SPARKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

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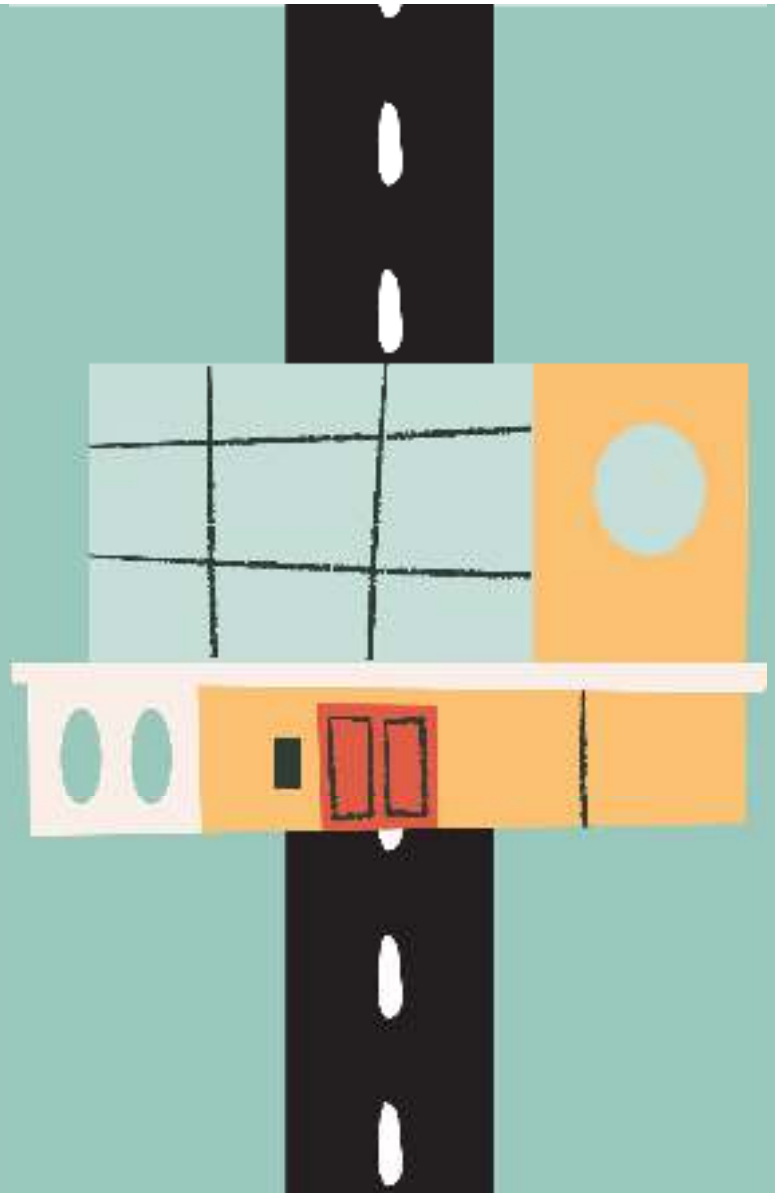


QUESTIONS?

- Does your library utilize partnerships to increase budgetary and staff capacity?
- What have been your biggest challenges in building partnerships?

CONNECTIONS

- Libraries are all about building connections and relationships
- A natural outcome of these connections is partnerships
- Good relationships make your Library successful.
- Nurture those relationships by supporting them as you would like them to support you.
- Say yes as often as possible. Always say Thank you.

