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Climate Change Conversations in Libraries: A Sabbatical Training Adventure

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CHAPTER 7

Climate Change Conversations in Libraries

(A Sabbatical Training
Adventure)

Madeleine Charney

Introduction

As part of a twenty-four-week sabbatical, I set out to train librarians in each New England state on a range of methods for facilitating climate change conversations. The ultimate goal of *Facing the Future: Facilitating Climate Change Conversations in Your Library* was to encourage—more honestly, to implore—librarians to see themselves as change makers and bridge builders. The training pressed participants to answer an essential and painful question. How will each of us—as individuals and community members—hold the global, life-threatening reality of climate change while leading our communities toward a kinder, saner, and safer world?

Facing the Future, a four-hour training, offered participants an opportunity to look squarely in the face of climate change while practicing leadership exercises and mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is more than a path toward reducing personal stress. According to UC Berkeley's *Greater Good in Action: Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life*, "Research is clear: Happiness, resilience, connection, and kindness are skills that can be taught and developed over

time—with practice.”¹ The website offers evidence-based mindfulness exercises that augment attributes such as empathy, compassion, and forgiveness—much needed as climate change erodes people’s sense of peace and security.

Libraries Save Lives

A recent *New York Times* article, “Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change,” explains how “nearly everything we understand about global warming was understood in 1979.... Human beings have altered Earth’s atmosphere through the indiscriminate burning of fossil fuels. The main scientific questions were settled beyond debate.”² The article points out our decades-long speculation around failure regarding temperatures, coastlines, agriculture, immigration, and economy. “But we have not allowed ourselves to comprehend what failure might mean for us. How will it change the way we see ourselves, how we remember the past, how we imagine the future? Why did we do this to ourselves?”³ Climate change pressures point to the urgent need for information, services, and spaces that support communities’ intellectual, mental, and emotional needs. Libraries are well suited for the task.

In her 2018 book *Resilience*, librarian Rebekkah Smith Aldrich wrote, “Let this sink in: in life-threatening situations caused by weather or humans, communities that are better connected have a higher survivability rate.”⁴ This slim yet potent read, published by the American Library Association, is brimming with examples of libraries addressing emergency preparedness as well as serving as “first restorers,” helping citizens recover from crises such as floods and wildfires. She reiterated throughout the book, the need for “understanding, empathy and respect” and pointed to civil discourse as a critical tool for literally saving the lives of our community members (and therefore ourselves). She urged libraries to work faster and more deeply considering the intensity of what’s in store: increased economic, environment and social chaos, including the potential violent outbreaks that will be exacerbated by extreme weather events, global temperature shifts, forced human migration, and more.

While library literature on disaster preparedness and response proliferates, it is critical to explicitly address the emotional challenges of climate change. Dedicated meditation rooms are popping up in many academic libraries,⁵ and a quick Internet search will unearth scores of meditation programs at public libraries. The Facebook group Mindfulness for Librarians is a dynamic community nearing 900 members.⁶ Library Juice Academy and ALA recently offered month-long mindfulness courses for library professionals.⁷ Several books have been published recently, including *The Mindful Librarian: Connecting the Practice of Mindfulness*

* Smith Aldrich borrows this phrase from George Needham, library consultant, director, strategist.

to *Librarianship* (Elsevier, 2016), *Becoming a Reflective Librarian and Teacher: Strategies for Mindful Academic Practice* (ALA, 2017), *Recipes for Mindfulness in Your Library: Resilience and Community Engagement* (ALA, forthcoming 2018), and *Yoga and Meditation at the Library: A Practical Guide for Librarians* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming 2019). We need to connect libraries' climate change and disaster efforts with mindfulness offerings, strengthening library users' inner worlds for improved daily living when crises strike.

