STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The man who enters a library is in the best society this world affords;
the good and the great welcome him, surround him,
and humbly ask to be allowed to become his servants....

Andrew Carnegie
1895

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A. The Mission

Align Public Perceptions With the Reality of the Mission

Mention the word "library" to most people and you probably will conjure up in their minds the image of a building populated by matronly women prone to glaring at patrons (especially youngsters) and issuing a stern "hush" when conversations rise above a whisper. If asked to describe the primary function of a library, some may describe it as a place where people may obtain the latest best selling novel or find a new stuffing recipe for the Thanksgiving meal. Others may respond by labeling it as a place where kids burn time after school surfing the Internet, free movies are shown during the summer, or the homeless go to get out of the elements. Yet others see their library simply as a taxpayer-subsidized competitor to Netflix.

With those thoughts in mind, it's not surprising that when local or state government revenues fall below projections, the library budget is among the first cut, if not the first. Service hours are sliced and materials acquisition slashed, because policymakers and taxpayers see the library as offering non-essential services, ones that people may either do without or may obtain easily with their own resources. Particularly in the age of the Internet and Project Gutenberg, many people may assume that books and libraries are quaint anachronisms, as everything is available, with just a few taps on a keyboard.

Unfortunately, these mistaken assumptions harm individuals and communities both in the short-term and the long-term. They fail to appreciate that libraries offer indispensable services to the entire community, even more so during periods of economic downturn.

Modern libraries are invaluable professional resource centers. They are the first stop for many people looking for employment opportunities or resources that will better prepare them for a job search or a new position.[1] Others may visit the library to investigate self-employment options or to seek out tips for increasing the income of their existing businesses (e.g., through sales to governments or via better financial management). At libraries, business owners may obtain valuable information from expensive

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[1] With the movement of virtually all employment opportunities from readily accessible newspapers to online job boards, the need for supplemental assistance is even more pressing. To search for employment today, applicants need Internet access (preferably high speed) to identify available positions and to complete the applications that, all too often, must be submitted online as well.

subscription business databases or journals that would otherwise be beyond their means to review.

During periods of economic downturn, non-professional needs for library services expand as well. When individuals are forced to watch their budgets even more than usual, access to the myriad resources of the local library may be a godsend. At the library, homeowners may find the information necessary to help them do gardening or home maintenance projects that they would contract out in better times. Creative patrons may pour through the latest edition of "Writer's Market" or "Self-Publishing for Dummies" in hopes that they might profit from their creative efforts. Parents and students may avail themselves of the evening and weekend hours to search the collection for information on financial aid for post-secondary education expenses.

Community groups too will use reference tools in the library to identify revenue sources for their enterprises or techniques to enhance fundraising or grant writing. Yet others may indulge themselves with a novel, an album of their favorite composer's works, or a classic film to help reduce the stress of unemployment or decreasing business or personal income.

Regardless of the economic climate, untold numbers of individuals always will be at the library, digging through old records to discover more about their family history and their ethnic heritage. To their great joy, they may learn that their ancestors were survivors of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 or that they were instrumental in the founding of their town.

All are library services that have no price, but are priceless to those who benefit from them.

To help synchronize the public's perception with the modern library's vital community service mission, it is time for a name change to reflect accurately the scope of available services. Toward that end, the *Community Knowledge Center and Learning Annex* should replace the title "library," with subunits to be known as the *Creativity Hub, Civic Engagement Center,* and *Local and Family History Center*. Furthermore, staff would best be referred to as "information specialists" or "youth service specialists" to underscore the true purpose of their work.

B. Program Development

1. Focus on Programs and Services That Enhance the Individual's Quality-of-Life and Build the Community. Offer Programs and Services the Public Can't Find Anywhere Else, at Any Price. Regardless of the demographic makeup or its size, every community benefits from the presence of a library system that pledges to accomplish the following:

a. Be the Knowledge Managers for the Community. Over the last two decades, technological developments have spawned an information explosion. Now, rather than suffer from an absence of information, all too often, people are overwhelmed with it. Imperative now is the ability to cut through the clutter to find the right data, to ensure that it's accurate, and to find it quickly.

Although some individuals may have that skill in certain fields, librarians are the only professionals that excel at that task across all subject areas. They know how to select the proper reference sources[2] and "find it fast" for others, regardless of topic. The successful libraries of the future, therefore, will focus like a laser on this pivotal service. Moreover, they will hire, train, and value skilled reference professionals, as their strength will be in their staff (not the number of books on the shelves).

b. Support Individual Educational Achievement, Literacy, and Life-Long Learning. See Item B2a for a detailed discussion of programming in this area.

c. Foster Civic Engagement. Some of the most sought after knowledge at any library is about the operations of the governments that serve the community. As non-partisan repositories with an unwavering commitment to the open exchange of ideas and information, libraries are vital, often overlooked, partners in the drive for an enlightened citizenry.[3]

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[2] Both as to quality of information and the precise match to user needs. A high school student working on a school report about the Civil War will have different needs than an individual designing an exhibit about the Civil War for an area military museum.

[3] These services may be particularly helpful to residents participating in local Leadership Academies or seeking to become US citizens.

As finances allow, flat screen television sets (equipped with earphones) should be installed so that patrons could monitor C-SPAN and other government programming.

d. Be a Creativity Hub. At first blush, readers may think of aspiring, but frustrated, novelists or poets and their stacks of rejection letters from publishers when the subject of creativity arises. Many may see government initiatives in this area to be "nice," but not essential and thus easily abandoned during times of budgetary stress. Creativity, however, is a quality that every business owner or self-employed individual should cultivate to help them improve their advertising and marketing initiatives. Grant and proposal writers as well may benefit from

information and training needs of citizen advisory panels.

Reference materials should focus on items that explain the operations of government as well as the issues before it. At a minimum, libraries should have available (in electronic and/or print format, as appropriate) for all local governments within their scope of service the following:

✦   agenda packets,
✦   audit reports,
✦   budgets,
✦   charters, codes, and ordinances,
✦   comprehensive annual financial reports,
✦   comprehensive plans,
✦   environmental impact statements (for large projects),
✦   financial disclosure forms for elected officials,
✦   initiative and referendum procedures,
✦   maps (e.g. highlighting boundaries of city council, county commission, school board, and state legislative districts),
✦   minutes of meetings,
✦   newsletters,
✦   press releases,
✦   rules of order and procedure,
✦   speeches of elected officials (e.g., State of the City speech),
✦   strategic plans, and
✦   video tapes of public meetings.

Although citizens may go to city hall or the courthouse for information, or obtain it from the government's home page, access is limited to the hours that governments are open for business and their commitment to posting materials and retaining documents online for future reference. Those without Internet access face additional obstacles in accessing this information. That obstacle grows daily as governments, to save money, cease producing and distributing print documents and rely solely on electronic formats and distribution. The ever growing number of special districts that deliver governmental services further challenges even the most dedicated citizen in his/her efforts to stay informed.

For the benefit of the entire community, libraries should collect all core documents and reference materials used by governments; display them together in a separate, readily accessible section of the library; and make that availability widely known.[4]

Library staff should consult with those who man the area 211 and 311 telephone information services to identify common information requests to help refine the collection. Acquisition of print materials about the operations of federal and state government agencies, of necessity, will be subject to space availability.

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[4]   Library board members may be the most important beneficiaries of such assistance and should be key consultants in the development of this initiative, given their unique insights into the

discovering new approaches to blending the spoken and written word with visual images to craft an appealing grant application or proposal (i.e., being creative).

With the options now available for self-publishing, many individuals who could never break through the conventional publishing system may now profit from their creative works.[5] Even if writers fail to make a penny from their work, the process of writing creatively will sharpen their communications skills, thereby facilitating professional advancement in a wide number of fields. Writing groups for teens, therefore, should be explored (if not available through other organizations).

Creativity also is an attribute of inventors, which, if nurtured, could result in the development of new products. Especially for young people, the marriage of the library's information resources with appropriate volunteer inventor mentors could open

new horizons. Building a more creative community, therefore, will pay multiple dividends, thus, it must be a core function of libraries.[6]

e.   Preserve Local History. Enable Individuals to Explore Their Cultural Heritage and Family History. Every community has a strong interest in gathering and preserving its history. In the absence of a museum dedicated to that purpose, libraries play a pivotal role. Furthermore, their information specialists are valuable assets to individuals seeking to use that historical information for a variety of purposes.

Even if a local history museum exists, libraries and librarians may be better equipped to preserve and store the documentary elements of that history (e.g., city directories, newspaper articles). Libraries, for example, might take the lead on digitizing local historical resources and making that material available online. In addition, library volunteers could work with museum volunteers to record oral histories.[7]

The Bennett Martin Public Library in Lincoln, Nebraska, illustrates the unique role that libraries may play in both advancing the creativity of the community and its historical sensitivity through its Heritage Room for Nebraska Authors.[8]

Strong interest in history does not stop with town or regional history. Individuals have a powerful desire to know about their ancestors and their ethnic heritage. High levels of utilization for genealogical material in every library's collection illustrate the priority that the public places on this area.