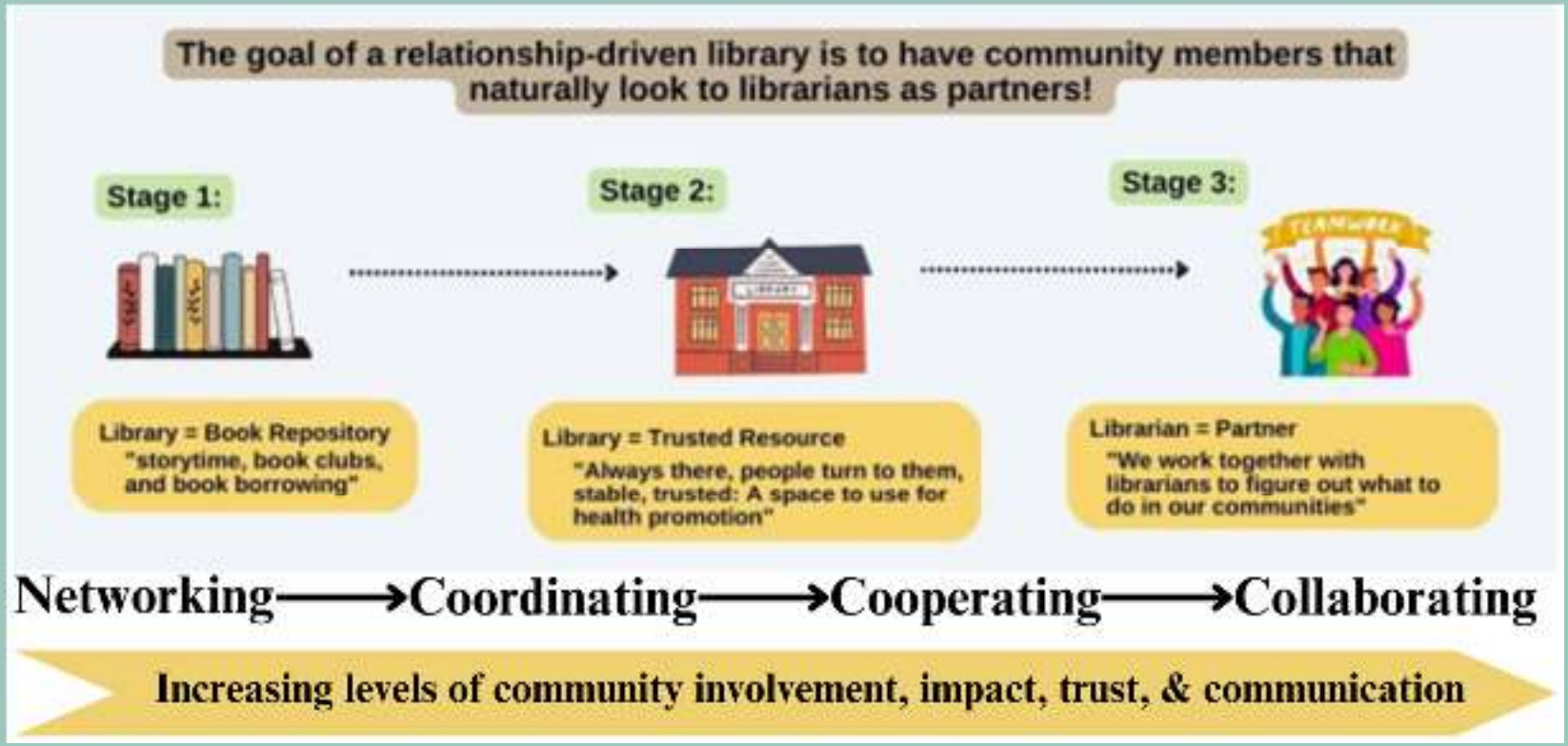
PARTNERSHIPS = OUTREACH, MARKETING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, & ADVOCACY

What are partnerships?

