Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #4, “Strategically Planning the Library”
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Ken Harvey: 00:02 Welcome the episode number four of Check It Out!, the podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds. This podcast is brought to you by Sno-Isle Libraries and the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.

Cindy Tingley: 00:14 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:22 My co-host for this interview is Cindy Tingley. Hi, Cindy.

Cindy Tingley: 00:25 Hi, Ken.

Ken Harvey: 00:26 Hey, I'm glad to have you with me. We are really pleased to spend some time with a very special studio guest. I'd like to introduce to our audience our deputy director for Sno-Isle Libraries, Kendra Trachta.

Kendra Trachta: 00:40 Hi.

Ken Harvey: 00:40 Hey, Kendra.

Kendra Trachta: 00:40 I'm glad to be here. Happy afternoon.

Ken Harvey: 00:44 Well, we are pleased to have her. I wanted to just tell the audience a little bit about Kendra. She has been our deputy director at Sno-Isle Libraries since 2011. She achieved her Master’s degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Texas-Austin. She's been a librarian for about how many years 20, 25 years?

Kendra Trachta: 01:07 It depends on how I'm feeling, if it's just over 25 or almost 30.

Ken Harvey: 01:13 Okay. Now I'm sure there are some days when it seems longer or shorter than others.

Kendra Trachta: 01:19 Absolutely.
Ken Harvey: 01:21 The audience may be interested to know that her previous leadership positions included library director of the Institute of Texan Cultures and assistant director of the San Antonio Public Library.

Kendra Trachta: 01:33 Right. I always get jokes about the oxymoron of Texan cultures, but it's a great museum that celebrates the background of all of the different groups that settled in Texas. We had a huge historic photograph collection-

Cindy Tingley: 01:51 Wow!

Kendra Trachta: 01:52 ... that the library was very proud of.

Ken Harvey: 01:54 Yeah. I know from a little bit of Texan history that there were a lot of different groups that settled there. Those who settled there found other groups there before they were there.

Kendra Trachta: 02:05 Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 02:06 There's a lot of history there. I'm just wondering if we could just start out, Kendra, with you just taking maybe a minute or two to tell the audience a little bit about yourself beyond what I just got out of you.

Kendra Trachta: 02:18 Sure. I have been a librarian my entire career. I always describe myself as a dog person, because I know that we librarians are often categorized as cat people. I want to clear that up right away. Just a dog person.

Ken Harvey: 02:41 What kind of dog?

Kendra Trachta: 02:44 Terriers.

Ken Harvey: 02:45 Oh.

Cindy Tingley: 02:46 Oh, wonderful.

Kendra Trachta: 02:49 Absolutely. I always say a Scottish terrier is my totem animal or my spirit animal, because they are small. When people see them, they may not take them too seriously. But, man, if they get a hold of you or your ankle, or when I get a hold of an idea because I don't bite peoples ankles, I do not let go, and neither do Scottish terriers.

Ken Harvey: 03:24 Well, I know that from some experience because I had one when I was a child, too.
Kendra Trachta: 03:29 They're great.

Cindy Tingley: 03:30 I currently have a Min Pin-Jack Russell mix, so I can totally relate to the terrier family.

Kendra Trachta: 03:35 Yeah. My daughter and I were having breakfast this morning, and there was a golden retriever waiting outside the coffee shop, just sitting, no leash, looking through the window, waiting for her person to come back outside. We both said, "Oh, a terrier would never ..."

Cindy Tingley: 03:54 Never.

Kendra Trachta: 03:55 It must be nice to have a well-behaved dog.

Ken Harvey: 03:59 Your dog's name is?

Kendra Trachta: 04:01 Oh, Moxie.

Ken Harvey: 04:02 Moxie.

Kendra Trachta: 04:03 She is full of moxie. She's just great. She's, as I described, a terrier.

Ken Harvey: 04:12 You grew up with dogs as well, family, or what did you grow up with?

Kendra Trachta: 04:16 Some. We had a few dogs. We had an Irish setter, but Duffy was really the anomaly. Otherwise, it's always been terriers. Moxie is the third Scottish terrier my husband and I have had since we've been married.

Ken Harvey: 04:33 Oh, and never a cat.

Kendra Trachta: 04:35 Never a cat.

Ken Harvey: 04:37 Okay.

Kendra Trachta: 04:37 I might have had a cat, but everyone else in the family is allergic.

Ken Harvey: 04:44 Well, it sounds like Moxie is well-loved and highly regarded at home.

