

President's Update - August 11, 2016

At the Howell Library we've begun a new strategic planning process. Our facilitator has challenged us to define our own highest purpose as an individual as well as the highest purpose of the library. This is no easy task. However, when we can state our highest purpose with a vision, the planning strategies will fall into place rather easily.

One of the books I recently read, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth, defines purpose this way; the intention to contribute to the well-being of others . Purpose is deeper than intention and /or goals. It is like a calling.

As the Michigan Library Association is celebrating its 125th anniversary, I reflect upon its mission: *Helping libraries and library professionals succeed*, which sounds a lot like the definition of purpose. This purpose can be expressed in many different ways by the many people who are involved.

My first experience as a member of the MLA board was in the early 1980s when I was a relatively new and young professional. Eleanor Pinkham was the President of MLA. She was quite skilled at running an effective meeting, bringing all board members into the discussion and keeping the tone very civil. She made me feel welcome and excited about being part of something important. I learned much under her guidance. Looking back, she was a true mentor. Shortly after her term as MLA President, she retired from her position as the director of the Kalamazoo College Library. Although it's been more than 30 years since I served with Eleanor, I still remember some of the things that I learned from her example.

Finding positive role models is one of the greatest gifts that being active in MLA has brought to me. Another gift is the opportunity to work together with others on difficult challenges to make something happen that I couldn't have done on my own, such as getting legislation passed that has benefitted libraries and library users. There is always strength in numbers, especially when people work in harmony together toward a goal. A quote in another book I read recently, *A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World* by Daniel Goleman, is The human connection is key. We struggle together, not as isolated individuals. We work with one another, commit to one another, act with one another. This quote and the song, *One Voice* by The Wailin Jennys, reinforce how working together makes us all stronger.

As I am nearing the end of my professional career, it feels like I've come full circle. I can pay it forward by working alongside younger professionals and passing on some knowledge about perseverance and passion for librarians and libraries.

What about my purpose? I'm working on developing it in a form that can be shared. I'll keep you posted.

(I can highly recommend both books that I quoted above as well as the Wailin Jennys song. If your library does not have them, they are available in MeLCat.)

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