

TO: Core Board of Directors

TOPIC: Core Forum 2024 Report

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED BY: Debbie Ehrman and Melissa Brooks, Co-Chairs, Core Forum Planning Committee

SUBMITTED: February 10, 2025

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**Members:** Melissa Brooks (co-chair), Debbie Ehrman (co-chair), Kristen Clark, Gina Costello, Laura Costello, Jill Dixon, Debbie Feisst, Kate Ganski, Richard Guajardo, Michael Holt, John Klima, Kristy Lockhart, Mary Miller, Cate Sering, Catherine Soehner, Jody Gray, Anne Slaughter, Amanda Click (Past co-chair), Angie Ohler (Board Liaison), Amy Swartz (Board Liaison), Tabatha Farney (Fundraising Committee Liaison), Frank Skornia (Web Committee Liaison), Tom Ferren (Staff Liaison), Julie Reese, (Executive Director)

### Summary

Core Forum 2024 was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 14-16, 2024 at the Hilton Minneapolis. The Core Forum Planning Committee, co-chaired by Melissa Brooks and Debbie Ehrman, met monthly for the year leading up to the forum to develop program content including pre-conferences, pre-forum tours of local libraries and cultural institutions, and poster sessions. Core's six sections: Access & Equity; Buildings and Operations; Leadership & Management; Metadata & Collections; Preservation; and Technology were represented by content that was reviewed and selected for the Forum program by each section's leadership. Julie Reese, Tom Ferren, and the Core office support team led the efforts around event management, program timeline, registration, sponsor/exhibitor support, marketing, presenter and attendee support and on-site management. Their work was supported by the Core Website and Sched Event Management software implemented and updated by Core Planning members Frank Skornia, John Klima and Gina Costello. The Sched app was well-received by attendees as a convenient and accessible event tool. The 2024 Forum attendee registration topped out at 470. There was a good mix of academic and public libraries represented. 99% of 84 respondents rated their overall experience at the 2024 Core Forum as very satisfied (56%) or satisfied (43%).

### Philosophy and Structure of Forum

As with the third Core Forum, the 2024 Forum Planning Committee's majority of members were involved in one or both of the previous forums. This experience and continuity served the committee well as lessons learned from past forums were reviewed and shared to ensure that the committee was utilizing that information to its advantage in planning and implementing this year's program.

The Minneapolis and Minnesota library connections were instrumental in planning the keynote speakers, suggesting and arranging tours of local cultural institutions and the University of Minnesota and the tours of both St. Paul and Hennepin County public library systems.

### **Day 1, November 14**

**4** pre-conferences; **4** facilities tours; OCLC sponsored Welcome Reception; **2** dine-arounds

### **Day 2, November 15**

Keynote session: More than Hope, Saray Garnett-Hochuli

A conversation about pushing for deep institutional change in turbulent times. How do we do our jobs when the concept of equality, equity, peace and social justice are being questioned and the oppression of others is desired? What is your responsibility to ensure humanity, equality, equity, peace and social justice? If we want a future where everyone is thriving, we must ensure these concepts are at the root of everything that we do at work and in our lives.

**26** program presentations; Poster sessions; exhibits; **2** dine-arounds; and off-site reception sponsored by MSR Architects

### **Day 3, November 16**

Keynote session: Dr. Kate Bean

Dr. Kate Beane (Flandreau Santee Sioux Dakota and Muscogee Creek) holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She is the Executive Director of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, and serves as adjunct faculty in American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota. She is vice chair of the board for Vision Maker Media, a national organization based out of Nebraska, chair of the board for Wakan Tipi Awayankapi in St. Paul (Imnizaska), and in 2020 was appointed by Governor Walz to serve on the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB), which oversees Capitol complex preservation and development (including public art) in downtown St. Paul.

**23** Poster session presentations; **25** program presentations

### **Marketing**

Marketing of Core Forum was handled in a variety of ways including Email, Connect (ALA, Core, PLA, ACRL, RUSA, ALSC, AASL, IRO), American Libraries Online, Core Social Media, and Listservs the Planning Committee helped identify.