Kendra Trachta: 04:49 Absolutely.
Ken Harvey: 04:51 Tell us a little bit about what being a deputy director is like. What does your job entail?

Kendra Trachta: 05:00 Well, the first thing people ask me is if I get one of those little star badges since I'm the deputy. Unfortunately, I do not. But it really involves some of everything because I am really the leader for the effort to identify our strategic priorities, align all of our services with our purpose, and make sure that the incredible staff we have working in our community libraries have the resources they need to do the great work that they do. With those 23 libraries across two counties, we've got about 400 people working in them.

Ken Harvey: 05:54 Wow!

Kendra Trachta: 05:55 That's in a nutshell.

Ken Harvey: 05:57 That sounds like a lot of responsibility.

Kendra Trachta: 06:00 It is. It is, but when you work with great people, that responsibility is not a burden, it is a privilege. Now I'm not saying this is easy-peasy, but I like it.

Ken Harvey: 06:26 Yeah, and with talented people around you, they're sharing a lot of that burden, too.

Kendra Trachta: 06:30 Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 06:30 They're pulling ... It reminds me of a commercial I saw recently of George Washington crossing Delaware, I think. It was the Delaware turnpike. They're pushing and pulling the rope across the road. Maybe it feels that way for you sometimes, but knowing that there are others who are helping you get across is probably really, really inspiring.

Kendra Trachta: 06:55 Absolutely.

Cindy Tingley: 06:55 That's what I was thinking. There's got to be a lot of pressure in your position. Obviously, you like the people, but beyond that, what is it that you like about this role?

Kendra Trachta: 07:08 I really love that the library is part of our community. We are not just providing great service to the individuals who walk into the library. Of course, we do that. Of course, through that service, we are helping each person. But we're also part of strengthening the entire community. I always use early literacy as an example because everyone knows that public libraries are
tied to early literacy. If we teach or get 10 or 20 children in a town ready for kindergarten, their success through school, their ability to be successful through life benefits the entire community-

Cindy Tingley: 08:11 Absolutely.

Kendra Trachta: 08:12 ... not just those 10 or 20 children. With that outlook-

Cindy Tingley: 08:16 It's the ripple effect.

Kendra Trachta: 08:18 Exactly.

Cindy Tingley: 08:21 Fantastic. Now you said you've been doing this type of work for 25, 30 years. What originally got you into the field?

Kendra Trachta: 08:31 I needed a job. I was a senior in college. I had an English degree and realized, "Oh, this is my last semester. I need a job. Gosh, I love libraries." I went on to UT and got my master's degree and really never looked back. I always think of myself as a very lucky person. I have a lot of friends, and I'm sure you all do, too, who found their career, who found their passion in maybe their second or even their third career. I'm so lucky because what started out as a job became my career, became my passion, because as I started really doing the work, it opened my eyes to how wonderful it is to feel like you're part of something that is helping people, that is making the world a better place, not just showing up for my job.

Cindy Tingley: 09:53 Right. It makes me wonder, and maybe you've talked to your colleagues over the years, how many people actually ... I see a lot of people here especially, they always knew they wanted to get into the field. But then there's the folks like you. How would you say that balances out?

Kendra Trachta: 10:11 Maybe it's about even.

Cindy Tingley: 10:13 Really?

Kendra Trachta: 10:14 That is totally guesswork.

Cindy Tingley: 10:17 Nonscientific.

Ken Harvey: 10:17 Yeah, nonscientific.

Kendra Trachta: 10:18 That is based on nothing. That is based on the number of people I know. There are some people who have known from day one
and then there are others who are the folks I mentioned earlier, becoming a librarian was maybe their second or third career. They say, "Wow! I finally found it."

**Cindy Tingley:** 10:41 Right. As far as progressing then into the role that you hold today, when you first got into this world, did you know that it existed? How did you get into the more executive end of the library system?

**Kendra Trachta:** 10:58 Opportunities presented themselves. Really I was aiming to be the librarian in a small town. Maybe I'd seen too many movies or read too many books about quaint little towns and everyone loves their librarian, and that was it. That was really as far as my look into the future for my life was taking me. But I was lucky to work with people who saw further into the future. I was lucky to work at some really great libraries and with dedicated professionals who were saying, "Hey, you can take this next step. You can make more of a difference in your community."