During Facing the Future, mindfulness practices slowed the pace of the day, allowing the weight and personal meaning of climate change issues to arise and demonstrating the benefits of self-care for leaders of potentially charged conversations. According to a recent study,

Survey respondents who scored highly on mindfulness questions were more likely to report ...being motivated by social factors to take [climate change] action (i.e., being encouraged by friends and family, reducing the risk for others, and having a “good conscience”); ...having taken social (“other-focused”) adaptation measures that require community interaction (here, warning neighbours about hazard events); ...[and] general pro-environmental behaviour ([e.g.], being a vegetarian).⁸

Basic Outline of the Training

- Finger labyrinth
- “Collapse and Rebirth” Joe Brewer video
- Grounding exercise
- Presentation of climate change activities
- Reflective writing: How Do You Feel about Climate Change?
- World Café
- Labyrinth walk
- Guided visualization
- Review Ellen Hall’s article
- “Libraries Transforming Communities” video
- Facilitation skills discussion
- Pair-Share activity: What excites/concerns you about facilitating a climate change conversation?
- Brainstorm: How to archive/exhibit/share climate change conversations
- Brainstorm: Potential partnerships
- Draft ideas for a climate change conversation

Getting Started

We began each training by using a finger to trace a labyrinth printed on a piece of paper. Because a labyrinth has no dead ends, we are never really lost. I offered the labyrinth as a metaphor for the unknown effects of climate change in existential wrestling and awakening to possibilities. During lunch, a 16-foot-by-16-foot canvas labyrinth (purchased with a grant from the Association of Mental Health Librarians) was set up so that participants could experience this archetypal tool designed for clarity and well-being (see figure 7.1).



Figure 7.1

Training participants walking the canvas labyrinth

On the training feedback form, a public library director from New Hampshire offered, “It was not what I anticipated, but I found it very fulfilling.... Working with Quakers, I know the importance of quiet meditation in coping with our technologically enclosed world. That was a nice inclusion.”⁹ An instruction librarian from Smith College shared, “The contemplative piece is important to both facilitation of the conversation and having the strength for the actual catastrophes. So, it’s fully worth it to integrate them into programming.”¹⁰

Next, we watched “Collapse and Rebirth,” featuring Joe Brewer, a “change strategist working on behalf of humanity.”¹¹ With a backdrop of a Hollywood depiction of the fall of Rome, Brewer explains the reality that “collapse happens across decades to hundreds of years” and that “the US as an empire is already past its peak and going into decline.” Brewer invites us to recognize “longer time scales than we normally think about” and, because collapse is already underway, “to let go of the feeling that we need to stop it from happening. Because we can’t stop

it from happening.” He counters this difficult truth with a “silver lining.” While collapse is inevitable, it doesn’t mean the “total annihilation of all things” and that there are “elements of collapse that are necessary and good for the future.” He also challenges us with a weighty paradox “because those collapse processes are going to create previously unprecedented scales of suffering and loss, which is why we have to embrace this grieving process.” Finally, he calls on those of us who want to be “designers of change in this time” and expresses the need for us to “develop the capacity to be in that paradox.”¹²

Facing the Future is not your typical library training. This is a call to action for librarians to be “contemporary pioneers, unifying architects, mindful pro-activists, and radical transformers—all at once!”¹³ Driving around New England, I reflected on the essence of my training message or “original medicine,” which Gail Larsen described as a speaker’s source of “brilliance, which springs from their heart of who they are, creating a singular pattern nowhere else duplicated.”¹⁴ I deliberated about how to balance “doom and gloom” with hopeful messages. I experienced extreme doubt about incorporating Brewer’s video, stealing glances at the trainees’ faces, worrying whether this slap of reality would cause them to run from the room. To the contrary, their reaction was largely one of relief. Several expressed gratitude for addressing the elephant in the room. On the training feedback form, an academic librarian from Rhode Island offered, “What I appreciated about your workshop was the focus on emotional responses and to use Donna Haraway’s phrase, ‘staying with the trouble.’”¹⁵ A librarian from the Maine State Library wrote that his most valuable takeaway was, “As humans we are in this together. It’s okay to feel the ‘doom.’ More importantly we need to act upon it to ensure positive results personally and in our communities.”¹⁶