## **Registration and Budget**

The pricing for the event was kept flat from 2023 to 2024. Total Forum Attendance was **478 in comparison 404 in 2023**. We had 165 presenters and 18 exhibitors. The total amount brought in through sponsorships was \$36,000, which was \$18,000 less than budgeted.

To extend the reach of Forum and make it accessible to all members, attendees voted on their Best of Core Forum sessions which are being presented as live webinars in the months following the event. Registrants of Core Forum can attend the webinars at no additional charge. Non-attendees will be charged the Core webinar going rate.

## **Best of Core Forum Webinars**

The Best of Core Forum sessions were voted on by attendees and will be presented as webinars in FY25. The webinars provide a way to extend the reach of the presenters and presentation content beyond the in-person forum. Webinars are free to all Core Forum 2024 attendees.

2024 Best of Webinars: 27; Estimated total revenue: \$30,000; Estimated total attendance: 1400

## **Core Forum 2024 Final Budget Report**

The 2024 Forum Planning Committee worked with the Core Fundraising & Scholarship committee to secure the following sponsors at the levels indicated.

**Diamond: OCLC**

**Gold: Agati Furniture; MSR Design**

**Silver: East View Information; LSE Architects; Shepley Bulfinch; SHP; SpaceSaver**

**Bronze: Backstage Library Works; Momentum Interactives; University of Minnesota Libraries.**

Two Core Forum 2024 scholarships were awarded to either a first-time attendee or presenter to offset the costs of registration, hotel, and travel. The Core Scholarship Fund enabled the funding for these scholarships.

Expenses originated from the hotel fees were for audiovisual equipment, meeting room rental and catering. Other expenses were for the keynote speakers' honoraria, registration processing, and ALA overhead costs. Overall, the event provided a net income of \$5,342 based on current fiscal reports.

<b>Income</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b># Registrants</b>	<b>Total</b>
Core Member (Early) - Oct 17th	\$329	120	\$39,480
Core Member (Reg)	\$369	3	\$1,107
ALA Member (Early) - Oct 17th	\$399	39	\$14,376
ALA Member (Reg)	\$469	1	\$469
Non-Member (Early) - Oct 17th	\$499	62	\$30,938
Non-Member (Reg)	\$569	2	\$1,138
Student/Retired/International (Early) - Oct 17th	\$229	9	\$2,061
Student//Retired/International	\$269	2	\$538
MLA Member (Early) - Oct 17	\$329	25	\$8,225
MLA Member (Reg)	\$369	1	\$369
One Day Registration (Early) - Oct 17	\$259	10	\$2,590
One Day Registration - Friday - After 10/17	\$279	1	\$279
Presenter Registrations	\$189	119	\$22,491
Comp Registration	\$0	14	\$0
Keynote (Comp)	\$0	2	\$0
Press	\$0	1	\$0
Exhibitors/Sponsorship (reg incl. in tabletop purchase)	\$0	29	\$0
Planning Committee Member Discounted Fee	\$99	16	\$1,584
Planning Committee Co-Chairs (Comp)	\$0	2	\$0
Staff (Comp)	\$0	3	\$0
Exhibitor Tabletop Purchase	\$750	7	\$5,250
Preconference & Tour Registration Fees			\$15,437
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>468</b>	<b>\$146,322</b>

<b>Sponsorships</b>			
Diamond	\$10,000	1	\$10,000
Platinum	\$7,500	0	\$0
Gold Sponsor	\$5,000	1	\$5,000
Silver Sponsor	\$3,000	5	\$15,000
Bronze Sponsor	\$2,000	3	\$6,000
Supporter Sponsor	\$1,500	0	\$0
<b>Total Sponsor Funding</b>			<b>\$36,000</b>

