

Advisory Board Grant Report 2015-2016

Deborah Eicher-Catt, Professor
Communication Arts & Sciences

Title of Project: Narratives, Culture Re-imagining, and the York County Library System

Amount Requested: \$2,971.57

Amount Funded: \$2,971.57

This grant supported the cost of a one-course release from teaching for fall 2015. The course release allowed me to continue my work on a collaborative research project with the York County District Library Consultant, Ms. Mina Edmondson. This project began as a service learning opportunity for Communication Arts & Sciences majors enrolled in my communication research methods class fall 2014. At that time, they collected organizational narratives from many district library staff and administration at all but one library within the county system. Each student conducted three recorded interviews and transcribed the data. The objective of our study was to gather organizational stories from personnel about their experiences working within the system with the explicit aim of documenting the degree to which their stories represented cultural re-imagining. As a study fully endorsed by the state-wide "Re-imagining Libraries" initiative, it is theorized that storytelling helps library systems strategize, develop, and share stories of why libraries still matter in the digital age.

This advisory board grant thus enabled Mina and I to work more closely during fall 2015 semester to critically assess the results of the service learning initiative. We thoroughly analyzed the data, interpreted the results (and thus demonstrated the value of storytelling in understanding organizational culture change), and researched appropriate publication outlets for our results. Our collaborative efforts produced a written report that has been shared with the library staff and administration. In addition, we compiled a twenty-five page, academic manuscript that has been submitted (February 2016) for publication review to the journal, *Public Library Quarterly*. We are awaiting the results of that peer review. As an extension of this important collaboration, Mina and I have been invited to be keynote speakers at the York County district's in-service training session to be held May 6, 2016 at Martin Memorial Library. We are in the midst of preparing that presentation and designing an additional storytelling workshop for the attendees. We also are scheduled to present our research at the Pennsylvania Library Association's annual conference to be held in October 2016 in the Pocono's. This grant thus afforded me the opportunity to devote valuable time to this rewarding project. Thank you.