The Centerpiece: World Café

The most in-depth part of each training was World Café, a conversation method set in a welcoming space with group rounds of questions and a harvest of what was drawn and written on the sheets of paper covering each table.¹⁷ World Café can provide an early step in change making in a community or at an institution. For instance, University of New England’s Biddeford campus hosted a World Café on Planetary Health that brought together students, faculty, professional staff, and administration. Forging transdisciplinary partnerships, they created a road map for planetary health engagement on their campus.¹⁸ This model can also be used to direct a community toward environmentally sound practices that strengthen the community, as in the case of Louisville Public Library. Its World Café was facilitated by municipal employees and a representative from EcoCycle. Participants brainstormed around how to overcome industry and community barriers.¹⁹ The Wilbraham Public Library held a weekly World Café with an environmental theme. Guest speakers including a senator and faculty from Western New England College.²⁰



Figure 7.2
World Café, Maine



Figure 7.3
Rhode Island trainee perusing resources, World Café harvest on wall

World Café does not call for in-depth knowledge of climate change (though resources can be provided). More importantly, the librarian would be a host of the Café, gently guiding the movement in the room and letting the people speak. This takes the pressure off us as “facilitators.” Further, World Café is not about deliberation, debating, decision-making, nor deciding on actions or solutions; instead, it is a harvesting of collective wisdom of the people in the room. Preceding the experience, I quoted Kathleen Dean Moore, who likened art making to the,

“shining, reflective shield” that allowed Perseus to stare down Medusa without turning to stone. Like a shield, she believes, “the work of art today is to take the hideous faces of these global crises and transform them so that people can bear to look and respond.”²¹

The following questions were used for our practice World Café:

1. What gives you hope regarding climate change?
2. To whom would you turn in your local community in the event of a climate change crisis?
3. What tools (inner and/or outer) would you activate in the event of a climate change crisis—to support yourself and others in your community?
4. What do you fear re: climate change?
5. What do you feel called to do re: climate change?

While talking and snacking, everyone doodled with markers, with the “harvests” displayed later on the walls. A public librarian from Rhode Island wrote that her most valuable take-away was “that the humanities are a valuable and viable way to address climate change and overcome barriers to conversation.”²²

Other Training Elements

Another element was a reflective writing exercise to answer the question “How do you feel about climate change?” (See appendix 7A, “How Do You Feel about Climate Change?”) This seemingly simple exercise has been executed many times as part of Talking Truth (see Inspiration behind the Training below), with responses housed in the University Archives at UMass Amherst’s main library, forming a time capsule of thoughts and feelings. Other climate change activities we talked about included grief rituals, games, makerspaces, meditations, songs, and the Elm Dance, popularized by climate change activist Joanna Macy. New ideas bubbled up as well. The Connecticut group of trainees envisioned a Human Library, with the “books” being a climate scientist, a prepper, a skeptic, an activist, and a staffer from a climate change nonprofit organization such as the Sierra Club. The Human Library is a worldwide movement, “designed to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue.”²³

The final activity was cocreating a story. The starting line I provided was, “Once there were [16] brave people—librarians and their allies—who banded together to make a difference in the world....” (see appendix 7B, “And the Polar Bears Thrived”). Then, in “Exquisite Corpse” fashion, people added their own lines. Finally, everyone was given a template (see appendix 7C, “Drafting a Cli-

* “Based on an old parlor game, Exquisite Corpse was played by several people, each of whom would write a phrase on a sheet of paper, fold the paper to conceal part of it, and pass it to the next player for his contribution.” Exquisite Corpse website, “About,” accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.exquisitecorpse.com/about.html>.

mate Change Conversation”) to draft a climate change conversation. A time line for planning was also provided.

Over the seven sessions, I trained 106 participants. Roughly two-thirds were from public libraries, with the rest from academic settings (plus a writer, artist, trustee, Friend of the Library, and staff from an environmental nonprofit). A participant who works in both public and academic libraries wrote on her training feedback form,

I think the combination of public and academic library folks helped A LOT. I do both jobs at different libraries. Speaking with folks at the workshop, everyone seemed to have different experiences with patrons and programming based on their role and their patrons, so I think it was really great. And I notice that depending on one’s role at an institution, even if it had been all academic or all public staff, there are such a wide range of library users and library jobs that it’s always interesting.