**Ken Harvey:** 11:55 They obviously saw a potential in you for something even greater.

**Kendra Trachta:** 11:59 Well, thank you.

**Ken Harvey:** 12:03 You're welcome. That was not in my notes. I just decided I would say that. Hey, Kendra, I'm thinking that, like me, you probably have heard some people wonder aloud about whether libraries are now just a relic of the past. They're thinking that we have bookstores and we have computers and we have the internet and we have smart phones and we have Amazon.com, and everything you want to know or look for or buy or you want to have, you can buy it online, so why have a library around these days? What do you think about that notion that libraries are obsolete? What do you say when people ask you about that?

**Kendra Trachta:** 12:52 I say, "Ha!" I think we have the huge opportunity and responsibility to be sure that people really know why libraries exist. We don't exist to handbooks across a counter. That is something we do. But libraries exist so that our communities can be informed communities, so that they could be literate communities. For centuries, the book was the technology. There's no question of how people associate books and libraries so very closely. What I'm always telling people is to peel back those layers to why we're here, why we started lending books and making sure that everyone had access, even the people who cannot buy everything they want. Sure, it's available; not everyone can buy everything.

Ken Harvey: 14:15 Or even afford the stuff that you would need in order to buy it.

Cindy Tingley: 14:19 Exactly.

Kendra Trachta: 14:20 Exactly. When I'm talking with non-library people, you can see that light bulb go on, "Oh, yeah. I get it. I wondered why you were offering those classes." Well, that's part of being informed. "I wondered why you offer computer access." Well, if you don't have computer access, how do you access the internet? If you don't have that connectivity, how do you tap into all of that information that's out there? You're at a real loss if you can't.

Ken Harvey: 15:03 Yeah, you're right. With the time that you've spent in this career, you probably have seen the libraries change and the libraries evolve a little bit because they've been other changes that have happened with technology and the way people get their information and are looking for things. Talk a little bit about that with us. What are some of the changes that you've seen and that you think are really significant and good for others to know about?

Kendra Trachta: 15:41 Well, the biggest change, of course, big surprise, is this access to the world of information. That's not always information. I always try to say information and ideas, because a lot of what's out on the internet, it's not information. That has really changed our society's needs and how we behave when we need to know something.

Ken Harvey: 16:15 Yes, you're right.

Kendra Trachta: 16:20 When I started out, I was a reference librarian, and I loved it, people would come in.

Ken Harvey: 16:28 What is a reference librarian?

Kendra Trachta: 16:29 Well, that is librarian talk for the kind of librarian who can help you with all of your research questions or what we would call reference questions. We now call that service information services so that we're not so buried in library lingo.

Cindy Tingley: 16:53 This is a special skill that gets developed, right? I mean I've seen specific interview-style classes for reference librarians.
Kendra Trachta: 17:01 Absolutely. There is something in us, in humans that even when we’re asking for help, we don't want to be a bother or we don't maybe want to expose everything at once, and so a reference or information services librarian will draw out, because we want to be sure we're really providing the information that people want.

Ken Harvey: 17:32 Sometimes what I may really want or need is not exactly what I'm asking for ...

Kendra Trachta: 17:37 Exactly.

Ken Harvey: 17:37 ... because I'm embarrassed or-

Kendra Trachta: 17:40 Maybe you're embarrassed, maybe you just haven't thought all the way through or you don't want to ... We get this a lot, "I don't want to be a bother." No, we want to help you. It might be, "Do you have any books on statistics?" or, "How can I look up the population?" We say, "Oh, what are you looking for?" Then it turns out, oh, this person is looking for new markets for their product because they're an entrepreneur starting a small business.

Kendra Trachta: 18:15 They think it's really going to appeal to women who have terriers. They want to locate them and connect them with their product. It takes some drawing out to get from the very broad to the real specific need. I don't know why we humans do that, but we do.

Ken Harvey: 18:45 Is that something that you've also seen change in any way over the years?

Kendra Trachta: 18:52 Absolutely, and it's a wonderful change. Previously, at the beginning of my career, all of that information was in print only. That's how the regular person could access it. Well, most people didn't have bookshelves full of $800 books or $2,000 encyclopedias. They would turn to the library. We would look things up no matter how serious.

Kendra Trachta: 19:33 People often turn to the library with maybe some notes from a recent doctor's visit, and they want more information so they can understand what they've just heard. In my first job, it was in a pretty small town in South Texas, Friday afternoons, we started getting a lot of bar bet phone calls, which now we would all just pull-

Ken Harvey: 20:00 Bar bet phone calls?
Kendra Trachta: 20:01 Bar bet. I'm calling from this bar down the street.