To enable individuals to maximize utilization of documentary resources or photographs within the collection, scanners should be available for individual use. If at all possible, the library should obtain 1980s and 1990s era computers (with software) and audio equipment; therefore, if a patron stumbles across an

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[5]   One also could schedule business management classes designed to benefit those in creative fields (e.g., covering copyright, patents, royalties, and trademarks).

[6]   The Iowa City, Iowa library maintains a collection of original art work, including children's book art, for patrons to borrow (eight week maximum).

[7]   See the Austin (Texas) History Center, http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/ahc/default.htm, and the Denver Public Library's Western History and Genealogy section, http://history.denverlibrary.org/about/index.html, for illustrations of the leadership role libraries may play in this area.

[8]   http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/hr/front.htm.

old audio/video recording of a parent or a floppy disk with family data that material could be converted to modern formats and thus saved for future generations.

Being mindful of the fact that family heirlooms are a matter of great curiosity and pride (as evidenced by the popularity of "The Antiques Road Show"), special efforts should be made to build the reference collection to assist patrons in learning about their heirloom clothing, furniture, and household goods. Based on the availability of volunteer subject matter experts within the community, the library could host a miniature "Antiques Road Show" for patrons, offering reference assistance on matters of provenance, preservation, and restoration.

Instruction in the languages common to the immigrant settlers of the area would be another ideal service, assuming that space allows and instructional staff may be found.

f. Become a Foundation Center Cooperating Collection. Non-profit organizations are among the building blocks of a community. The Foundation Center aims to build the fundraising capacity of those vital entities. In support of that work, it publishes a variety of reference works. By becoming a Cooperating Collection of the Center, a library may then place the Center's valuable databases, directories, publications, and research reports at the disposal of its non-profits patrons.

2. Do Not Duplicate Services Within a Community or Compete with Other Established Organizations (Public and Private). Coordinate and Integrate All Services. Some of the services offered by libraries are ones that may serve dual purposes (e.g., educational advancement and recreation). In small communities, in particular, libraries have stepped in to deliver services that, although outside their traditional role, are valuable to the community (e.g., providing assistance to low-income individuals and senior citizens in filing their income tax returns). With tax revenues not limitless and service demands high, it is imperative that libraries coordinate closely to ensure that service delivery is coordinated across all service providers (both public and private) within a community.

Make certain the public knows that all agencies are working together to maximize cost-efficiency and program effectiveness by preparing joint brochures on these initiatives and placing notices about them in a prominent place on the web page.

a. Partner with the Education Community and Literacy Organizations. Next in importance to its mission as a knowledge center for the community is the vital role that libraries play in educational enhancement for all residents. That is one role, however, that must be performed in concert with other educators in the community to promote maximum effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

Library staff should meet with educators at all levels (i.e., elementary, secondary, community college, and higher education) on a periodic basis to ensure that whenever and however possible, the library may support and supplement educational programming within the community.[9] Particularly on an elementary and secondary level, knowledge of the curriculum should be shared so that librarians will be ready to offer effective homework assistance or tutoring to all students in all subjects and to assist those pursuing a GED.[10] Summer reading and literacy programming are other areas where coordination and consultation should be ongoing.

To the extent possible, library acquisitions for children and young adults should be planned with an eye towards meeting the needs of local students (e.g., ensuring that the library has age appropriate reference materials when astronomy is added to the science curriculum of the local middle school or having sufficient copies of popular novels to allow schools to borrow the books from the library, rather than purchase them). If possible, the library and schools should coordinate purchasing to maximize the acquisition budgets.[11]

For secondary students, libraries may play a vital role by providing a one-stop shop for career counseling. Unlike schools, libraries are open at night, on weekends, and 52 weeks a year. At their convenience, therefore, parents may come with their

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[9] Including educational staff of juvenile justice institutions.
[10] To help enhance the working relationship, all educators should be invited to an annual open house at the library.
[11] Especially regarding access to expensive software (e.g., the Powerspeak foreign language instruction tool), subscription databases or scientific and technical materials. Thought should be given as well regarding ways to allow students to use school library materials during the summer recess. Every book locked in a school for 10 – 12 weeks during the summer is a lost learning opportunity for a young person.

teens to the library to explore career opportunities, review information about a myriad of colleges and training programs, and investigate financial aid options. (Non-students may do the same.) Libraries also may invite business owners and professionals to "career nights" open to all students, regardless of their school (be it public or private) to supplement the information found in the reference collection.

Parents who home school their children may be among the most frequent users of local library services. Coordination with this group is highly encouraged as well.
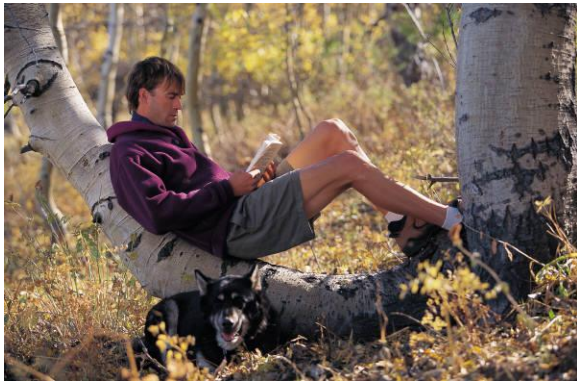
Strong adult education programming also is vital to the economic health of a community. For many adults, the greatest need is for short, targeted courses not taken for college credit (e.g., composition/grammar, computer utilization, financial management, interviewing skills, public speaking, resume writing, and test preparation). In some communities, that programming may be provided by community colleges, traditional four-year institutions, a Small Business Development Center, or other entities. The US Department of Agriculture's Graduate School, for example, has been offering professional development opportunities to Washington, DC residents and workers since 1921.[12]

Needs will differ from community to community and, in many cases, from subject area to subject area. In some cases, course programming may be well developed (e.g., computer training, distance learning, GED preparation, or sign language instruction), but the sponsors may need readily accessible, appropriately equipped classroom space that might be available at the local library. In other instances, essential programming might be absent (e.g., automobile maintenance for women, foreign

languages, and speech writing) and thus need to be developed and delivered. Libraries, therefore, should consult with educational institutions and interested parties in the community to assess educational gaps and determine how to fill them.[13]

b.   Coordinate with Parks and Recreation. Check the activity listings for public libraries and you will see many offering gaming activities for teens or movie nights for families. To the extent that these services are desired within the community, they would best be managed by the parks and recreation department (if not a private sector sponsor).[14] By doing so, local government may avoid service duplication and ensure accountability for program goals for parks and recreation managers. Such concentration also allows the parks and recreation staff, who are the experts on leisure activities, to best use their experience and skills for the benefit of the community.

c.   Consult with Public and Private Entities Working For/With Senior Citizens. In most communities, a host of public and private entities work with senior citizens (e.g., AARP, assisted living facilities, Meals on Wheels, parks and recreation department, and senior citizens centers, to name just a few). Consultation and coordination with all interested parties will help avoid not only service duplication but also service gaps. In addition, the expertise of individuals from all of these groups should be tapped for collection development to help the library have the best reference materials available on the topics of current concern to seniors and their caregivers.

d.   Plan Events in Conjunction with Area Cultural Organizations, Museums, and Genealogical Societies. Cultural heritage or local history programs warrant coordination and cooperation as well so the information resources of the library may be blended with the human and physical resources of museums and other non-profit organizations (e.g., a "pioneer farm" that features not only historical displays but also reenactors playing the roles of pioneer farmers) to enhance programming.

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[12]   That programming now is delivered beyond the Washington, DC area.

[13]   These partners should, in turn, maintain a supply of library card application forms and distribute those liberally to their program participants.
[14]   Although libraries may (should) make their meeting rooms available for such activities.

The Pueblo Colorado City – County Library District exemplifies this type of cooperative activity as the main library's top floor houses infozone, an interactive news museum.[15]

e.   Collaborate with the Business Community, Educational Institutions, Job Training Programs, Other Government Agencies, and Social Service Agencies for Business Development and Career Services.   Of all the possible programming areas, business development and career services may be the most important across the entire community. Collaboration should result in a cost-efficient, seamless flow of service delivery across the community, thus, it should be pursued aggressively.

3.   Marketing Isn't a Dirty Word.   Libraries resources are like vegetables. They are good for you, but some people need to be convinced to consume them.   Marketing, therefore, is essential to the successful management of a library and its mission of serving all community members. Toward that end, libraries need to look for new ways to appeal to individuals, especially adults, who may have drifted away from structured activities or reading, in favor of other interests. To pique interest, libraries could:

a.   Hold an annual open house. Invite attendees to come as their favorite book character or author. Play charades, based on book titles only. Have an adult spelling bee, with teams from area businesses or civic organizations competing. Hold a reading marathon (e.g., participants taking 15 minute shifts in an uninterrupted reading of Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None").