Because climate change affects everyone, and we’re all in this together, the mix of public and academic librarians felt particularly relevant.

Inspiration behind the Training

Facing the Future was largely inspired by an interdisciplinary incubator project I cofounded in 2015 at the UMass Amherst, Talking Truth: Finding Your Voice around the Climate Change Crisis. A successful example of an academic library as a “third space,” Talking Truth complements climate change classroom learning with a psychosocial emphasis.²⁴ Activities include storytelling, reflective writing, pair-share exercises, art making, film screenings, and discussions. All Talking Truth activities, and by extension Facing the Future trainings, integrate deep listening, meaning making, and mindfulness practices that strengthen our inner landscape so we may face disturbing climate change facts which can gnaw at our psyches. In her book *Navigating the Coming Chaos: A Handbook for Inner Transition*, Carolyn Baker noted that “whether they are fully conscious of it or not, regardless of how much they may protest being confronted with the facts, something in them knows that we are rapidly sliding down the slope of every peak humanity has become aware of in the past decade—peak oil, peak water, peak soil.”²⁵ Sitting in a circle, in solidarity, and actually addressing these facts is one step toward action. More importantly, many Talking Truth participants have expressed relief in knowing they are not alone in feeling deeply about climate change issues.

Further inspiration came from the American Library Association’s (ALA) Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC), which “seeks to strengthen com-

munities by giving libraries the tools they need to bring disparate voices together and lead change.”²⁶ I chose to model the World Café portion of ALA’s training, as their other offerings tended toward deliberation. My point was not to train librarians to lead debates around climate change but rather to build community and open people’s eyes to appreciating one another’s values, differences, and thought processes.

Mental Health and Climate Change

A study by Cunsolo and Ellis linked climate-related weather events and environmental changes to “a wide variety of acute and chronic mental health experiences, including: strong emotional responses, such as sadness, distress, despair, anger, fear, helplessness, hopelessness and stress; elevated rates of mood disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and pre- and post-traumatic stress; increased drug and alcohol usage; increased suicide ideation, attempts and death by suicide; threats and disruptions to sense of place and place attachment; and loss of personal or cultural identity and ways of knowing.”²⁷

All trainees were sent instructions beforehand to read “How Climate Change Affects Your Community’s Mental Health (and What to Do about It).” The article offers “13 Tips to Support Communities,” for instance: provide clear and frequent information; train the people who will serve the community during disaster; engage community members; pay special attention to vulnerable populations; increase cooperation and social cohesion.²⁸ Although the article was not written with libraries in mind, it was striking how many of the tips pointed to the services libraries already provide or could fine-tune with climate change in mind.

According to Bob Doppelt, executive director of the Resource Innovation Group, “the harmful impacts of climate change on personal mental health and psycho-social-spiritual wellbeing” must be addressed or “this crisis will undermine the health, safety, and wellbeing of people worldwide.”²⁹ Doppelt is also the author of *Transformational Resilience: How Building Human Resilience to Climate Disruption Can Safeguard Society and Increase Wellbeing*. He is a strong proponent of “grounding exercises” (i.e., mindfulness) and taking stock of our inner and outer resources so we may thrive as individuals and communities under adverse conditions (as well as enjoying the fruits of those skills before disaster strikes). In the absence of these coping skills, we may be prone to challenging mental states that “block the executive functions of the brain and reduce your ability to think through clearly and objectively.”³⁰ Left unaddressed, challenging mental states leave us at risk for going on autopilot, suppressing feelings, isolating ourselves from others, numbing ourselves with consumptive behavior (e.g., shopping, overuse of electronic devices), and perhaps having violent outbursts. Such patterns are counterproductive to

building social cohesion and “damage the natural environment and climate and ultimately come back to harm other people—and you.”³¹

As I open the door to more conversations about the “coming chaos,” I discover a growing kinship of others sensing their way toward feeling alive while recognizing the disintegration of our world, seeking a viable next chapter of human existence, and finding relief in safe outlets for sharing our personal truths. By not decoupling our emotions from climate change, librarians may lead with authenticity and depth.