Ken Harvey: 20:07 Oh, okay. I thought that was a foreign word for a second.

Kendra Trachta: 20:08 No. Bar bet. No, bar bet. My friend's going to buy me a beer if I'm right with this bet. Nowadays, we would just pull out our phones and Google it, right?

Cindy Tingley: 20:21 Right.

Kendra Trachta: 20:21 I do that a lot, but back then-

Ken Harvey: 20:27 As part of a bar bet yourself or ...

Kendra Trachta: 20:28 No, just proving I'm right. That's my family. But, yeah, everything from these serious medical issues where you really need to be very respectful of the customer and pry without prying to answering why do hot dogs come in packs of 10 and hot dog buns come in packs of eight. I can't tell you how long I worked on that one.

Cindy Tingley: 21:08 You get the Tootsie Roll question. That's what I want to know.

Kendra Trachta: 21:10 I did not get the Tootsie Roll question.

Cindy Tingley: 21:13 How many licks does it take to get to the center of it?

Kendra Trachta: 21:16 Oh, that's-

Ken Harvey: 21:16 Yeah, Tootsie Roll pop. Yes, I remember that.

Kendra Trachta: 21:19 Some things are unknowable.

Cindy Tingley: 21:21 That's true.

Ken Harvey: 21:21 Right, because you'd always crunch on it first.

Cindy Tingley: 21:26 Absolutely.

Kendra Trachta: 21:26 That's completely changed. It has really changed what people need from their library. When so much of that quick fact information is available at their fingertips, the librarians really get fewer of those sorts of questions. When people do come to us, it's for the more detailed, "I have a product that will reach women who own terriers within a 50-mile radius of the Puget Sound." They really need that skilled research assistants.
Ken Harvey: 22:14 I'm aware that we do have librarians who are available that people can book time with, right?

Kendra Trachta: 22:20 Absolutely, right.

Ken Harvey: 22:22 And really pursue those kinds of things. I just wanted to go back to one thing that you were saying that isn't so much about the evolution of services, but I just think it is an aspect of libraries, a service that a library offers that's really precious, and that is around when someone is really looking, wanting to know more about a medical condition, either they're fearful of maybe coming down with something or they've just been diagnosed with something, or they have a family member who is, and they are just trying to better understand what they're dealing with. I've heard of these stories with our librarians of individuals coming in, and it's an emotional issue.


Ken Harvey: 23:23 But the librarian is there to help walk them through gaining more information about it.

Kendra Trachta: 23:30 I think that in any public librarian's career, they have helped customers with a situation like this, that it's painful and very emotional for the person. The people I have worked with, the librarians I've worked with in the past and currently work with, really want to be sure that the person they're helping gets the information they need, is treated kindly.

Kendra Trachta: 24:13 We will take the person aside. If someone has a sensitive issue, we don't just stay there at the public desk with everyone milling about. We really want to respect that person's privacy and their feelings, so we'll take them aside and work privately one-on-one. That's what that person deserves.

Cindy Tingley: 24:45 Absolutely. On a different note, earlier you mentioned in your role as deputy director that you work with the strategic planning.

Kendra Trachta: 24:53 Absolutely.

Cindy Tingley: 24:54 I know that's a big passion for you and you have led the planning efforts. In fact, I was able to bear witness to the last round of those when I joined Sno-Isle a few years back. It is a four-part plan or four areas in the plan that reflect the library's purpose, values, areas of core service, and the strategic priorities. Can you elaborate a little more on what that's all
about? We can actually start with the purpose and values and work from there, if that helps.

Kendra Trachta: 25:24 Sure, sure. Well, historically, strategic plans have really been very detailed work plans or more tactical plans that we call strategic. Sno-Isle Libraries had built a really great foundation. We were operationally very solid, great staff, great services, incredible customer service. We wanted to go to the next step of not only improving the lives of individuals, but improving our entire community.

Kendra Trachta: 26:17 I was working with Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory, our executive director, and saying, "Okay. What do we really need to identify to get this started?" Because people who work in public libraries put such value in the difference we make, we really wanted to start with our values and our purpose. Those values, these are the things we really believe. These are why we think our work is important. We really believe that everyone has a right to information. We even believe that's part of our bill of rights.

Cindy Tingley: 27:10 Sure.