In the alternative, attendees could play a customized game of Trivial Pursuit, where all the answers may be found in the library's reference collection. If individuals didn't know the answer, they would have three minutes to find it by using the reference tools at hand.

b.   Announce an "Item of the Week" (e.g., paint) and invite the public to list written works where that item plays a role in the plot (e.g., Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" or John Grisham's "A Painted House").

c.   Urge "older" community members to create a "Bucket List" of books or poems[16] and share it with others.

d.   Write the opening scene to a new novel (or an old-time radio show) and invite everyone, from age 6 to 106, to contribute the rest (e.g., limiting each contribution to 5 paragraphs and/or 500 words). See where the community's creativity takes the story!

e.   Invite a local restaurant (with the appropriate ambiance) to host a monthly mystery book club, paying homage to the rich legacy of Sam Spade/Dashiell Hammett and "The Maltese Falcon" of course. Ask another to sponsor a weekend "Book Brunch" for book lovers to gather (with appropriate programming).

f.   Design several types of bookmarks and library cards (e.g., for children, teens, or science fiction lovers). Those that appeal to a special interest, such as science fiction lovers, could be available for a small donation to the library (i.e., following the practice for vanity license plates).[17]

g.   Athletes typically receive a cap or t-shirt to mark their participation in a unique sporting event (e.g., marathon). To the extent that funding may be obtained, caps or t-shirts could be provided to participants in summer reading programs or other activities for the children, tweens, and teens. Ideally, the caps or shirts could be designed by the students (or perhaps a participant in programs of the Creativity Hub). Not only would the attire publicize the library, but receipt of it should offer students a small, but important, incentive to visit their library.

h.   Help people look at their world in new and different ways. Using the arts as a starting point, for example, one could offer a "triple play" series where patrons read a novel, then see the movie production of the work, and also view a live performance of the stage version (presented in conjunction with a local theater company).   A number of works lend

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[15]   http://www.infozonenewsmuseum.com.

[16]   The works they suggest that everyone read before they "kick the bucket."   To launch the initiative, the library could screen the film "The Bucket List." [On a personal note, I recently invited about a dozen family members and friends to suggest their "Bucket List" and it's been a highly enjoyable and enlightening experience.]

[17]   Ideally, the designs would be submitted by community members, with teens particularly encouraged to participate, with the winning design selected by community vote.

themselves to this treatment, including "Les Misérables," "The Color Purple," and "The Wizard of Oz." "Ragtime," the novel, the movie, and the musical, could be subject to a four prong treatment including a look at ragtime music as well.

Families might find particularly attractive a multipart program on "The Sound of Music," showcasing the movie and the musical along with biographies of the von Trapp family. A close examination of the life of Michelangelo could draw a divergent group of patrons who would read "The Agony and the Ecstasy" (historical fiction) and view the film of the same name, plus read Wallace's biography "Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man & His Times" and study many of Michelangelo's works. Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead" could be an attractive programming option blending the book, the movie, a discussion of Rand's philosophy, and a closer examination of the world of architecture.

Photographers could be given a poem (perhaps one written by a library patron) and urged to take photographs inspired by, or to illustrate, that work. Novelists, poets, or short story writers, in turn, could be invited to write works inspired by a given photograph, with all resulting products displayed at the library.[18]

If appropriate experts are available and the facility (internally or externally) is amenable, schedule science demonstrations. Supplement the demonstrations with reference materials, biographical information about inventors and scientists (e.g., "Madame Curie" by Eve Curie), and presentations from area subject matter experts. Where relevant, screen movies about inventors or scientists, especially youthful ones (e.g., "October Sky").

Finally, the writings of area/state authors could be featured in conjunction with programming on the community's history. Nebraska libraries, for example, would pair historical programming with the tall tales of Febold Feeboldson and readings of Willa Cather's novel "My Antonia," John Neihardt's epic poetry "A Cycle of the West," Mari Sandoz's biography of her father, "Old Jules", and Louise Pound's "Nebraska Folklore" to bring richness to the history.

i. Sponsor a breakfast or luncheon book club for the business community with the focus on non-fiction works (e.g., "Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard" or "The Snowball: Warren Buffet and the Business of Life"). Of course, a reading of "Ragged Dick" might be the appropriate first selection.

j. If one hasn't already been established within the community, launch an astronomy and/or meteorology club. Host a star party. Assuming that private funding could be obtained, purchase a telescope that could be available for patrons to check out, just like they would a book.

k. Most people do at least their initial summer vacation planning during the winter. A series of programs on popular vacation destinations (domestic and foreign) could be prepared in conjunction with local travel agents. In addition to offering an overview of international travel generally, library staff could prepare destination specific reference materials. The programming could be enhanced through readings that highlight the flavor of the vacation destination. Those planning a trip to Africa, therefore, could set the stage for their trip by reading Isak Dinesen's "Out of Africa," Ernest Hemingway's "Green Hills of Africa," or Beryl Markham's "West to the Night."

l. Perhaps in conjunction with a local pet supply store, shelter, or zoo, form a reading club focused on books about animals. Selections could be both fiction and non-fiction and could cover the waterfront from "Marley and Me" to "Gorillas in the Mist." Of course, the club should meet where pet companions are welcomed. Assuming demand would exist, both an adult and youth club could be organized.[19]

m. Explore the science behind the science fiction. Take popular science fiction novels and examine the expectations about scientific advances expressed in the works. Investigate the scientific concepts underlying elements of the story. Study how science fiction has changed or how it might differ based on the national origin of the author (e.g., Do English writers approach the genre differently? Is science fiction a genre that is common in other countries or only a few, perhaps English speaking ones?)

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[18]   With appreciation to the late Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who explained that her short story, "The Bedquilt," was inspired by a painting by Diego Velasquez.

[19]   Adults might enjoy joining the children to reread classics from their childhood such as "Black Beauty," "National Velvet," "Watership Down," and "Wind in the Willows."

n.   Create a daily or weekly "News You Can Use" e-newsletter covering the fields of business/career development, consumer protection, government, personal finance, and technology. Post the material in a visible spot on the web page as well.

o.   Sometimes a person needs to borrow something other than a book. Toward that end, the Iowa City, Iowa public library includes in its collection audio, CD/cassette, and DVD players, as well as flip cameras, that patrons may borrow. Security conscious Baltimore County, Maryland residents may borrow engravers from their library.

p.   The best programming in the world is wasted if no one knows of its existence. Libraries, therefore, need to ensure that their calendar of events, press releases, and weekly news updates go to every outlet (e.g., bloggers, city specific business journals, arts and entertainment publications, and the shoppers weekly). No longer is it sufficient to contact the major daily in a city to get the massage out, given the changing nature of news dissemination.

C. Service Delivery

1.   Serve Patrons Wherever You May Find Them – Anywhere and Everywhere. Engage Every Segment of the Community. The people who most need services are the people who seldom, if ever, visit a library. They are the people for whom academics and reading have been struggles and, in all likelihood, sources of embarrassment. Others are so busy earning a living, they don't have time for professional enrichment or to bring their children to the library. Yet others may not be able to access services because they work during library hours or sleep during those times because they work the late shift. Those with mobility impairments (due to age, disability, or economic circumstances) also may struggle to get to a central facility or even an area branch library.

Allowing individuals to complete transactions or conduct research activities online is helpful, but only if the potential patrons have Internet access and the skill to complete desired research alone. Again, the people most in need of assistance may be the ones with the greatest barriers to receiving it. Thus, staff must make every effort to find them where they are, engage them, and let them benefit as well from the services – whatever their circumstances.

a.   <u>Be Mobile</u>.   To help everyone tap the knowledge within the library, advance their
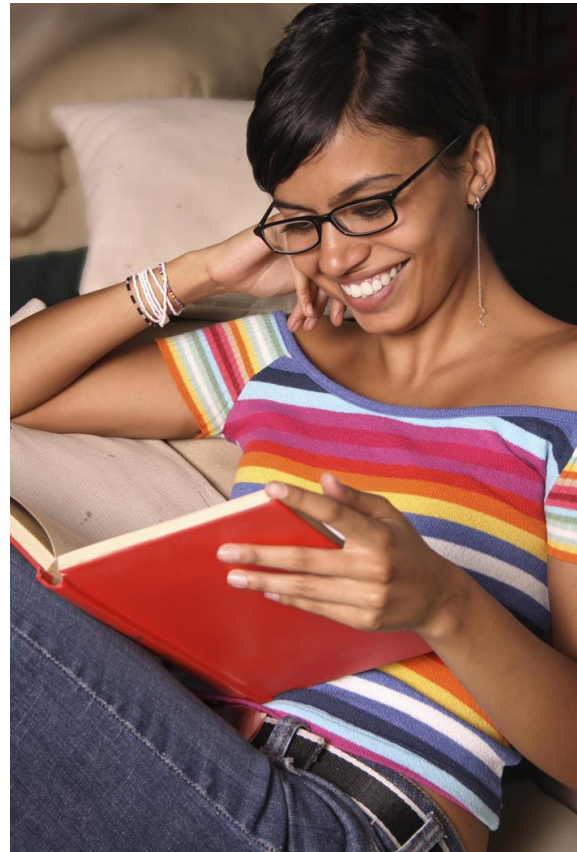
educational and professional development, and promote lifelong health through cognitive activity, the library must go mobile.[20]