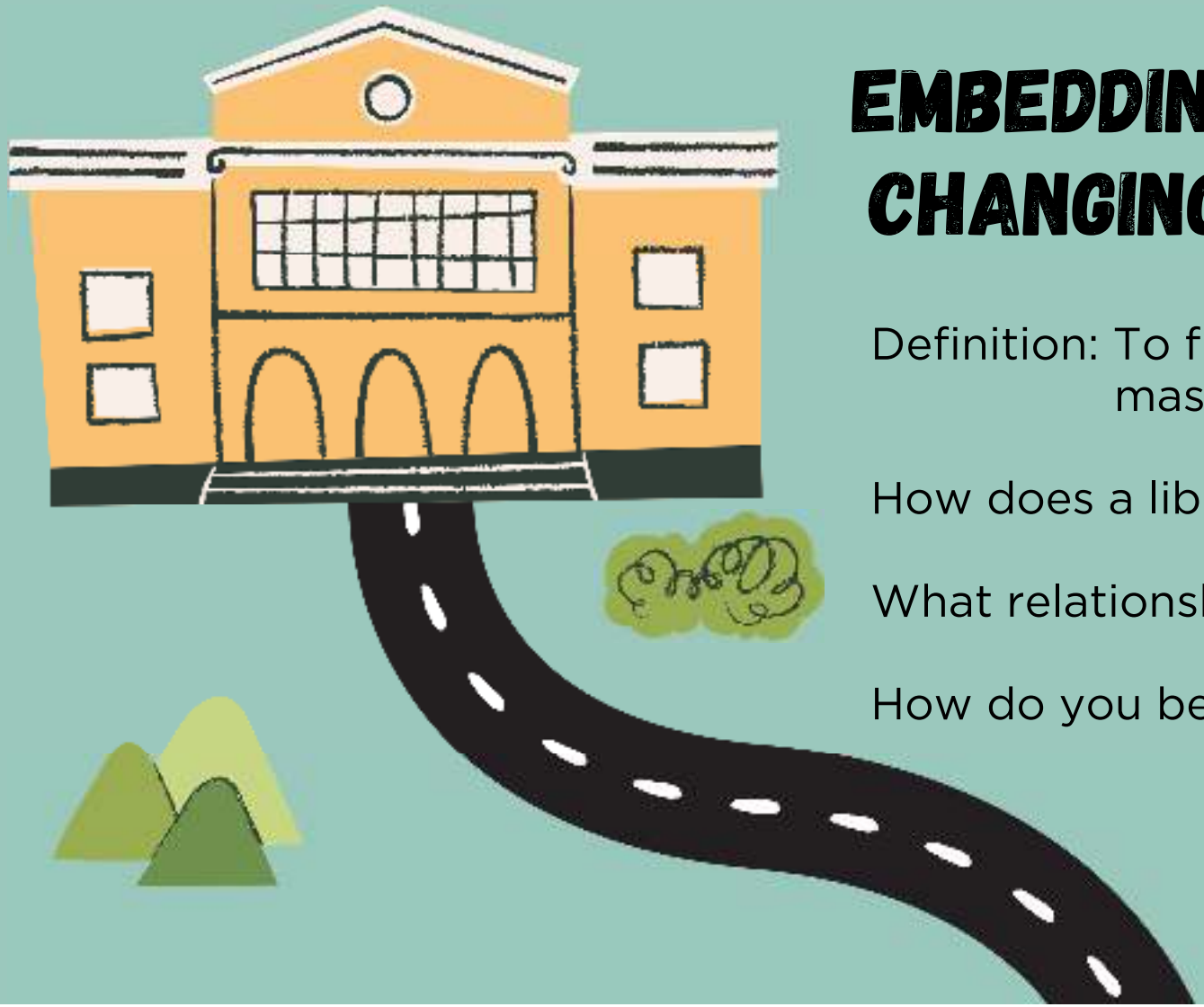
Definition – "Cooperation between people or organizati in the public or private sector for mutual benefit"(McQuaid, 2000, p. 3).

- Many levels exist on a continuum (Coleman et al., 2020; Gajda, 2004; Himmelman, 2002)

PERCEPTIONS



Coleman, 2020; Cunningham, 2020; Lenstra, n. d.



EMBEDDING THE LIBRARY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Definition: To fix firmly in a surrounding mass

How does a library do this?

What relationships already exist?

How do you become indespensible?

LIBRARY AS AN INDESPENSIBLE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

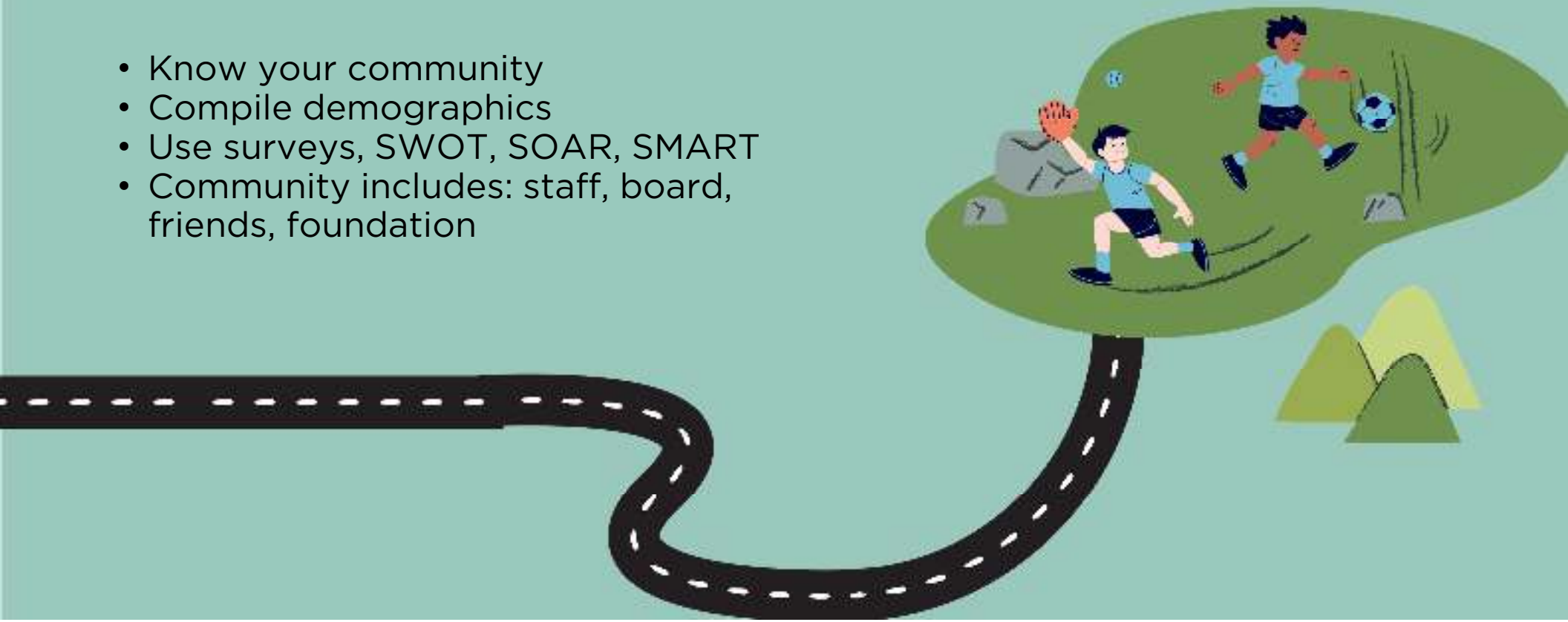
1. Get involved
2. Get feedback
3. Market the Library
4. Reinvest in the community
5. Find common goals