Kendra Trachta: 27:11 That is our top value. We see value in the different points of view. Yes, facts are facts, information that we provide will be verified and reliable, but a lot of our world is point of view or opinion, and we balance that. We work to balance that in what we present, what we have available for customers.

Kendra Trachta: 27:47 We really started with there. What do we believe? Then moved on to our purpose, which, as I said earlier, is not about handing books across a counter. We really wanted to focus on the idea that we exist to build a literate and informed community, not to check stuff out or manage inventory. Those are the building blocks of it.

Cindy Tingley: 28:20 Right. Of course, these are not things that we just arbitrarily decided on our own. There was a whole process behind this.

Kendra Trachta: 28:28 Absolutely. Absolutely. All of our Sno-Isle employees had the opportunity to share what their values were connected to our work, what their view of our purpose was. We work with our board of trustees, too. They're our governing body. They are residents we serve, and their input was absolutely vital.

Cindy Tingley: 29:02 Right, because people are always still surprised to learn what a public library system like Sno-Isle offers. I'm still finding things. As an employee, I'm constantly finding things. What are some of
the core services that we offer that you can tell us about for our customers and communities?

Kendra Trachta: 29:22 Well, these are the kinds of things that most customers are aware of. When we're talking about our core services here at work, we are talking about the things that a customer would just say, "Well, of course you do that." That's things like maintaining that diverse collection of materials for people to borrow, whether it's a book they're taking out of the building or an ebook that they're downloading, things like connecting readers with books, which is a really fun service. I know all of our staff enjoys that, and that's where all of us have been, "Oh, what do I read next?" Of course, the library is there to help with that.

Kendra Trachta: 30:15 Providing access to computers and connectivity. 20 years ago, that was not something libraries did because the web and public access to it was just starting. I remember then, well, why would libraries have computers? Well, again, go back to the purpose. People need information, and that's how you get it these days. Without that connectivity, people can't apply for jobs.

Kendra Trachta: 30:52 We've been talking about our information and research assistants. In these days of "I could just quickly look that up myself," I think people aren't as aware as I'd like them to be, that we are here not only to tell you why the number of hot dogs and buns don't match but you could Google that yourself, but to really help with that in-depth research, whether it's, as Ken mentioned, making a one-on-one appointment with a librarian so that they can give you their full attention, whether it is using our chat system online to chat with a staff member real time, "Hey, what's on my account?" "Hey, what's the spelling of Punxsutawney? I can't Google it because I can't spell it," that sort of thing to the more detailed research that I was talking about, whether it's business research or scholarly research, assisting someone who's maybe writing a really important paper, whether work or school or a master's thesis. We do that, and we love doing that. I want more people to know we do that.

Kendra Trachta: 32:21 Then, of course, the programs. A lot of folks are surprised that we offer classes, that we offer hands-on learning, and sometimes just interesting programs. We often partner with music groups, or the Seattle opera will do a few programs for us on a preview of the coming season's operas. All of that we're doing, keeping in mind that we want people to learn something.
Kendra Trachta: 33:04 If we’re doing a program, if we’re presenting something, we want people to go away a little better informed than they were when they came. It’s not always life-changing. Sometimes you learn something small and think, “That’s neat.” But we’re always being purposeful in what we do.

Ken Harvey: 33:30 Because you’re looking for lifelong learning opportunities.


Ken Harvey: 33:37 Your comment about Punxsutawney Phil, and that’s the … What?

Cindy Tingley: 33:43 Groundhog.

Ken Harvey: 33:43 Creatures at the groundhog. I was going to say goffer, but, yes, groundhog, reminds me that our son used to come to us and say, “Hey, dad. How do you spell such and such?” and we’d say, “Look it up in the dictionary.” He’d say, “How can I look it up in the dictionary if I don’t know how to spell it? Can’t you just tell me?” We’d say, “No, go and try to find it.”

Kendra Trachta: 34:06 That’s right. That’s what my mom always said, too.

Ken Harvey: 34:08 He’d say, “Take me to the library so I can ask a librarian.”

Kendra Trachta: 34:10 It’s a conspiracy of parents.

Ken Harvey: 34:12 Yes, it is.

Kendra Trachta: 34:14 Now I do that, too. I’m sure you passed that on.

Ken Harvey: 34:18 Yes. He’s doing it now to his seven-year-old.

Kendra Trachta: 34:24 Good, good, good.

Ken Harvey: 34:24 Hey, I’m just thinking that there’s that other area, the fourth area, in that strategic plan that’s all around priorities. That’s a list of three things. I want to make sure we have time for you to talk about those.