Identify the places where people gather (e.g., animal adoption events, coffee shops, craft fairs, shelters, and transit stops) or wait for services (e.g., automotive repair shops, barbershops, hair salons, hospitals, and laundromats). Pack 1 – 3 plastic tubs with carefully selected books for the adults and/or children likely to be at those events or locations. Dispatch a staff member or volunteer to these places with the books and all relevant library brochures to give individuals an unexpected opportunity to browse some of the offerings available at the library and to learn more about its services (especially career or literacy related offerings).[21] Ideally, the opportunity would exist to check out these books or to apply for a

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[20]   Even if the library has a bookmobile, these suggestions would be for programming in addition to that service. This suggestion assumes that outreach services already are in place with area assisted living centers, nursing homes, and retirement communities.

[21]   Coordinating with the event sponsor or property owner, of course.

library card, if the individuals didn't already have one.

To capture the attention of children, the books could be packed into Radio Flyer wagons making them a distinctive treat for children (as well as an easy "bookmobile" for staff or volunteers to manage).[22]

Taking the concept one step further, consider deploying volunteer subject matter experts (SME). Armed with the tubs of specially selected materials, these subject matter experts could provide instant, additional enrichment opportunities to the public. Imagine, for example, the presence of an SME and resource materials at a concert, movie, or theatrical performance. Before the performance, moviegoers could browse through books about the director, the screenwriter, or key performers. They also could see samples of other works by these artists and learn more about the artists by querying the volunteer Subject Matter Expert. Such exposure could encourage them to check out items on the spot or to swing by the library later for additional materials.

Other SMEs could go to dog parks with a supply of animal care resources, no doubt helpful to the pet parents who are encountering unexpected behavioral or health issues with their four-legged friends.

Netbooks and WiFi further expand the outreach possibilities. Equip staff members or volunteers with a laptop, send them to a place with WiFi access, and they could scatter information services to the far reaches of the community. They could help individuals check out the books in the mobile package, conduct research, explore the collection, apply for a library card, and place items on hold for later pickup, among other tasks.

b.   Be Flexible. Rethink What a Modern Branch Library Might Look Like. Branch libraries are an excellent way to deliver services to the far reaches of a community. Financial constraints, however, limit that option for many communities. A rethinking of what a branch library could/should be could open up additional service options for neighborhoods.

Rather than be a miniature version of the main library, a branch library could be "express" only and still serve the neighborhood well. Governments simple need to find a storefront suitable for public

access computers and basic reference materials, with perhaps a meeting room(s) or study carrels. Malls are a great location.[23]

Without the expense of outfitting branches with books and shelving, these express locations could pop up almost anywhere. To keep staffing costs down but service up, they could be open only from 3 - 9 p.m. weekdays and normal hours on weekends.

Colorado's Pueblo City - County Library has eight "community satellites" scattered throughout the community at a charter school, six local elementary and middle schools, and a school of natural sciences. Hours vary by facility.
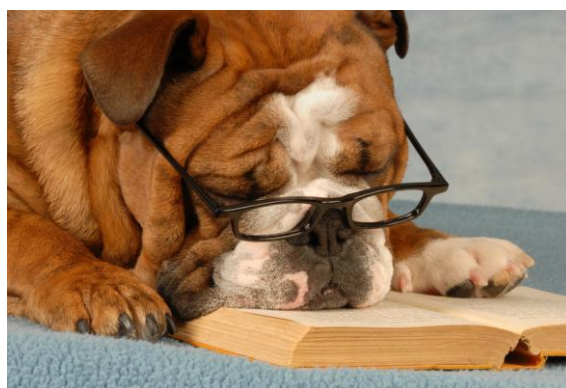
c.   Remember – Even Tough Guys Love to Read (ETGLR). Among the target groups that would benefit most from increased utilization of library services would be young men (especially those under 30). To help make reading "cool" among this group, start an "Even Tough Guys Love to Read" program.

Meeting locations could be flexible (e.g., a local restaurant, park, or recreation center – not necessarily the library). The staff member or volunteer organizing the effort could pack 1 – 3 tubs of books, selected with an eye toward more "manly" selections (e.g., books by Tom Clancy, Clive Cussler, Zane Grey, W.E.B. Griffin, Ernest Hemingway, Louis L'Amour, or Jack London; on subjects like sports; or selections from National Geographic's 100 Greatest

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[22]   If library vehicles aren't used, explore the possibility of signage that can be added to a vehicle to publicize the mobile book service (e.g., magnetic signs for vehicle doors).

[23]   Bookmarks, the Dallas library branch located in North Park Mall, circulates more items than branches eight times its size, with about one-fourth the staff, according to a July 6th, 2010 article by Jamie Stengle of the Associated Press. Worth noting as well is the fact that Mall owners covered the costs of renovation and charge only $1 a year rent.

Adventure Books of All Time[24]). For adults, the groups could discuss authors (e.g., Robert B. Parker) or books generally or select one book for all to read, just as a conventional book club would do. One assumes that the focus would be on fiction or historical works, but the men might enjoy reading selections such as "Men Are From Mars, Women are From Venus" "Tuesdays with Morrie," or "The Last Lecture."

Of course, ball caps with the ETGLR logo, to be issued to all participants, would be an essential part of the program.

Special ETGLR groups could focus on fathers – sons, although any type of related males could participate (e.g., grandfathers – grandsons, uncles – nephews, big brothers – little brothers). Men of all ages, from 9 months to 109 years, should be encouraged to get involved.[25] With increasing numbers of fathers having custody of their children only on weekends, holidays, or during the summer, scheduling of these groups should be sensitive to those constraints.[26]

Given the potential age range of those that could be involved, the structure for these groups would be different. Someone could read a selection for the entire group (e.g., a chapter from "Huckleberry Finn" or "Casey at the Bat,"), after which father to son (or son to father) reading would follow.

Beyond the important bonding opportunities that would be promoted, another key goal of this initiative would be to provide supportive services and a welcoming environment for those with reading difficulties (e.g., caused by dyslexia, limited literacy, or language barriers). The staff member or volunteer organizing this event, therefore, could pack the tubs with everything from pop-up and comic books to sports biographies or sports magazines (whatever might be helpful to build reading skills and interest).

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[24]   http://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/ 0404/adventure_books_1-19.html.
[25]   Sons with fathers who have Alzheimer's or other health issues could benefit from having this special time together.
[26]   Correctional officials in some communities might be among those willing to promote the formation of ETGLR groups, particularly for fathers and sons. Sites selected for these gatherings also should be sensitive to the fact that participants may not have access to personal transit, thus, locations should be readily accessible by mass transit at the scheduled day/time.

d.   <u>Go Online</u>. For those who have the desire but not the opportunity to participate in person in a book club, allow them to participate through online ones.[27] For those who want to discuss literary topics but may not wish to read a given book at a set time, consider establishing online bulletin boards for such discussions (e.g., "Do you think Weldon Kees really committed suicide or did he just disappear into Mexico?").[28] Taking a page from Amazon.com, one could allow patrons to post reviews of items in the collection.

e.   <u>Utilize the Airwaves</u>. Approach a local radio station about sponsoring a weekly radio call-in show on books, poetry, genealogy, or other related topics.[29] Call upon the local television stations to create a regular three minute segment for the library. A weekly program on the community's public access cable television should be a given.[30]

2.   Make Extensive, but Appropriate, Utilization of Modern Technology to Meet Community Needs and to Support Effective Management. Life is changing with almost lightning speed, thanks to an endless parade of technological advancements. Few, if any areas, reflect that transformation more than the distribution of the written word. The "Christian Science Monitor" is perhaps the most notable of the thousands of publications that have already or will soon abandon a print format in favor of an electronic version.