GETTING INVOLVED

- What local organizations are active in your community?
- What local events occur yearly that the library can take part in?
- How can you support your local school district?
- Get to know your local business owners
- Attend City Council meetings

GET FEEDBACK

- Know your community
- Compile demographics
- Use surveys, SWOT, SOAR, SMART
- Community includes: staff, board, friends, foundation



MARKET THE LIBRARY

- Constantly
- Programs, services, collections
- Pictures of events on social media get great engagement - releases

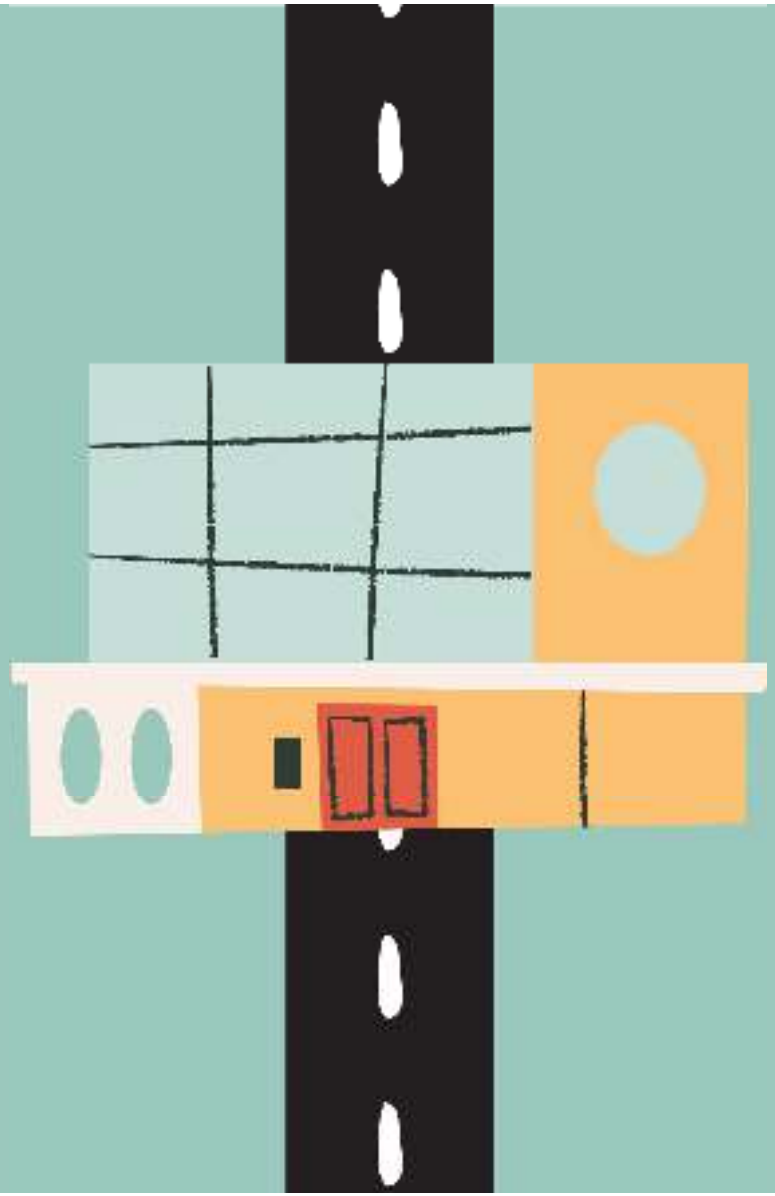
REINVEST IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Join community boards or councils
- Support your schools
- Support your businesses