Kendra Trachta: 34:40 Oh, sure.

Ken Harvey: 34:42 Walk us through those.

Kendra Trachta: 34:44 Sure. Can I talk about how we identify that?
Ken Harvey: 34:49 Sure, please.

Cindy Tingley: 34:49 Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 34:50 Please do.

Kendra Trachta: 34:51 The big step here was that we wanted our priorities to be our community's priorities. It's not about what do we as library employees really want to do? If I had my choice there, we'd be buying twice as many romance novels and doing more ... Well, I can't even think of ... That would be about me, not our communities. In identifying what our priorities were, we did not go out to people and say, "What can the library do for you?" because we anticipate they'll say, "Well, I guess you could buy more books."

Cindy Tingley: 35:43 Right.

Kendra Trachta: 35:44 Right? Instead, Jonalyn and I met with community leaders and said, "Hey, what's going on in your sphere? What are the concerns of your clients? What are your priorities for the community?" We asked our customers. We put a questionnaire out for our customers. "These are some of the issues and goals for our communities that we're really hearing about in the news and hearing about from community leaders. What's most important to you?" Of course, I'm a librarian. We did a little research. What are our elected officials and our governing bodies' priorities?

Kendra Trachta: 36:45 What we identified as the strategic priorities currently are increasing kindergarten readiness, because that is a statewide priority. We have too many children who are entering kindergarten not at all ready to learn at that level. In the example I gave earlier, that affects not only their school career and their entire lives, but our entire community.

Kendra Trachta: 37:20 Building civic engagement. We heard from volunteer, or I should say nonprofit organizations, that the activities surrounding volunteerism really needed to increase. We heard from elected officials that they were not seeing people participating in civic dialogue and being part of a community. I can understand that. It is difficult. We commute to work, we commute home, and we're tired at the end of the day. But you've got to have people engaged to have a strong community.

Ken Harvey: 38:11 Yeah, that's right.
Then the third priority is strengthening our economy. That is one that is so fun to explain to people, because they think, "What? You're all about ABCs and checking out books."

How can a library strengthen the economy?

That’s right. Well, supporting small business is a priority for both the Snohomish county executive and the island county commissioners. It is a priority of the Economic Alliance of Snohomish County. It is a priority for them because we have to have a diverse workforce, a diverse economy in order to be solid and sustainable into the future. I mean think of some of the steel towns back east. When that steel mill shut down, the whole town died because that was it. We want that diversity.

How does the library do that? Of course, through information, so classes on how to access information that will help you develop your business plan and get funding, how to develop that marketing plan and identify the characteristics of your ideal customer and how to connect with them. That is all about information, and it’s what we do. Does that make sense?

It does.

Yeah.

That's how we're stepping it up. These core services, huge value to each individual. These strategic priorities, we want to make a difference on a larger scale.

How do we actually follow up and pursue those priorities? Can you give us an example maybe for preparing children for kindergarten? What are some things that we do?

Sure. Well, our story times, and I know everyone knows that libraries do story times, they are our secret weapon there. In those story times, our librarians and our library staff are not actually just focusing on making sure these small children have a nice 45 minutes.

They are really working to train the parents or the grandparents or the caregiver who is bringing that child to story time, because, honestly, think about 45 minutes a week making a difference in a young child's life. It doesn't really cut it. The parent doing those activities that help that young brain develop, that help the child pick up some of the concepts even before they know what they're doing gets them ready for kindergarten.
Ken Harvey: 41:42 How about in the area of that civic engagement? Is there a good example of how small libraries can pursue that?

Kendra Trachta: 41:51 Absolutely. We have a series of programs or forums called Issues That Matter.

Ken Harvey: 41:59 I've heard of those.

Kendra Trachta: 42:00 Have you?

Ken Harvey: 42:01 Yes, I have.

Kendra Trachta: 42:04 When we put the public questionnaire out on our website, asking customers and residents, "What are your goals or issues for your community?" what we heard were a lot of the social issues. We heard about hunger, we heard about homelessness, we heard about mental health.

Ken Harvey: 42:34 Those are pretty serious issues.

Cindy Tingley: 42:34 Absolutely.

Kendra Trachta: 42:37 Those are really serious issues. Of course, some of the questions and comments we got was, "This isn't the library's business." We're not a food bank, we are not an emergency shelter, we are not doctors, but we take our role as providers of information very seriously. These are the things that our communities really want to grapple with.