A rush to e-books and electronic databases may be expected to accelerate exponentially as some of the perceived problems with electronic readers are resolved and the price point drops. Google Books and other initiatives, such as Project Gutenberg, are revolutionizing the distribution of books minute by minute. As a result, libraries must be alert

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[27]   Online clubs also may allow the library to have a wider variety of clubs than those that meet in the traditional way, including some that meet just for a specific book discussion and not for multiple selections.
[28]   Carefully moderated of course.
[29]   The Book Brunch mentioned earlier could be an ideal backdrop for this weekly program, with the radio station having both a call-in and a live audience to tap for discussions. Perhaps a youth oriented station might sponsor a show at midnight Friday or Saturday covering fantasy, horror, and science fiction works.
[30]   See the Iowa City, Iowa Library Channel, http://www.icpl.org/the-library-channel.

continuously to the need to revise their programming to reflect changing technology. A carefully thought out technology plan is imperative.

a. <u>Meet Customer Expectations for the Use of Technology</u>. A weekly electronic newsletter,[31] automated circulation, Bookflix, electronic catalogues, email reference services, email/text messaging/telephone notification of due dates or holds, iPhone apps, lightning fast Internet access, online account access, podcasts, remote access to databases, self-checkout, Tumblebooks, wireless access in-house, and a fully featured web page[32] are just a few of the "must haves" for modern libraries.

Some cutting edge public libraries are offering patrons audio book and e-book options through NetLibrary and Overdrive and movies via eFlicks. Others are providing premium services (e.g., online homework help) made possible by technological advances. The challenge, therefore, is to balance the expectations of the early adopters of technology with the needs of individuals who are satisfied with lower technology, or no technology, or who lack the desire or skill to utilize the new offerings.[33]

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[31] Being mindful of the needs of the entire community, as much as possible of the weekly electronic newsletter should be taped and made available by telephone.

[32] http://www.buffalolib.org,
http://www.carmel.lib.in.us,
http://menu.ci.cerritos.ca.us,
http://www.columbuslibrary.org,
http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org,
http://www.denverlibrary.org,
http://www.freelibrary.org,
http://www.friscolibrary.com,
http://www.hcplonline.info,
http://www.hclib.org,
http://www.icpl.org
http://www.kclibrary.org/,
http://www.lincolnlibraries.org,
http://www.lfpl.org,
http://www.marshallpl.org,
http://www.naperville-lib.org,
http://www.youranswerplace.org,
http://www.pueblolibrary.org,
http://www.tscpl.org,
http://www.victoriapubliclibrary.org,
http://www.wclibrary.info; and
http://www.wichita.lib.ks.us.

[33] An example on point would be the preference of some with vision impairments for screen reading capability. Others might opt for audio books or large

Libraries also must be mindful of the technology gap that exists within the community. Although many people may have Internet access and thus are able to connect to the library and its services electronically, they may only do that to the extent their Internet connection speed meets or exceeds the Internet speed assumed by web page designers. Patrons using dial-up connections will find library home pages with scrolling text, extensive use of videos, and other complex features virtually unusable.

Furthermore, such designs send an immediate message, "Only people with advanced technology or technology skills are welcomed here." As a result of this barrier to utilization, they will turn away disillusioned and disinterested.

b. <u>Be Accessible to All. Continuously Monitor Technological Developments (Regarding Both Hardware and Software) to Help Serve Individuals with Disabilities or Mobility Constraints</u>. Many outreach programs, for example, deliver books to homebound individuals. With the move towards e-books and online services, some patrons may be best served by being provided with the basic technology for e-books and the training to use it.[34]

To the extent that low technology solutions may achieve service objectives equally well, continue to employ those. Recorded messages on the library's telephone line, for example, may be equally efficient in communicating information to the vision impaired as would be material transmitted through a computer with a screen reader.[35]

c. <u>Be Ever Vigilant Regarding Privacy and Technology Security</u>. Although many libraries are rushing to create a Facebook page or to utilize Flickr, Twitter, or YouTube to connect with patrons, managers need to be mindful of the risks of

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print texts. Yet others could be well served simply by having access to an appropriate magnifying glass.

[34] Many may have the basic hardware necessary but lack the know how to install new software or to download e-books. A bit of onsite technical support could provide immeasurable benefits and be more affordable than current service delivery mechanisms.

[35] A weekly library news update, crafted with the vision impaired in mind, should be available via telephone for all patrons. Even those without a vision impairment might appreciate the opportunity to check the recorded messages for days/times/locations of special events; registration deadlines; or additions to the library's collection.

technology use, especially online technologies. These sites have the potential to spread malicious computer viruses or to lure users into phishing scams. The privacy of user data on such networks also has come into doubt. Finally, social networking services have been tools of pedophiles, thus, libraries must be exceptionally carefully in utilizing any websites or electronic services not managed by the government in order to protect patron privacy and personal safety.[36]

An advisory panel of citizens and professionals with a background in information technology and public records issues could provide key advice to library staff in coping with these complicated and rapidly evolving issues.

d.   Develop a Facilities Plan That Anticipates the Move Toward Electronic Books and Revise It Continuously As Trends Solidify. One of the biggest challenges facing communities over the coming decade will be to plan effectively for the location, size, and types of facilities that library systems might need.

Publishing industry consultant Michael Shatzkin estimates that within a decade, less than 25 percent of all books sold will be print versions.[37] Just as the US Postal Service has seen mail volume plummet due to the shift to electronic communications, libraries must anticipate a similar digitization in their environment. Building a library facility today based upon the assumption that it will display and store an ever increasing stockpile of books, CDs, and DVDs for decades to come – instead of being an access point for digital information and media – could be foolhardy.

Similarly as broadband Internet service reaches more and more of the country, that expansion may have an impact on the number of public access computers needed at public libraries. Facilities planners will need to keep on top of service availability within the community and its impact on the needs of library patrons.

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[36]   Given that some parents prohibit their children, especially young ones, from using Facebook or Twitter, material that would be posted to those services would be inaccessible to all youngsters in the community. That underscores the reasons for being cautious about moving library information from a government managed web page.

[37]   Miller, Claire Cain, "E-Books Top Hardcovers at Amazon," New York Times (July 20, 2010).

3.   Once You Get Patrons to a Library Facility or to Utilize Library Services, Make Certain They Come Back – Often.   Streamline Their Experience.

a.   Match Hours of Service to Community Needs and Transit Availability, Not Staff Convenience. Survey the community to make certain that service hours meet community needs. Being open six days a week from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., for example, may be administratively efficient, but it may leave many people unserved because of conflicts in their work schedules. For some individuals, Sunday may be their only day off from work. Others may not have any daytime hours free, thus, Sunday afternoon (1 – 5 p.m.) and evening hours (6 – 9 p.m.) at least one or two nights a week may be imperative for them. An 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. or Noon – 8 p.m. schedule for weekdays and Noon – 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays could be another option. As an alternative, telephone reference service could be a limited, but viable option, to expand services while minimizing the costs incurred when the doors are open to the public.
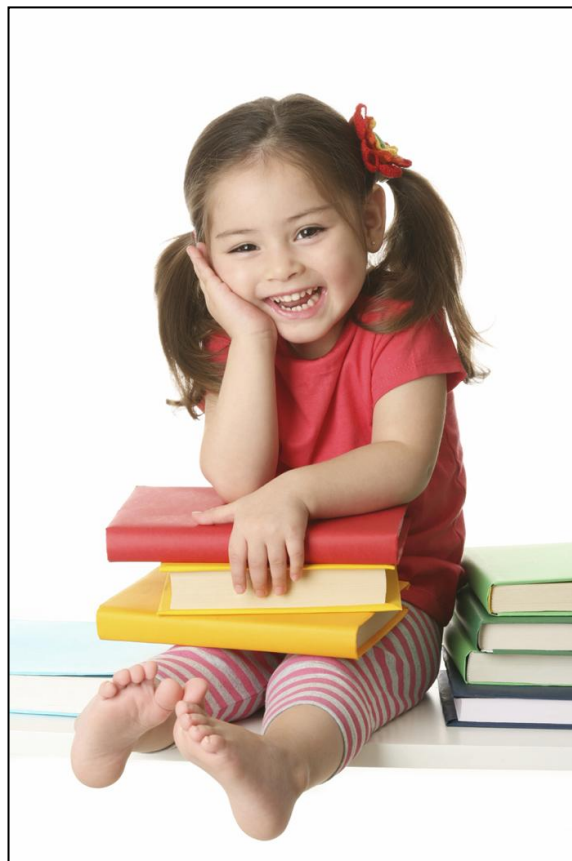
Scheduling of specific programs also should be done carefully to maximize participation. Consultation

with local transit providers, therefore, should be ongoing to ensure that those relying on mass transit to visit the library may do so easily. Be mindful too of the fact that many seniors drive only during daylight hours, which change throughout the year.