**Core Forum 2024  
Final Budget Report**

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Registration Fees	147,487	143,497
Exhibit Sales	4,500	5,250
Donations/Honoraria	54,000	36,104
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>205,987</b>	<b>184,851</b>
Professional Services	3,800	3,582
Bank S/C	4,260	3,152
Transportation	2,800	2,131
Lodging & Meals	4,500	2,582
Meal Functions	71,500	83,171
Speaker/Guest Honorarium	3,000	1,500
Special Transportation	1,900	1,983
AV Equipment Rental	25,000	24,843
Printing Outside	5,000	1,770
Supplies Production	500	0
Supplies/Operating Expenses	850	0
<b>Total Direct Expenses</b>	<b>96,700</b>	<b>103,016</b>

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>
IUT/CPU	750	315
IUT/Dist Ctr	800	247
IUT/Repro Ctr	200	527
IUT/Registration Processing	3,238	3,638
IUT/Overhead to ALA	4,988	4,770
<b>Total Indirect Expenses</b>	<b>26,438</b>	<b>31,910</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>165,827</b>	<b>169,594</b>
<b>Surplus/ (Deficit) From Operations</b>	<b>40,731</b>	<b>5,342</b>

## Evaluation

Following the Forum, all speakers and participants were invited to participate in an evaluation. Out of **470** attendees, **83** responded. At under **17%** percent, the response rate for participants was low but better than the 2023 survey results. Overall the survey provided feedback on areas of improvement and several aspects that we should continue providing.

A sample of “What did you like most about the conference?” includes:

- A few good sessions, Mpls was convenient for me.
- Everything. I love meeting and talking to people at the dine-arounds. The keynotes are always very interesting and I like how unusual they are for a library conference.
- high quality sessions - the continental breakfasts and sodas/seltzers out during the day were unexpected and a nice touch!
- I like networking and would like it if we could have more opportunities for that. Maybe lunches --author lunch would be great.
- It being held in one place and was more manageable. Also, it was great there were good restaurants close by that were walkable.
- Networking with colleagues, chatting with the architecture firm at the second evening reception, and attending some really interesting and dynamic speakers.

- I attended only building related sessions but overall the schedule felt more manageable than other conferences I've attended. I had some time in between sessions for some restorative time or to stop in to a local business. Overall, the quality of the sessions was great and I learned a lot I will keep in mind for the renovation project I am working on.
- I really loved how many drinks and snacks there were! I know it's not an educational thing but it was nice not to have to hunt down coffee.
- it was nice to have the conference right in the hotel and have everything so close by and convenient and just a nice small group of some of the nicest people I've ever got to go to a conference with. I enjoyed the rounds because I got to meet people.

A sample of "What would you have changed about the conference?":

- There might have been too many AI/Renovation sessions. Those two topics seemed to take up a good share of the sessions.
- I'm not sure what the reasoning is behind doing a Thursday-Friday-Saturday event, rather than Wednesday-Thursday-Friday, but having it fall over into the weekend can be problematic in terms of scheduling for some.
- Not having the keynotes start at 8:30am!
- It became obvious after the first day, but either more signage or advanced communication on the best place to go and eat the continental breakfast provided in the mornings. Maybe it was communicated the first day and I missed it.
- More cataloging and technical service focused sessions. I also think there is room to have Core interest groups meet like they used to at Midwinter and do at Annual. I think some interesting sessions could be produced by IGs.
- I personally would prefer just one keynote, and replace the second one with an additional session block.
- The sessions skewed a little heavily towards academic libraries, but in general, the conference was excellent.
- Some of the 'workshops' didn't go the entire 2 hours. They were really great sessions, but then I had to adjust my schedule and find another session to attend when they ended early.
- Leadership track felt heavy on academic libraries - info was broadly applicable but if you're a public library you had to work harder to make it apply
- Can we pay a little bit more for some eggs and bacon/sausage for breakfast, pretty please?
- Retain a strong contingent of CaMMS-related presentations.
- Maybe some events at night-like the dine arounds but for plays, etc. in the area
- I would like more administration and management topics. Some of the topics (DEI, trans, AI) seem to be repetitive of other conferences. It would be great if there were more options for records management and archives so that I can send staff in those areas. I also would like more communications and PR, particularly those who can help with topics like crisis communications and outreach.