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT = OPPORTUNITIES

If you never ask, you will never know

- City government - parks & rec
- State Extension
- School districts
- Community Action programs
- Local Civic Organizations
- Churches
- Business



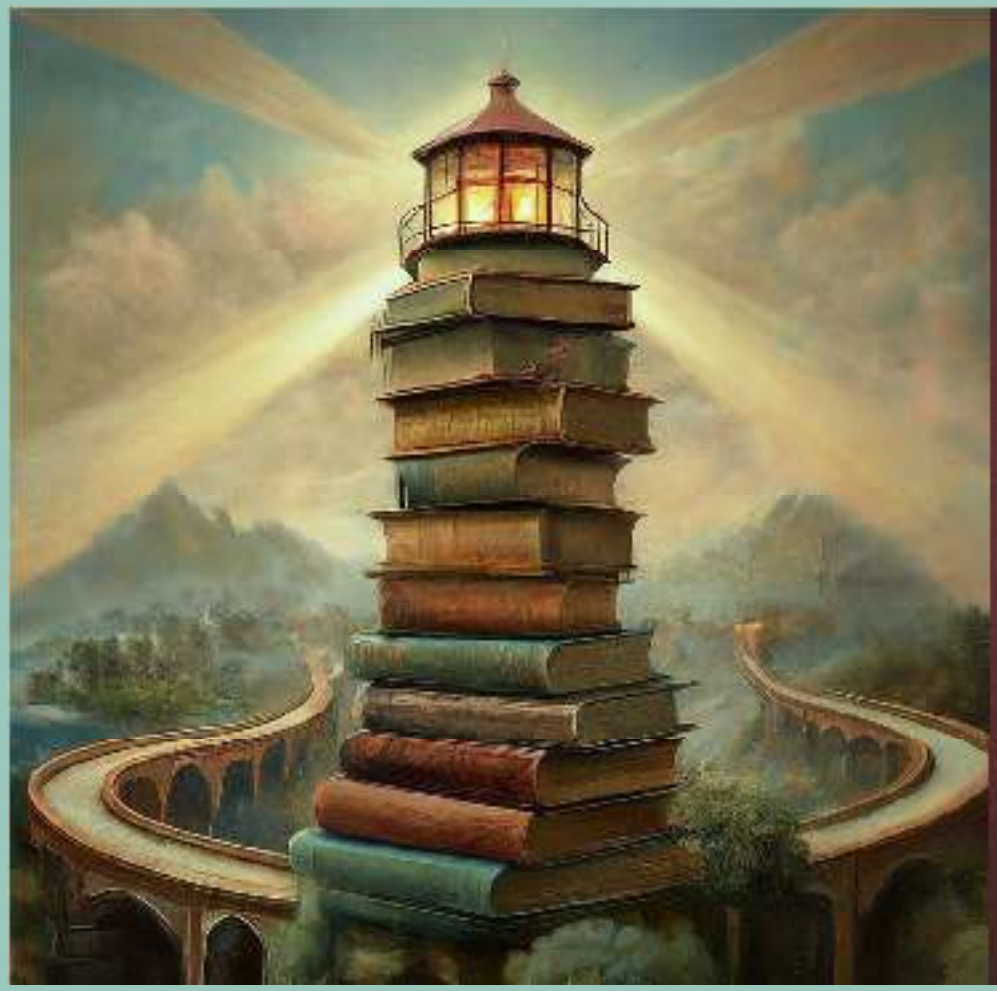
WHAT WE KNOW

- Partnerships help libraries
  - Funding
  - Reach
  - Useable space
  - Advocacy
- Only partner if it is beneficial
- Prospective Partners - view libraries
- Partnerships help partners
  - reach & ...

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

- Partnerships can change perspectives and perceptions
- Keep partnerships positive
  - Do what you say you are going to do
- How do true rural library partnerships look?
  - Agreement on what rural means

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?



"Libraries aren't just buildings; they're community connectors. By actively engaging with local residents, partnering with schools and organizations, and hosting events and programs, libraries extend their reach beyond their physical walls to become integral parts of the communities they serve." - Author unknown

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