Once hours are set, use them to the best advantage to reach the most people. Summer reading activities, for example, seem to be scheduled exclusively during the daytime. Although ideal for children with a stay-at-home parent, children without a parent or caregiver who may transport them to the library at that time are shut out from program benefits. Teens who work during the day also may be barred from participation in a summer reading program if scheduled only during normal business hours. Events in the early evening and weekend days, therefore, should be planned to expand the potential for participation as widely as possible.

b. Enhance the Patron Experience From the Instant Individuals Approach the Facility or Encounter Staff/Volunteers at Another Location. First, draw people to and into your facility through sound external signage. An electronic message center atop the building or along its side could update patrons on library hours and special events. A brochure rack placed on or next to the book drop(s) could ensure that, even if they arrive after hours, potential patrons will be able to learn more about library services.[38] Supplement that with a notice on the door directing visitors to the library home page and indicating the types of assistance available online. If the building design allows, install a case (similar to the ones used at theaters for movie posters) to display the events calendar and other information about key services.

Second, make it exceptionally easy for visitors to identify a staff person. Libraries are busy places. Staff or volunteers may not always be sitting behind a desk waiting to be approached by a patron. Provide colorful chef's aprons, scarves, shirts, or vests[39] to staff and volunteers so that patrons may identify them readily in a crowded room or at an off-site event.

Third, focus on internal signage. If a staff person or volunteer isn't immediately available to guide a patron to their target destination (e.g., the

photocopier or science fiction novels), make it obvious by clear, well positioned print directions. Ensure that signage is appropriate for children and adults, both regarding content and placement (e.g., position signs for children at their eye level). If an area may be approached from more than one direction, use signs that may be read from all directions.

Borrowing a practice from the transportation industry, one might consider having signs in different shapes to help patrons even more quickly locate essential information. Information important to the youngest patrons could be on round signs. Teens could be targeted with diamond shaped signs and information for adults placed on hexagons. Rectangular or square signs could be reserved for information valuable to all patrons, regardless of age. Those could be color coded as well (e.g., yellow for children, orange for teens, beige for adults, and white for general audiences).

As part of the signage program, have up to date maps of the interior and exterior of the facility as well as its immediate neighborhood (to illustrate access to a drive up book drop, parking, and transit stops). Interior maps should identify the locations of basic services (e.g., checkout desk) as well as components of the collection (e.g., graphic novels or large print books). Color coding to identify areas with a common focus (e.g., children's, young adults', and adult sections) may be valuable as well, using the color scheme described above.

Consider all the space that might be available to communicate information.[40] Screensavers on library computers could be used to highlight new acquisitions or services. End caps on shelves are excellent spaces for displaying featured books.

Finally, create audio/video tours to serve the needs of those with language barriers or vision impairments or

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[38] Investigate the type of brochure/flyer holders used by realtors that are free standing and have flip up lids to protect the materials from the elements.

[39] Distinctive attire would promote the safety of child patrons as well, who could/should be instructed to limit interactions with adults not wearing such distinctive clothing.

[40] With the exception of some items targeted specifically to children, all print materials (from book marks, business cards, information brochures/flyers, and leaflets to rooftop signs and vehicle markers) should have a standard design and color scheme (as mentioned above). Items of a similar type (e.g., bookmarks) should be of a similar size.

Although the text will be exceptionally diverse, all items should carry the library logo, email address, main telephone number, telephone number for the hearing impaired, and the web page address.

simply to provide a personal welcome to the facility.[41] Prepare versions for children, teens, and adults. As community demographics dictate, record bilingual editions as well.

Post those tours to the library web page or make them available via telephone so that people who might be a bit timid in visiting the facility could prepare in advance. If possible, show on the local public access television channels. Assuming that you've created audio tours, make certain that patrons know of their availability the instant they step into the library (if they haven't already listened to the tour online or via telephone).

c.   Anticipate Reference Needs.   Plan ahead. Anticipate questions that patrons will have about all aspects of library operations (e.g., hours of operation, fines, genealogy services).   Craft a "Frequently Asked Questions" document with all the common questions and answers. Post it on the web page and present it as a brochure and poster.

Pair that with other brochures that discuss special services (e.g., Interlibrary loan) or address the interests of select groups of patrons (e.g., individuals with disabilities, parents who home school their children, teachers, or young adults).

In addition to anticipating the questions patrons have about library operations, anticipate their reference questions as well. Create bibliographies for posting online and distribution in-house and at special events to streamline research.[42] Consider starting a daily or weekly "News You Can Use" service that directs readers to useful magazine and newspaper articles on

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✦   arts (e.g., dance, literature, music, photography, quilting, sculpture, theater, visual arts),
✦   association/non-profit management (e.g., grant options),
✦   astronomy and weather,
✦   business development & management (e.g., copyright, entrepreneurship, franchise operations, patents),
✦   career development (e.g., employment opportunities, interviewing skills, public speaking, resume writing),
✦   care giving (e.g., Alzheimer's, assisted living, nursing home selection),
✦   child care/parenting (e.g., adoption),
✦   consumer protection (e.g., landlord – tenant, small claims courts, warranties),
✦   crafts,
✦   current events (e.g., flood safety, terrorism),
✦   environmental protection (e.g., energy conservation),
✦   family heirlooms (e.g., preservation, provenance, restoration),
✦   fitness,
✦   gardening,
✦   genealogy,
✦   general references (e.g., almanacs, dictionaries, encyclopedias, quotation compilations, style manuals, thesauruses),
✦   health (e.g., nutrition, wellness),
✦   history (e.g., local, state),
✦   hobbies (e.g., coin or stamp collecting, model airplanes or trains),
✦   home repair,
✦   nature (e.g., bird watching, entomology, oceanography, ophiology, wildlife),
✦   personal finance (e.g., budgeting, home buying, investments, retirement planning, taxes),
✦   pet care,
✦   science,
✦   technology (e.g., buying and using eReaders),
✦   travel,
✦   vehicle maintenance, and
✦   writing skills (e.g., composition, grammar, technical writing).

In the event that no agency or organization within the community is providing this service, the library also should serve as a clearing house for information on the activities of/services provided by area non-profit organizations and professional associations (e.g., volunteer opportunities).

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http://www.cityoffargo.com/CityInfo/Departme nts/Library/BeyondBooksAVideoIntroduction.
42   Save patrons time by pointing them to the best sources, both electronic and print, as determined by library staff and volunteer subject matter experts. Areas of concentration could include:

topics such as career development, care giving, childcare, do it yourself initiatives, or technology.

Librarians in Mentor, Ohio stepped up to meet the reference needs of their patrons regarding technology. The library purchased two iPads that may be checked out for three days, thus allowing borrowers to do "hands on" research about a new technology tool.[43]

d. <u>Consider the Patron Perspective in Displaying/Shelving Materials</u>. Layout may be an invaluable asset to patrons as they seek to utilize library offerings. For frequent visitors, a "recent acquisitions" display placed at a prominent location in the facility may help them access desired offerings swiftly. Displays of materials relating to "hot topics" (e.g., health care reform, oil spills) should be explored as well.[44] To promote browsing, non-fiction works about literature could be placed at the beginning or end of the adult fiction section.

Many people focus their fiction reading on a specific genre (e.g., historical, mystery, romance, science fiction, or western) and non-fiction on subject areas (e.g., military history), thus libraries should support those interests by grouping and shelving items accordingly. Even for materials in the general collection, patron guides could be provided easily (e.g., a sign with an arrow and a caption that reads "Look here for Books about World War II"). Prize winners (e.g., Caldecott, National Book Award, or Pulitzer) could be identified on the shelves, or via posters on the end caps, as could be staff recommendations to aid patrons further.

No doubt parents would appreciate having all of the materials (e.g., books, DVDs, and magazines) relating to childcare and parenting clustered together and placed adjacent to the children's section (creating a "Parenting Center"). That placement would enable them to browse the collection easily while still keeping a watchful eye on their children.

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⁴³ See http://www.mentor.lib.oh.us.

⁴⁴ If you do use a "new acquisitions," "hot topics," or other display option, copy that feature to the home page and cross reference accordingly (i.e., note on the web page that the materials may be found in the "new acquisitions display" immediately inside the front door or in the "hot topics" section next to the second floor reference desk).

Hobbyists too would benefit if all the materials related to their hobby would be grouped together.

Test all of these features with a sample group of patrons, of varying ages and backgrounds, to ensure that what you think is clear meets that objective. To a library professional, interlibrary loan may be a self-explanatory term. But patrons may not understand that the interlibrary loan is for the purpose of providing an item to them, especially one that they may borrow like a regular collection item. A focus group will be helpful, therefore, in making certain that all communications are clear to all possible users.

e. <u>Be Customer-centric</u>. Think of all the ways that you may make utilization of the facilities and services easier. Offer periodic orientations to the library and its resources.[45] Explore the possibility of placing book return boxes in other government facilities (e.g., city hall or a fire station) or schools to make it easier for individuals to return materials in a timely fashion. Allow patrons to use credit cards, debit cards, or PayPal, if at all possible.[46] Have a coin changer on the premises. Scatter footstools throughout the stacks. Offer key chain library cards (as does the Iowa City, IA library). Keep computers and photocopiers in top condition and always operational. Provide instruction on the various types of book readers and how to download books, music, and videos from the common services.