Kendra Trachta: 43:16 In our Issues That Matter series through this 2017 through '19, three-year period, each one is focusing on one of those top issues that the communities shared with us. We bring together specialists because information isn't always from books or the internet or a database. Sometimes a person is the best source of information. Bring them together and learn some, have a community conversation. They've been really well-received.

Ken Harvey: 43:58 Yeah. I know that we've received some pretty profound feedback from some participants and attendees, who said that they were living some of those issues and felt rewarded by the information that was shared at them and, in some cases, received some practical information in terms of next steps for their own lives.

Kendra Trachta: 44:26 Absolutely. When we do these programs, like I said earlier, we are wanting to achieve some very specific things. We don't just gather people and say, "Hope someone learned something." We
follow up and we ask people. We have heard over 85% of the attendees learn something that apply directly to them that they could use. A real plus for civic engagement was that around 70% ... And when I say that, I want to be clear we have hundreds of people attend each series. We're reaching a lot of people. Around 70% are inspired to volunteer somewhere.

Ken Harvey: 45:24  Oh, that's remarkable.

Cindy Tingley: 45:24  It is.

Kendra Trachta: 45:26  That's how we're really tracking on ... Yeah. We're making a difference. We knew we were, and now we're hearing from the library customers and program attendees.

Cindy Tingley: 45:39  Yeah. Another area where we're getting wonderful feedback, at least what I've heard, is our third priority, which, of course, is strengthening the economy. You talked about the various different ways we help small businesses and entrepreneurs. What more can you tell us about why this is a priority and how we've pursued it?

Kendra Trachta: 46:01  Well, we have done a number of different things here. I've already talked about the resources we offer now. But we are really trying to breakout of the mindset of, "We have all this great stuff. You come here to us and we'll show it to you." We have started having small business meetups. Those are listed on meetup.com, because our business librarian identified that as a way that entrepreneurs and small business owners connect with each other. We needed to be there, there being that digital space.

Kendra Trachta: 46:47  We don't require that everyone come to us. Our staff will go to a chamber of commerce meeting and lead a class on a topic that's really pertinent to that particular community group. Our staff will go to the WorkSource office to make sure that the clients who are job seekers are aware of what we have to offer them.

Kendra Trachta: 47:26  One thing that we do is that we participate in WorkSource rapid response events. Most people haven't heard of these. When a large employer is laying off a certain number of employees, there's a strike team that goes in that includes Sno-Isle Libraries. We have representatives from WorkSource, from Sno-Isle Libraries, from the Small Business Administration all going in there to make sure that the employees who are being laid off are aware of the resources available to them.
Cindy Tingley: 48:13 That's amazing. I didn't know about that. Did you, Ken?

Ken Harvey: 48:16 I happen to know about that.

Cindy Tingley: 48:17 It's my first time hearing-

Kendra Trachta: 48:18 Yeah.

Cindy Tingley: 48:20 That's new to me.

Ken Harvey: 48:21 But just to make sure no one thinks that it's something, was maybe thrown off by the word "strike force," it's really a rapid deployment first force, right?

Cindy Tingley: 48:29 True.

Kendra Trachta: 48:29 Right. Well, that's why it's called-

Ken Harvey: 48:29 A resource force.

Kendra Trachta: 48:31 ... rapid response, yes. I'm sorry.

Ken Harvey: 48:38 That's okay.


Ken Harvey: 48:38 I mean it is great. In having worked at some organizations that have gone through downsizing with the dips in the economy that happen periodically, that type of assistance that's provided is very, very meaningful, because a notice that your job is not going to exist after a certain period of time, that can be devastating.

Kendra Trachta: 49:11 It is, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 49:12 It really throws your whole life, your future and present, up in the air, and so you're really wondering, "Where do I go from here?" That can be very, very useful. Look, in the few minutes we have left, I wanted to maybe just tap on you for just a couple of things. Then I think there's so much more that you could share. We're going have to invite you back.

Cindy Tingley: 49:33 Definitely.

Ken Harvey: 49:36 I just happen to know that you have a family and you're an executive mom. You have a daughter, I think, who is in college and a daughter in middle school, pretty soon be senior high. Is it
junior high or middle school? What are they calling it these days?

Kendra Trachta: 50:03 They call it middle school here. It was junior high when we were in it. But ...

