To: Professor Steven K. Bowers

From: Allison Berger

Date: May 27, 2023

Re: Podcast Reaction Report

The purpose of this memo is to share my reactions and takeaways after listening to the podcast, *Cataloging the Community with James LaRue*. I will also briefly explain my thoughts on using podcasts as a way to continue to develop professionally.

In this memo, I started by reviewing LaRue's process of cataloging the community. Then, I explained my three takeaways: interviews are powerful tools, contacting influencers can be beneficial, and it is important to remember that every community has its own set of issues. Lastly, I closed with my thoughts on using podcasts as a professional development tool.

In the podcast, *Cataloging the Community with James LaRue*, LaRue shares how he is helping libraries become more community-centric by cataloging the community; this process involves using common skills that all librarians know: cataloging, reference interviews, and database creation. The first step in this process of cataloging the community is to meet with the staff and the board of the library and identify the main influencers or leaders within the community. The second step essentially involves a librarian or two performing a reference interview to learn more about the community through the influencers' insights into the community. LaRue emphasizes that it is important for these appointments to take place outside of the library, preferably in a place of the influencers' choosing, somewhere they feel comfortable and in control. The third

step involves creating a database of sorts. LaRue discovered the best way to go about this step is to record the influencers' responses in a Google Form, so they automatically populate a spreadsheet that can be reviewed later. The fourth step is comparing the results of the interviews with members of the library and highlighting the major issues that were consistently talked about by the influencers. The fifth step involves inviting the influencers to the library to discuss the library's findings from the interviews. This leads to a meeting where the prominent members of the community and the library discuss the issues in the community and how the library would be able to step in and help resolve the issues. Overall, this process leads to several benefits for libraries, which are greater visibility, better relationships with influential people, more support, increased knowledge on current issues, an opportunity to contribute to the community, and the possibility that the librarians become influential figures themselves.

My first takeaway from this podcast is that interviews can be powerful tools. I have always known that gathering information and feedback is crucial to making decisions, changes, etc., but my go-to method has always been to create a survey with open- and closed-ended questions. I thought this tool was the easiest way to gather the thoughts and ideas from the most people. After listening to this podcast, I realized that in-person interviews can be more informative and powerful than surveys, depending on the reason you are collecting information. As LaRue expressed, interviews allow you to go more in-depth and possibly discover unexpected patterns or information. Interviews often prompt people to share their passions; when people become passionate, they are more likely to be more open and have more fun. All in all, interviews are powerful tools because they can lead to great conversations and unexpected information while being exciting and enjoyable for all parties involved.

My second takeaway from this podcast is contacting influencers can be beneficial. Information about the issues in a community can be collected from anyone, but LaRue takes it a step further. I was impressed by LaRue's decision to go straight to the main influencers because it showed great forward thinking of the benefits that can come from interacting with influencers. Not only can influencers give valuable information about the community, but they also give the library greater visibility and better support. This occurs if librarians are able to maintain a good relationship with the influencers that they interviewed since the influencers are likely to continue to interact with the library, causing other influencers that they know to become curious about the library. If more influencers begin to interact with the library, then it will gain even more support.

My third takeaway from this podcast is it is important to remember that every community has its own issues to focus on. LaRue points out that he did interviews in two Arizona libraries that were only thirty miles apart and they had completely different issues. At first, I was surprised, but then I realized that communities near me, that are less than thirty miles apart, consist of completely different people and classes, so it makes sense that they would have different issues. Often, it feels like people assume all libraries face the same issues, so it is important to remember that libraries are created to help their specific community, and each community has their own issues.

In conclusion, this podcast was interesting and educational. It provided a great example of how a library's leadership can go about making the library more community-centric while also gaining several other benefits that will help the library in the long run (better support, more visibility, etc.). If most podcasts are as informative as this one, then I will begin to listen to more podcasts as a way to develop as a professional. They seem to be a great source to learn lessons from current professionals in the field. Do you have any podcasts recommendations for me?