Invitations to Embrace Our Emotions

Librarians (and archivists) increasingly address climate change at conference programs and events. Examples include Libraries and Archives in the Anthropocene colloquium and Rare Books and Manuscripts Section conference, “Response and Responsibility: Special Collections and Climate Change.”³² ALA’s Sustainability Round Table: Libraries Fostering Resilient Communities (SustainRT) facilitated “Crisis and Community,” which included “the emotional resources and skills necessary for vulnerable populations to endure and thrive in the face of catastrophic climate, social, and economic disruptions.”³³ SustainRT also offered a virtual conversation, “Getting Real with SustainRT,” which allowed librarians to share nuanced thoughts and feelings about climate change.³⁴

Embracing grief and other strong emotions triggered by climate change is emerging in academia. This is evidenced by Good Grief, a support group started at the University of Utah, and courses such as Environmental Grief and Climate Anxiety at the University of Washington Bothell and Apocalyptic Grief, Radical Joy at Harvard Divinity School.³⁵ Such offerings point to the inevitability of academic librarians teaching information literacy around the emotionality of climate change.

Wider Impacts

On the practical front, the training covered ideas to document climate conversations for wider impact. Examples included archiving or exhibiting artifacts from the conversation (such as World Café harvests), creating digital stories or videos, or writing an article for a library newsletter, local paper, or professional publication. The list of potential partners grew each time. Maine librarians added lobstermen and clammers. A Massachusetts librarian who turned the conversation toward issues of environmental racism added social justice organizations.

If People Push Back

We also practiced responding to potential “darts” that may be aimed our way (all of which I have personally experienced). For the sake of brevity, I provide some snappy answers here:

- **Aren’t you just preaching to the choir?** Yes, and “the choir” needs an outlet and solidarity.
- **Isn’t this just talking?** Yes, and “just talking” has value, and where else can people find such brave space?
- **What about *doing* something?** Speaking or writing about climate change provides a step toward taking action.
- **Isn’t this just wallowing in despair?** If we ignore our shadow side, it will come back to bite us, says Carl Jung. I’m paraphrasing here.
- **Isn’t this too political to talk about in a library?** Climate change is a biophysical reality.
- **Is it okay to use public money to hold this conversation at a public institution?** As long as everyone’s voice can be heard, any topic is game. And anyone can schedule an event on a topic of their choosing.

When I experience a tremor of timidity, I remind myself that we do not have time to lose; runaway climate change is upon us. I ask myself whether my ego is more important than encouraging awareness, courage, accountability, and engagement in the face of this disturbing reality. My meditation practice, which I resumed soon after the 2016 presidential election, offers me critical support, insights, and a reminder of priorities in my personal and professional life.

Due to time constraints, we did not address climate deniers, though I provided a resource list that included readings on talking across divides. Generally, people want to be respected and valued; there is likely to be a continuum of opinions even with climate change “concernees.”

My advice, if challenged:

- Do not argue facts or allow arguing among participants.
- Acknowledge all views.
- Focus on values.
- Lead with curiosity.
- Encourage those with opposing opinions to organize their own event.

Besides the World Café model, LTC offers a raft of options that support deliberative conversations, such as Reflective Structured Dialogue and Dialogue to Change.³⁶ Of course, these models may be applied to difficult conversations around other social issues. Show your community that librarians are leaders. Then let the people speak. People generally love to talk—and talking is free!

Journey Comes to a Close

Wrapping up my Sabbatical Adventure in Vermont, I encourage my colleagues to stay present, stable, motivated, and enlivened in the face of climate change and the question of collapse:

- Maintain excellent self-care to be clear-eyed about the realities of climate change.
- Learn to stabilize your nervous system to stay centered and engaged.
- Immerse yourself in the natural world. Become still. Notice smells, sights, and sounds. Bring a child. Model reverence in a consumer-obsessed culture.
- Acknowledge your grief for the world.
- Let the hollows carved by grief be filled with radical joy and amazement.
- Reduce your carbon footprint, even if you're not sure it really makes a difference. You'll walk with more authenticity, bucking the "business as usual" approach that lulls us into complicity.
- Invite your community into a conversation about climate change. Librarians needn't be experts, but rather gracious hosts, especially in choosing World Café as a format.
- Work through your insecurities as leaders. Read up on facilitating, observe good speakers, find your "original medicine."
- Consider your spheres of influence. Where can you make a difference? Do you have access to resources such as a meeting room, a modest fund, special talents, or community connections?