Ken Harvey: 50:06 Yes. I'm sure that in a position that you're in, with a family like yours, that there are things you have to do to really achieve some balance with life. What would you say to others that may be approaching that kind of situation in their lives? Do you have any words of wisdom for them?

Kendra Trachta: 50:33 Set your own priorities. I would say this to any person, any parent, anyone who ... Well, anyone, period. It is difficult. Sometimes I will say to my daughters, "Think about what you want from life, not what you're going to be when you grow up but what is it you want from life. Is it making a difference in the world? Is it personal freedom? Is it the ability to be creative? What is that?"

Cindy Tingley: 51:22 That is such a great approach. It really is.

Kendra Trachta: 51:26 Honestly, when I am not at work ... And in case I haven't made it clear, I love my work. I love the public library's work. I cannot imagine a better library than Sno-Isle Libraries. When I am not here, I may be thinking about ideas because I just can't stop doing that, but I'm focusing on my life outside of work. I think anyone who is in a career or working and trying to juggle being responsible for others is in that position.

Ken Harvey: 52:26 Well, I happen to know that part of that balancing and prioritization that you do involves some crafting things that you seem to be very passionate about. Just for our listeners, I'll say that Kendra Trachta introduced me to Mod Podge.

Kendra Trachta: 52:49 Yeah, Mod Podge.

Ken Harvey: 52:54 I got hooked on it myself. Tell us just a little bit about the crafts things that you enjoy doing.

Kendra Trachta: 53:01 Oh, I like making stuff. My older daughter hates the smell of Mod Podge, "Oh, mom's crafting. I smell Mod Podge." I say, "That's the smell of creativity."

Cindy Tingley: 53:17 "You need a she shed." "I do."
Kendra Trachta: 53:22 I just like making stuff. I like doing tangible things. I like things that make me smile. I like things that make other people smile. Sometimes I wonder, is that a lot of our work in the library is in our heads. We're not building something with our hands. I think as humans we have that in us ...

Cindy Tingley: 53:57 Definitely.

Kendra Trachta: 53:57 ... to different degrees. I think this is all based on nothing. Ken, in a recent conversation, mentioned the maker trend. I think that's it. We're waking up and saying, "Yeah, we need to ..."

Ken Harvey: 54:16 "I need to make something."

Kendra Trachta: 54:16 "I need to make something."

Cindy Tingley: 54:16 "Let me create," yeah.

Kendra Trachta: 54:21 "I need to make something."

Ken Harvey: 54:25 Yeah. Well, I've been inspired by some of the things I've seen you make and appreciate the work that you do for Sno-Isle Libraries-

Cindy Tingley: 54:34 Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 54:34 ... on behalf of our communities. Maybe in our last minute here, is there something you'd just love to just conclude with in telling our listening audience something about you or the library or life in general? This is an opportunity to be wise and inspiring.

Kendra Trachta: 54:58 But no pressure.

Ken Harvey: 54:59 But no pressure.

Cindy Tingley: 55:00 None whatsoever.

Kendra Trachta: 55:01 But no pressure. What I would say to everyone, and, of course, this will lead you to the library, is keep learning. Keep your mind alive. Every year, as I celebrate another birthday, I think, "Wow! I learned so much last year," and that makes me happy.

Cindy Tingley: 55:34 Well said.

Kendra Trachta: 55:36 If you come to the library, you'll learn even more.
Ken Harvey: 55:40 Oh, I like that. Yeah, thank you for that. Hey, I want to thank Kendra for joining Cindy and me in this interview. I want to just remind our listeners that some of the things, or many of the things, that she mentioned will be available in the show notes that you'll find on the website. You can go to the website at sno-isle.org/podcast and find some links to some very interesting things, including maybe some maker ideas.

Cindy Tingley: 56:15 Or photos of Moxie perhaps.

Ken Harvey: 56:17 Or photos of Moxie. Thank you, Kendra, for being with us.

Cindy Tingley: 56:23 Thank you very much.

Kendra Trachta: 56:23 Oh, thank you all for having me. You know I'm happy to talk about Sno-Isle.

Ken Harvey: 56:27 Okay. We'll have to have you back.

Cindy Tingley: 56:29 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 56:37 Our special thanks goes to our legacy sponsor, Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation. Your private tax-deductible gift to the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation provide seed money to expand and foster extra early learning and lifetime learning opportunities through innovative library classes, activities, and civic engagement events. Type Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation into your internet search engine to find out more about how your donation can change the lives of preschoolers, third graders, teens, and lifelong learners like you or someone you care about.

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