The CLC Reference and Instruction Roundtable had its inaugural meeting on Thursday, July 19, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Ridgefield Library. Twenty-two people attended the meeting.

The meeting was kicked off with introductions by all members. Alena Principato from CLC spoke about the main purposes of CLC: to save money for all 800 CT libraries by providing discounts and to provide professional development opportunities, including roundtables. Alena had a handout on Princh printing solutions for libraries. She also announced that there is a new staff member, Julie Yulo-Medeiros, who is the Member Relations Manager for School and Academic Libraries. Alena Principato is the Member Relations Manager for Public and Special Libraries.

Rachel Leff presented the goals/mission she and Christie Mitchell propose for the roundtable:

- We believe in the central importance of reference and instruction in libraries and we wanted to be a part of a larger community of reference and instruction librarians.
- Through a roundtable, we could gather librarians together to share ideas and best practices. It would also be a way to get to know and support our colleagues. And we hope that the connections we create in the roundtable can extend outside of these meetings to create a network of librarians to reach out to with questions and ideas.
- Lastly, and importantly, a roundtable offers a forum for raising awareness of recommendations from state and national professional organizations.
- We suggested monthly meetings: half professional development (offer learning opportunities through presentations) and half best practices (meetings geared toward sharing ideas and discussing the policies and practices at our libraries on various topics).
- To make the meetings more accessible to our colleagues across the state, we hope to meet in different locations. We also are looking into incorporating a virtual component, potentially using a Zoom account from CLC or another online solution. We are also open to the idea of a Facebook group for the roundtable, even a listserv, if warranted. And we intend to post meeting notes on the CLC Roundtable page.

**Presentation of Suggested Meeting Topics**

**Reference Topics – Presented by Christie Mitchell**

- **Basic Reference Skills** – Reference Interview, patron needs and transactions with patrons, and anything that happens at the Reference Desk.

**Collections**

- **Reference Collections** – Developing and weeding print reference collections. What reference sources are purchased and used today? How do you use standing orders? How do you bring patrons to use the reference collection? Have you turned over some reference materials to circulating collection? Where are reference materials located and how do patrons find them.
- **Building Reference Pages on Library Websites** – What to include? Besides databases, do you include outside resources/websites with links? What is the role of the library’s online reference? Virtual reference chat and email how is it working? Mobile services?

- **Collection Development for Fiction and Nonfiction** – How does it work at your library? Who participates in ordering and collection development? What reviews do you read? Are nonfiction subjects assigned to various librarians or does everyone share in ordering?

**Print Resources and Special Collections**

- **Medical and Health Reference** – Building a reference and circulating collection and recommending good sources such as UConn’s Health Center Library and Healthnet. Do you have a core medical reference collection? How do you help patrons with searches? Review and discuss RUSA’s Health and Medical Reference Guidelines. We would be interested in having a medical librarian contribute to this discussion.

- **Legal Reference** – Building a collection of legal resources and utilizing CT Judicial Branch Law Libraries and Court Service Centers.

- **Financial Resources** – Money Smart Week and beyond. Resources to improve financial literacy.

- **Genealogy and Local History** – Best practices. Do you charge? Relationships with local historical societies. What state and regional resources are available? Do we want to take a closer look at some of these resources, such as the Connecticut Historical Society?

- **Politics** – How do you handle politics in the library? Do you have information and resources about fake news? How do you remain neutral when patrons want to talk to you about politics? What do you say? What political books do you order and display? What programs do you have? What else should we be doing to support civil/social literacy in our community?

**Administrative Topics**

- **Privacy & Security** – ALA believes that it is essential that libraries ensure privacy and confidentiality; they are core library values. Let’s review ALA library privacy resources and discuss best practices. Discuss practical recommendations, such as teaching patrons not to leave their personal papers by the computer or copier, to delete any documents on public computers, and more.

**Instruction Topics – Presented by Rachel Leff**

Instruction and reference go hand in hand, and most of us are accustomed to teaching patrons on a one-on-one basis. But many of us are also called upon to teach classes, which isn’t always something we feel confident about. Here are some suggested topics to cover.

**Address Instructional Design Basics**

- What to teach?
  - How do you figure out what classes to offer?
  - How do we discover and then meet the instructional needs of our communities?
  - Are there underserved parts of our communities that could benefit from instruction at the library?
Ideas for Specific Instruction Topics

- Techniques for teaching at the appropriate skill level
- Teaching technology to adults, especially technology-averse adults
- Teaching to seniors (either one-on-one or as a group)
- Database instruction

Using the Technology We Already Have to Expand Our Instruction Offerings

- Using Lynda.com as a teaching tool
- Blending online and classroom learning to improve online learning outcomes
- MOOCs at the library

Summary of Discussion and Suggested Topics

Next, we opened up the discussion to everyone to suggest topics they’d like to explore in coming meetings. Below is a summary of the discussion.

General Subjects

Using MOOCs

One library has used Yale Open Courses in collaboration with a local Historical Society, with historical themes. They had 10-15 attendees on average. Topics included the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.

Another library discussed their successful experience with Coursera courses. For one course, there were 40 registrants and about 20 completed all sessions. The library blended watching the videos with group discussion. Lectures were about 1 hour 45 minutes per week. Writing assignments were optional for library participants. Coursera offers a certificate of completion.

Shifting Priorities of the Print Reference Collection

Topics discussed included weeding, space considerations, switching reference resources to the circulating collection, and focus on services more than collections.

Collection Development/Ordering

Ordering methods included selection committees, subject specialists, and vendor selected lists.
Specific Subjects and Services

Legal: CT Judicial Branch Law Libraries: They are open to the public and offer services and resources that we would like to know more about.

Medical and Health Reference

Business and Personal Finance

Genealogy/Local History

Training Staff: How to train part-time and backup staff/librarians working at the reference desk? What jobs are assigned and how are they assigned? What to do when the desk is slow?

Promoting Databases and teaching patrons to use databases instead of Google.


Extra Services: What extra services are you providing? Some examples participants shared: proctoring, proofreading, resume help, drop-in sessions, and booking a librarian, job seeker programs, and programs for patrons re-entering the workforce. Related question: how much time should we spend with one patron?

Privacy: Helping patrons with issues involving personal information. For example, passwords, health information, and banking. Create a list of trusted local resources for patrons for help with issues involving protected personal information (PPI). Dealing with lost items such as phones, computers, USB drives, and IDs.

Tip of the Day: Refer patrons to their financial institution/local branch for help with online banking and other financial accounts.

Conclusion of Meeting and Next Steps

We closed the meeting with the following suggestions for future meetings:

- Meet every other month
- Thursday mornings are good
- One main topic per session
- Allow for free time for questions
- Use group email and CLC messaging to stay in contact

Any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Christie Mitchell at camitchell@ridgefieldlibrary.org or Rachel Leff at rmleff@ridgefieldlibrary.org.