Self-Education

In honesty, I stated up front that I am not a facilitation guru. Rather, I leverage skills and tools that propel me on my path to being a change agent. Aspiring facilitators need to continually self-educate through reading, practice, professional development training, and trial and error. In fall 2018 I enrolled in Hosting World Cafe: The Fundamentals, an eight-week online course through the Fielding Graduate University. I recently completed a six-month online course Meditate and Mediate and an eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. My reading on climate change is never-ending. While meditating stabilizes my nervous system and preserves my sanity, I also send compassion to those in more threatened and traumatic situations than myself.

Staying Connected Post-training

I encouraged trainees to join the online group for New England librarians to brainstorm ideas, codesign a conversation, strategize promotion, troubleshoot,

consider assessment tools, and more. With fifty-one people subscribed to date, the group offers the training materials, support tools (e.g., Safe Circle calls³⁶), our World Café harvests, poems we cocreated, and a forum to share successful climate change programs and brainstorm ideas.

While I was tempted to open up the online group, New Englanders share a bioregion, history, and culture. I also declined offers to bring the training beyond New England, sticking to a “small is beautiful” model of thinking and living in the present. Imagine our future librarian selves in a fossil fuel-free world, airplane travel and in-person national library conferences things of the past. Traveling by high-speed rail, solar-powered electric cars, battery-boosted bicycles, and possibly by horse and on foot, librarians will work closer to home and connect face-to-face for authentic conversations. Fueled by our profession’s collective intellect, agility with systems thinking, and capacity for compassion, this degrowth approach—perhaps born of necessity—can lead to new ways of knowing and interacting in and between libraries. Even in my gloomiest moments, I see a world with physical libraries staffed by library professionals.

As librarians we have a duty to put our minds, hearts, hands, energy, spaces, funding, and materials to work. In the name of social justice, our privileged access to resources ought to stir a sense of responsibility. As a Maine public librarian wrote in her training feedback form, her most valuable takeaway was, “To ground myself and force my way out of my comfort zone for the greater good of bringing about climate change discussions/actions.”³⁷ Although none of us know how the story will unfold—I asked that we all commit, as invited by Joe Brewer, to “living into being.”³⁸

Conclusion

Will these librarians use the training as a springboard to facilitating actual climate change conversations? Only time will tell. Meanwhile, I picture these colleagues stepping up, risking vulnerability, and acting as if our very lives depend on it. Because they do. The rewards promise a sense of connection and gratitude for the people who attend, a chance to shine as a professional with courage and empowerment, and perhaps an increase in our sense of (and real) safety upon witnessing the will of our community to care for one another in the face of unprecedented societal and environmental turmoil.

Margaret Wheatley asked, “Who do you choose to be for this time? Are you willing to use whatever power and influence you have to create islands of sanity that evoke and rely on our best human qualities to create, relate, and persevere? Will you

* Facilitated by Carolyn Baker and Dean Spillane Walker, these online conversations allow for authentic sharing around climate disruption. To get on the list, email safecircle@gmail.com.

consciously and bravely choose to reclaim leadership as a noble profession that creates possibility and humaneness in the midst of increasing fear and turmoil?”³⁹

A public librarian from New Hampshire offered me what I consider to be the highest praise of all. Asked for her “most valuable take away,” she responded, “The fire reignited in my soul.” Upon reading her words, I knew my emotional, intellectual, and physical efforts in driving all those miles, making all those handouts, and facilitating all those training sessions landed in a place of meaning for her and hopefully many others who sat face-to-face in these circles, in this emerging community of practice.