Ensure that you have at least two wheelchairs available for patrons. If possible, obtain electric carts (similar to those available in grocery stores) with baskets on the front so that users may easily carry materials to the check-out area. Alternately, walkers with baskets attached to make library browsing easier for those that face some challenges in walking easily.

As financial resources allow, provide a variety of seating options (especially for computer use). Not everyone is comfortable sitting at a table with others. Scatter benches, study carrels, and student desks with writing arms among the tables and chairs.[47] Create a cozy reading corner with rocking chairs and reading lamps. Invite parents (or grandparents) to cuddle up with their children (or grandchildren) for story time.

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⁴⁵ Target educators and government employees.

⁴⁶ Online fee and fine payment might be viable in conjunction with the local government.

⁴⁷ Writing chairs with arms would allow patrons to relocate for privacy or to be a bit closer to materials (being mindful, of course, to maintain accessibility for other patrons). Note: Rocking chairs, with padded cushions, would be easier to maintain than fabric covered furniture.

D. Maximize Resources

1. Involve the Entire Community in the Effort by Developing a Strong Donor Base and Corps of Volunteers, Especially Tapping Subject Matter Experts. Have Faith in Their Abilities and Commitment. Let Them Take the Lead on Projects, as Appropriate.

a. <u>Ask for Donations!</u> People will give, and usually quite generously, if asked to do so. So ask! Solicit art from local artists for display in and around the building.[48] Create and widely publicize "Wish Lists" for donations of books or skills. (The Mentor, Ohio public library has a Wish List posted on Amazon.com.) Be specific. List book titles or types of equipment you need.

Donations of time are equally valuable, so actively recruit volunteers too. Ensure that people of all ages, from 16 - 116, know that their talents are welcomed and needed. Promote both short-term and long-term involvement. Encourage the formation of a "Friends" organization if one is not already in existence.[49] Seek the help of local retailers who have expertise in customer flow, marketing, product displays, and signage to help layout the facility.[50] Contact local high school/college students or Scout troops to determine if they would like to produce the audio/video tours or design the mouse pads mentioned earlier.

b. <u>Solicit Public Input on Collection Development</u>. Before they add an item to the collection, librarians may consult reviews of influential book critics (e.g., those of the "New York Times") or remarks prepared by publishers, among other sources. With newspapers struggling to survive and the news industry contracting, fragmenting, and transforming, these common methods for assessing the merits of material may need to change – dramatically. The rise of self-publishing further complicates matters. Although it offers great opportunities for writers, it presents tremendous challenges for librarians who must determine how to assess the merits of given works that lack the cachet of a publishing house.

To ensure that you have the best advice about potential acquisitions across the entire spectrum of subject areas, invite patrons to submit suggestions for acquisitions and their reviews of those items. Go to a Chamber of Commerce meeting, fraternal organizations, schools, and senior citizen centers, among other places, to ask patrons/potential patrons their views. Establish advisory panels to review the potential additions to, or removals from, the collection (including databases or electronic services, such a LiveTutor.com).

Use that group as well to help you determine the items that should remain physically in the collection as technology shifts from a reliance on print documents to electronic ones (e.g., back copies of newspapers that have full electronic archives). Now,

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[48] If the community does not have an art gallery or museum, the artists could list the works for sale with the library receiving an appropriate commission on the sale.

[49] Among other tasks, the Friends group may manage the sale of items no longer needed for the collection or donations that are not placed in circulation.

[50] Be all inclusive in the approach to signage. Customized mouse pads, placed at all library computers or distributed to patrons, may be simple, but effective, tools for communicating information about services.

for example, the most prized items in a library's collection might be repair manuals for 1920s – 1990s era automobiles. Individuals doing regular maintenance on vehicles still in service or those that are being restored as a hobby or for a museum need these materials.

Elizabeth MacDonald's "The Undercover Girl," is among the best, if not the best, memoirs of work with the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. It's a rare book, difficult to find at any price on the rare/used book market. Although not a high circulation item, it would be high value item to those searching for it, including people who may not live in the community. Patrons, therefore, should be asked for their thoughts on the broad issues of collection management with these issues in mind.

In addition to querying them on specific items, ask direct questions about the appropriate allocation of resources (e.g., financial, space) among audio books, e-books, large print books, and regular books; databases; music; and videos. Inquire about the merits of providing copies of recent DVD releases, given the rise of Netflix, Redbox, and pay-per-view cable television options and the continuing presence of Blockbuster throughout most communities.

It's their library. Give them a strong voice in its operation.

c. Make Training a Priority. Ensure that volunteers have the training necessary to support their efforts.

d. Honor Donors and Volunteers. Simple to say, not always done. Press releases, items in newsletters, and postings at the library/on the library's web page are among the recognition options that should be utilized regularly.

2. Explore All Options for Cooperative Purchasing and Service Sharing with Other Agencies and Organizations. Although libraries receive preferential pricing on most items, joint purchasing of items with educational institutions or other libraries in the area should be considered as well to expand access to materials but at a lesser cost. If a countywide or regional library consortium is not in existence, one should be formed to promote cost-efficiency and service enhancements.[51]

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[51] At a minimum, multiple libraries could join together to sponsor a cooperative online reference service, available to patrons of all participating libraries for extended hours (e.g., 7 a.m. – 11 p.m.

The Milwaukee County (Wisconsin) Federated Library System, for example, provides a wide variety of services to its 15 member libraries, including administration of a shared Wide Area Network, backup reference and information services, centralized cataloging, cooperative purchasing of subscription databases, and continuing education programming, among other services.[52]

Approach Goodwill, the Salvation Army, and other non-profits groups in the community that might have books for sale in their thrift shops. Propose combining efforts to create one used book store, with the profits shared among the participating organizations.

If staffed by individuals with both library and marketing expertise, a single facility should generate more revenues from book sales than any group might be able to do alone, at lower cost. Skilled volunteers, for example, could ensure that rarer books are priced appropriately and that all materials are displayed by genre or targeted audience. The store itself could be an additional location for special programming (e.g., literacy classes or GED tutoring).

3. Focus on the Entire Collection, Not Just Recent Acquisitions. Glance at any library web page today and you'll see that a substantial amount of space (and staff time) is devoted to keeping everyone abreast of the latest releases and/or best sellers.

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daily). With the appropriate high speed Internet connections and access to the necessary online databases, skilled reference librarians could work from their homes, an added benefit for those with childcare responsibilities. Students pursuing a Master's degree in Information/Library Science also could be hired to staff such a service.

[52] http://www.mcfls.org/what-we-do.asp#mission.

With dozens of websites now devoted to promoting new releases, however, the staff resources spent publicizing these items may be of marginal benefit to patrons. Furthermore, the focus on "what's hot now" is a strategy that backfires during tight budgetary times, when funding for new purchases may be sacrificed to avoid layoffs or reductions of hours.

With tens of thousands of books in the collection, librarians could best use their skill to highlight the full range of materials available, including not only new materials and the recognized classics, but some of the little gems that just get better with age.

To encourage a "look back" at the earlier fiction and non-fiction, perhaps a special "This is What America Was Reading the Year You Were Born" initiative" could catch the public eye. Alternatively, the library could launch a "Days Gone By" series, highlighting the works popular 25, 50, 75, 100, 150 and 200 years ago.

A reading list highlighting 1954, for example, would include the top selling novels "Not as a Stranger" by Morton Thompson, "Mary Anne" by Daphne du Maurier, and "Love is Eternal" by Irving Stone. Pulitzer Prize winners that year were "Teahouse of the August Moon" (drama), "A Stillness at Appomattox" (history),"The Spirit of St. Louis" (autobiography/biography), and "The Waking" (poetry).

Although no work of fiction was awarded a Pulitzer that year, nor was there a winner of the Hugo Award for best science fiction, "The Adventures of Augie March" was the National Book Award recipient.

The best mystery novel, according to the Mystery Writers of America, was "Beat Not the Bones" (Edgar Award). "The Wheel and the Hearth" won plaudits from the Western Writers of America, making it the first recipient of the Spur Award. "The Desert Year" was the top nature book (Burroughs Medal). Worth noting as well is the fact that "Sports Illustrated" began publication in 1954. That year also marked the release of the first segment of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

The Cerritos, California library identified a "Foundation Collection" of classic works in biography, economics, fiction, history, medicine, music, plays, poetry, and psychology.[53] Items included in the Collection are so designated in the

catalog; a separate alphabetical list is available as well.

4. **Capture the Moment**. Audio or video tape special programming and post it on the library's home page or make it available in DVD format to allow those who are not able to attend the event in person to benefit from it nevertheless. Taping the programming also allows presenters to review and revise the content as necessary if the program is to be repeated.

