LOCAL CONNECTIONS
Creating a Community Librarians’ Association

Joseph N. Anderson, Logan Library
Shawn Bliss, Utah State Library Cache/Rich Bookmobile
Anne Hedrich, USU Merrill–Cazier Library
Pamela N. Martin, USU Merrill–Cazier Library
Puanani Mateaki, fmr of Stevens–Henager College, Logan
Robert Shupe, Logan Library
Liz Woolcott, USU Merrill–Cazier Library

How we did it:

When one person spoke up in 2011, we found others were supportive and had the same idea.

Some felt disconnected from larger organizations and some could not travel around the state and region.

A Facebook group was started.

Invitations to the first meetings in 2012 were personally delivered to libraries of all kinds.

In those meetings, all agreed on the idea of an association. Its name and geographic scope were decided.

A Google group was started, allowing those without Facebook accounts to join the conversations.

Bylaws were written by a committee of volunteers:

- Specified positions, including term and duties
  - President, Vice President, Past President, Secretary, three Members at Large (traditionally one each from school, public and academic libraries)
  - One year terms for all
  - Vice President becomes President, then Past President
- Specified election rules
- Specified frequency of business meetings
  - Every January, March, May, July, September, November

It was decided that, at this time, there would be no cost to join and participate.

There were 47 members in 2012.

Members joined by giving us their name and email address, usually at one of our meetings.

The first Executive Committee was elected to serve in 2013.

A Facebook page was started (facebook.com/cachevalleylibraryassociation) and the Facebook group and Google group were discontinued. A Webmaster was appointed to manage all technology needs. We also began sending out periodic emails to keep everyone informed.

Our meetings are traditionally held at different types of libraries around the valley on Thursday evenings (survey respondents said this was best). The July meeting is traditionally an outside family event.

There were 86 members by end of 2013.

A logo contest was held and a winner was selected.

A historian was appointed to select documents that tell the history of the previous year and deposit them in our official archive at the USU Merrill–Cazier Library each January.

We began holding social activities (bike ride, brunch at waffle house, etc.) outside normal meetings.

A tradition was begun of presenting an annual Library Hero award.

There were 101 members by end of 2014.

Our first website was created (cachelibraries.blogspot.com).

Feel free to contact us with questions: cachelibraries@gmail.com
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How you might do it:

Reach out: Search out other libraries in your region. Google search for libraries and schools in your area. If possible, visit these libraries and see if they are interested in networking. You don’t need a specific idea in mind to start. Meet new librarians and learn what kind of organization would be most useful for your local community of librarians and libraries.

Be persistent & serious about your intentions: If you are passionate about this idea, let others know it. If you run into naysayers, don’t let them keep you from creating something great. Don’t get stuck in the mire. If you decide to create an association, there are many decisions to make (membership, geographic area, dues, events, etc.). While these decisions can seem daunting, forge ahead! The reward is worth the work.

Be friendly & have fun: It’s always nice to have time for socializing at events. Every CVLA meeting includes time to mix & mingle with fellow Cache Valley librarians, and some events are purely social. You’re more likely to help and support each other if you have created relationships.

Discuss goals or aspirations: What is the purpose of the group? What do you hope to achieve? Allow anyone interested to give input on the future of your group. You never know where a good idea will come from.

Be open: Having expectations and goals for your library community is important, but keep an open mind. Try new things! Your group might not look like ours. What is right for you? Is a formal association the best fit for your community? Should you have membership dues? Bylaws? Events?

Share: Ask librarians to share not only their best practices, but also events, news, successes and (dare we say?) failures from their libraries. Promote each other’s events. Everyone benefits!

Make your group as democratic as possible: We found that including librarians of all types (and even students, board members, and ordinary citizens) has brought diversity, and thus empathy, to our association. We learn from perspectives different than our own.

Be willing to donate time: An association is only as good as its members. You may or may not be able to participate on your employer’s time, but either way, the investment of your time and effort will most likely yield a hefty return.

Stay connected: Communication is essential!

- In person: Regular meetings keep the group and relationships moving forward. Find out what days of the week, times in the day, and frequency work best for everyone, and stick to them.
- Virtually (email, social media, website): Keep everyone in the loop between meetings.

Consider the situations of different librarians: Some may need a professional development element to receive permission to attend meetings “on the clock.” Some may only be able to meet after work hours. Some may find it difficult to find staff to cover service desks while they are away.

Get the word out: Distribute press releases and keep you local newspapers, radio stations, and other media outlets in the loop. Spread the word online via social networking and/or email lists. Promote your group to 1) reach other librarians, and 2) raise the profile of libraries and librarians in your community.

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