Postscript

Selected activities inspired by Facing the Future:

- April 20, 2018—“Talking Truth @ Smith”—Smith College Library, Massachusetts. Students engaged in a climate change virtual reality game; an interactive exercise about sense of place; and letter writing to future students to inspire them to effect change.
- June 14, 2018—“Can We Talk about Climate Change?”—Attleboro Public Library, Massachusetts. Patrons wrote their fears about climate change on flip charts, viewed “How to Transform Apocalypse Fatigue into Action on Global Warming,” and had a discussion cofacilitated by an environmental engineer and a librarian.
- September 5, 2018—Virtual brainstorming session for World Café. Librarians from Merrimack College and Forbes Library in Northampton, Massachusetts, were coached by the author to plan climate change–based World Cafés for a First-Year Experience course and a public event.
- September 25, 2018—“Librarians, Climate Change and Community Resilience,” Boston Public Library. Librarians and LIS students discussed climate change, transformational leadership, and ideas for community engagement as part of Boston’s first annual Climate Preparedness Week.
- *Partnering with Communities Responding to Extreme Weather* (climatecrew.org), a team of Massachusetts librarians is aiming to engage libraries across the state to offer climate change conversations as part of Climate Preparedness Week 2019. The effort will be propelled by a webinar training sponsored by the Massachusetts Library System.

Appendix 7A. How Do You Feel about Climate Change?

3/16/18
Urbain ~

Facing the Future: Facilitating Climate Change Conversations in Your Library

This workshop is presented and funded by the Massachusetts Library System

How do you feel about climate change?

I feel the fierce urgency of now. I cherish the earth, nature, the outdoors. I see the enormity of what is at stake, of what may be lost, of the human and animal suffering to come. I feel rage at the elites who compose ^{& promote} the "denier" beliefs. Many are not ignorant, but do so for their own short-term profit. I feel despair that ~~scientists~~ science & education are scorned in our powerful country. I feel hope in the company of activists. I feel shame for the failures ~~to~~ ^{I sometimes} of my generation.

I sometimes feel envious of H.S. & college students today - that they have this great battle before them. Their lives have such purpose.

Author anonymous, used with consent.

Appendix 7B. And the Polar Bears Thrived

Once there were 16 brave people—librarians and their allies—who banded together to make a difference in the world, even though they might sometimes feel some hesitancy as facilitators....

So they saddled up their horses and pulled up their big person panties and gathered their materials and handouts and put them in their go bags in case they needed to start a fire.

They started a conversation instead.

And to their surprise and pleasure—the conversation was just the beginning. The people kept talking and meeting and eating free ice lollies (aka popsicles) which were donated by the local farm stand.

And every week they met around the campfire and had a different conversation.

Sometimes virtually and sometimes actual campfires in a local park. And the scientists stopped by and listened to what they were saying and they welcomed them and gave them materials and handouts, including research that they themselves hadn't yet seen. And the scientists said, "We need social scientists to turn these conversations into actionable items."

SPSS software was procured. At first just a grant, but then sustainably funded with no end.

And there were ice lollies. Also called popsicles.

And the polar bears thrived.

Cocreated by Facing the Future trainees at Topsham Public Library, Maine, May 1, 2018.

Appendix 7C. Facing the Future: Facilitating Climate Change Conversations in Your Library

*Spring 2018 | Drafting a Climate Change
Conversation*

Possible theme(s):

Possible format (e.g. World Café, reflective writing “How do you feel about climate change?”)

Promotional language ideas:

Audience:

Space:

Capacity or preferred number of people:

Potential partners:

Potential funders:

Visual aids (e.g video, images):

Expressive elements (e.g. art, music, movement):

Mindfulness/Resiliency elements (e.g. finger labyrinth, grounding exercise, reflective writing) :

Possible discussion questions/exercises:

Resources to support you as a facilitator:

(e.g. Libraries Transforming Communities)

Materials to bring to the Conversation (e.g. markers, large sheets white paper, snacks for World Café):

Ideas for how to display/document/share/archive:

How to get support/share ideas during the planning process:

(e.g. Climate Change Conversations in Libraries, online group connected to this training)

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NOTES

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