## **Core Forum 2024 Testimonials**

The following attendee testimonials collected on the Core Forum 2024 participant evaluations illustrates the high value Core Forum provides to members and the potential for further financial success and growth in coming years:

- I attended Core Forum in part because it was local. But, the experience was so positive, I would not hesitate to sign up in future years.
- I was grateful to receive a scholarship from ALA to attend the Core Forum 2024. Working in Preservation it was great to see a Preservation track. I found the panel on Judging a Book by its Cover to be very valuable and applicable to my job managing the bindery.
- The content and people I met at Core Forum left me feeling empowered to manage an upcoming renovation.
- As a first time attendee, the forum was inviting, easy to navigate and very informative. I hope to see you in Denver.
- "I felt like I got a lot out of the Core Forum. Not only did I meet great information professionals from across the country, but I also gained new skills as a leader in the Library and within my community"

The full surveys are archived on the Forum Planning Committee Connect site for future groups to review comments and suggestions.

## **Recommendations for the next Core Forum:**

The committee provided feedback on their thoughts on changes to the Core Forum 2024 Committee should consider. They include:

### **The Good:**

- All day refreshment and snacks
- Content being chosen by the Core sections
- Have local people on the planning committee (prefer at least one on local arrangement and one on tours)
- Keep a public library tour on our schedule. Don't ask the library about what they have new, but more about the building in general. If they have a new remodel, see if we can get the designer involved too.
- Keep institutional knowledge (keep at least one of the previous co-chairs on the committee and several general committee members for the next committee)
- Keep a Keynote speakers library adjacent. We are having great success with local keynote speakers who impact their communities and provide opportunities for transferable skills
- Keep a cultural attraction tour



- Keep Sched software
- Keep the welcome from the local community library directors and deans. It keeps the community involved and attendees learn more about how the organizations fit into the community.
- Keep a notebook and good track of our meeting minutes. It helps with all the moving parts. Also make sure to reach out to Tom to make sure things are moving forward. He gets busy and some emails may slip through the cracks. He is cool with the reminders.

#### **The Not So Good:**

- Find a better way to merge blind results with the presenters (Excel)
- Double Check all Links and QR Codes – Also don't use a free QR code creator. Those links expire
- Find a way to get the correct city on the name badges. This data we believe is being pulled from Alternative address.
- Provide more signage for Tour meeting locations and dine-arounds. Also better instructions to moderators for tours
- Hopefully no email or server issues
- Provide attendance lists for tours and dine-arounds
- Find a way to limit the number of people who can sign up for a dine-around. Prefer 6 to 8 per table
- Ask Tom to be included on emails going out to conference attendees. These emails may contain information that will be useful to the committee when asked questions
- Ask to proofread all email communications. This will hopefully reduce errors in communications
- Ask that communications out to presenters be shorter. Point them to a link with more details
- Add Restroom signage
- Check with Tom to see when he has planned breaks with the hotel at least 2 to 3 weeks prior to the conference. Our listed breaks were off from the times he gave the hotel.
- Keep the refreshment tables together. It wasn't possible at this location since the rooms were all over. This will help hotel staff to keep food stocked.
- Print signage closer to the event. This will provide for opportunities to make changes on sponsors, etc.

#### **To Do for Next Forum (Possible):**

- Send out postcards and announcements to the Colorado Library Association to promote Forum at their annual conference.
- Julie would like to see about the possibility of session reporters next year. She would like to use this as marketing on the sessions.
- Look at the possibility of having a photographer available to do free headshots
- Look at way to have emergency contacts for all attendees
- Have all attendees agree to the Core Code of Conduct

- Break workshops over two sessions instead of doing a 2hr block. It will make breaks easier to schedule
- Look at voting on a best of poster sessions – not sure how this would work
- Make sure Poster sessions get added to Sched
- Drink tickets for any open bar reception
- Make sure we always have a healthy snack option.
- See if the Planning Committee can have a liaison with the Fundraising Committee - from the start
- Julie would like to see a Maker Space added to the general dining room as a fun activity for attendees.