical space, and duplication of effort

Partners keeps us apprised of what patrons are checking out at a statewide level

Access to this collection also allows libraries to maintain specialized collections that would otherwise have been weeded due to space constraints or low local usage

Keeps our circulation numbers up

Floating collections put new items on our shelves

Saves time and money on interlibrary loan

Without Partners, our patrons would simply have to go without requested materials because we could not afford to purchase or ILL materials at our current level of demand

Other services:

Extending use of our AV polishing and repair service to Partner libraries

Sharing donations of value

Shared cataloging services

What challenges are you seeing or experiencing in Partners?

Policies and procedures:

It seems that not all libraries agree that we are a shared collection with shared patrons

Libraries may have local internal practices that conflict with Partners policies and procedures

There is a perception among some that big libraries dictate how Partners should run

Disagreement about replacement policy / mistrust in communication about damaged items

Training:

New Partners libraries need training and orientation to prepare them for the changing workload

Partner libraries need training on how to use scheduled reports

Holds:

Buying new books only to send them immediately to another library

Some libraries feel that they purchase more than their share of in-demand titles

Partners patrons place more holds on our collection than our local patrons do / small libraries being net lenders / holds sheltering at large libraries

Courier:

Crates are not always processed in a timely manner

Long wait times for courier deliveries

Our staff time and physical space to devote to Partners is not quite enough to keep up with demand

What is your definition of success for Partners?

Partners is successful each time a user receives, in a reasonably timely fashion, an item they wanted from another library

Every library's patrons have consistent, fair access to all materials owned by all Partners, unless those materials are physically exempt from circulation, subject to licensing restrictions, or matched by circulating items.

Patrons have access to a wide variety of items

Partners is an evolving, growing organization that recruits and retains members from across Montana

All libraries commit to a borderless approach to item ownership, patron ownership, and customer service – we are all branches of one library

All libraries have the capacity and resources to fulfill both local and Partners obligations

Member libraries save money

Libraries take responsibility for damaged or lost items

Libraries have access to a viable courier network

Libraries follow the standards and guidelines set forth by the Montana Shared Catalog

Member libraries understand the purpose and spirit of the Partners network and can explain its value to their communities, governing bodies, and other stakeholders

Partner libraries feel like they are enjoying equitable benefits within the group

Partner libraries collaborate respectfully with one another and feel that their input is equally valued within the group

Partner libraries recognize that we all want the same thing – to provide our communities with the best library services and the most resources possible in the most economical manner.

What do you think is the State Library's role in relation to Partners?

**Follow-up question: as you listen to these, would you assign these responsibilities to the State Library, or to the MSC Executive Board, or to the Partners board, or someone else?*

Facilitation and leadership:

Moderate Partners discussions

Establish expectations for the group. We need a guiding force to help us all internalize and be able to articulate the value and impact of Partners

Leadership and accountability is best provided by the State Library

Coach Partners on how to resolve conflict as a group

Establish ground rules for productive and respectful communication in meetings

Assist with outreach:

Be the champions for Partners

Assist with vetting new members and connecting them with mentors in the group

Promote site visits between members

Introduce new library directors to Partners goals, values, policies, and procedures

Create a training manual for new members that is an interim document between the membership preparation plan and the policies and procedures manual

Create a brochure for promoting Partners to Boards

Organize and offer more training on collaboration

Source of information and guidance:

Be a resource for knowledge and assistance with the catalog

Continue to provide meaningful statistics and simple, concise analyses with clear takeaways for the group

Assume a bigger operational and directional role to benefit the consortium. Follow through with members about responsibilities, reminding them, where warranted, about obligations to conduct timely transit and item management. Use arising issues as an opportunity to explain how Partners enhances circulation statistics and gives value to an individual library. Encourage the sharing mentality by explaining the return on investment that holds fulfillment and floating collections offer.

Policy and procedural assistance:

Review the membership contract for updating and amending

Provide an easy way for members to leave Partners

Serve as a secretary, documenting and being able to explain the group's decisions and directing questions to the appropriate Partner contacts

Document expectations and training for the Partners board

System administration:

Assist in implementing decisions made by Partners, without being responsible for monitoring or resolving

Cataloging guidance and improvement

Continue to improve and optimize Enterprise and Workflows for sharing group use

Courier coordination:

Ensure that libraries have affordable access to the courier

Monitoring:

Make note of inconsistencies in a member's practices that indicates a training need

Holding libraries accountable:

MSL should hold Partner libraries accountable for not following procedures