E. Be Accountable

1. **Be Transparent.** Let the public know what you are doing and why so they may be aware of the value of the services.   Include in the weekly newsletter and post on the web page weekly and year-to-date totals for:

✦   deliveries to the homebound,
✦   donations (by number, type, and value, if possible),
✦   geographic distribution of library card holders,[54]
✦   items circulated (by type),
✦   items downloaded (by type),
✦   library cards issued (total number and number as a percentage of population),
✦   number of program participants (e.g., story time),
✦   reference questions answered (in broad general categories),
✦   special/subscription databases accessed (by total number of times and number of users),
✦   suggestions received (and staff response),
✦   volunteer hours, and
✦   web page hits.

Make available as well, both electronically and in print:

✦   the agendas for library board meetings,
✦   annual reports,
✦   audits,
✦   a budget overview (proposed, current, and previous years),
✦   information on green initiatives,

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[53]   http://menu.ci.cerritos.ca.us/cl_foundations.htm.

[54]   Assumes availability of Geographic Information Software for such a task. Geographic distribution of program participants would be invaluable as well, to determine penetration of marketing efforts and to determine if certain factors (e.g., mass transit service shortcomings) affect participation.

- ✦ minutes for library board meetings (posted within 7 days),
- ✦ press releases,
- ✦ state standards applicable to the library, and
- ✦ strategic plans.

2.   Set Forth Your Goals. Have a Sound Set of Metrics So That Progress Towards Goals May Be Measured Continuously and Consistently. Hold Managers and Staff Accountable for Meeting Those Goals.

Author's Note

Strategies regarding facilities (including security) and financing are not addressed as those must be crafted in conjunction with library specific factors.

Appendix

Sample Public Comments
About Modern Library Services (2010)

In a time of recession, public libraries ought to be evaluating what materials and services are frills, and what are foundational.

The NYPL (New York Public Library) has gone in the opposite direction since this recession began They have been buying relatively fewer books and far more DVDs. The books they do buy include multiple copies of bestsellers. (Queens Public Library has been doing this for years also, longer than NYPL.) The effect of lots and lots of resources being spent on current "hot stuff" are collections that lose value after a very brief period, as bestsellers lose their demand and are "weeded" off the shelves. That is an irresponsible mindset to have during a recession. While they might be buying these new mass-marketed books at a discount, they're still wasting money spending all those resources on expensive hard covers rather than waiting for the paperback editions to come out.

The DVDs similarly reflect a big focus on the new, hot, and vacuous. (Why are they buying DVDs of TV series?) The library's film collection used to be the place to go for good documentaries and foreign films you could *not* find on television, but they come with a worse problem: most of them are missing.

Do you remember the turnstiles and beeping security gates that used to be at the doors of all the neighborhood libraries? They're only at the biggest branches now. In the rest of the branches, they're gone… and so are the DVDs.

Here are some of my recommendations as a regular library user for a timely, ethical response to the recession at the N.Y.P.L.:

1.   Bring back the security gates.   This is an absolute no-brainer.

2.   Wait for paperback for bestsellers like James Patterson and Dan Brown. Yes, the public wants them… but if they absolutely NEED the brand new $30 hardcover, they can spend their own money on it. It should not be the government's job to meet that

kind of need. Meanwhile, have paperback racks full of books like these to meet the need for recreational reading. (Waiting 'till the paperback comes out also allows you time to see if a heavily marketed "blockbuster" is going to be a dud or not.)

3.   Change the limited hours to reflect when working people and students can make it to the library. Don't be open 10 to 6… be open 12 to 8 or 1 to 9.

4.   Block video games on library computers. People using library computers to play everything from solitaire to Grand Theft Auto are using machines that should be more available to job-seekers and kids who need a computer to type their homework.

5.   Don't buy any more ephemeral DVDs. Focus on things, current and not, that are going to stand the test of time.

6.   Change to focus to all the un-sexy stuff a city suffering from unemployment, homelessness, low literacy, poverty and limited public space really needs. Promote the literacy centers the library has more.   Bring the ESL classes to more libraries. Advertise the fact you can ask a librarian about more than just books: like how to get social services; how to find tenant information.   Offer resume/interview clinics at *every* branch, not just 34th St.

February 10, 2010
New York Times
"Read Faster: Libraries Cutting Back Hours"

…. Evening and weekend hours are when the libraries are most useful. Cutting back at these times doesn't make sense. It would be better to cut out a few underused locations completely, and keep full services at the remaining ones.

I think a better idea would be one that has been

proposed -- and dismissed -- repeatedly. Consolidate the city and county library systems. It makes no sense to have two separate systems that cover the same area.

April 7, 2010
Houston Chronicle
"Budget Forcing Cut in Library Hours"

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As a heavy user of Milwaukee libraries my entire life, it saddens me to see the libraries closing, but even I can admit they just don't make sense anymore.

Most people are borrowing new-release DVDs. Why on earth does every city library need to buy the "Spider Man 3" DVD the day it is released? The internet computers are babysitters for MPS students. And barely anyone gets books there. There's so much available on the Internet, the physical libraries are becoming obsolete. With broadband internet cheaper than a cell phone (and EVERYONE seems to be able to find the money for a cell phone) everyone is more than capable of getting the information they need at home.

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I am sick of libraries being used as a hang-out for internet surfers, a place to get free movies, and a place where people come to download stacks of CDs to their iPods.

My library has every episode of the O.C (a television show), yet I constantly have to request classic children's books through inter-library loan. What's wrong with this picture?

I would donate money to my library to buy more classic books, but a notice by the check-out counter says that they're raising money to buy a Wii system. Seriously?!?!?!?!

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Consolidate the libraries to save money and enrich their content - but leave the computers and internet separate. If you separated the library into 2 parts - actual libraries and free computing, I bet you'd see what people's real concern is. Most people want a free local computing place in their neighborhood - and if that's the case, so be it. But you could save a lot of money by removing the library portion and consolidating the libraries elsewhere.

With a large concern being the poor/low income areas - drive through those neighborhoods. There is plenty of cheap real estate for lease that could be set up for a computing center at a fraction of the cost needed for a whole library. Get some sponsorship from the private industry in there to help pay for it - slap some ads up from Time Warner, Pepsi, and any other company that wants to sell products to that market.

Break down problems and simplify them, and we'll start to make some progress. Most people don't want a library in their neighborhood - they want a computer station.

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Q: What is the difference between a public library and a video rental store?

A: The library also has a few old books. And, it serves as an after-school babysitter and daycare for homeless adults.

Perhaps the real question is, "What is the purpose of a public library?"

At one time, the purpose was to make books available to those who could not afford them. But, today, few read anything unless they have to. If a public library's purpose is to provide taxpayer-subsidized entertainment, perhaps the model is "bread and circuses." But, where's the free food?

If the library's primary purpose is to circulate materials, wouldn't a Netflix-like model be less expensive and more convenient for borrowers?

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I live within walking distance of the Bay View Library and I hate it. There is nothing in the stacks that I feel is worthwhile to walk in and read. Generally I have to order the books that I want through inter-library loan and have them delivered to Bay View. The idea of an express library where patrons could easily pick up materials ordered in advance is a boon to someone like me. You get on the internet, order your materials, and pick them up conveniently. I don't want or need the other services at the library and half the time it's not open when I can pick up materials because hours have been cut.

As others have said, new DVDs and CDs seem like a

huge waste of money for the library to own and loan out.

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The library administration justifies funding by "circulation" figures. Over half of the circulation is media--primarily entertainment DVDs. These are expensive, prone to problems (scratches, etc.), theft, and staff time spent contacting users who do return empty cases. However, since they generate circulation numbers they can be used to justify funding. Get out of the video rental business--it hasn't worked out for Blockbuster either.

Librarians with Master's degrees are not needed for helping people on computers. College students can do the job cheaper and better.

April 25, 2010
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
"Milwaukee Library Proposal Calls for Fewer but Larger Libraries, Mixed Uses,"

In an ideal world, every library would remain open, with full hours of operation and adequate funding. But our world isn't ideal. There are legitimate issues that place the library far down the list of worries for most Milwaukeeans. Consolidating the system, while regrettable, may provide the financial edge needed for our libraries to survive, if not thrive. Of course, libraries are more than just bookshelves. They are community centers in disguise….

I'd also like MPL to acknowledge its errors. For instance, it's not cost-effective, necessary, or educational for each branch to own every new DVD. The library is not Netflix.

Nor has MPL adequately addressed why it's important in a digital age. With the Internet continuing to grow in scope and influence, how will MPL compete? It's not enough to wax poetic and say it'll continue to remain relevant; prove it with cold, hard facts.

Daniel Slapczynski
April 28, 2010
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
"The Future of Our Libraries"

Libraries are just expensive movie/music/book borrowing facilities....actually VERY expensive. Their time has come and gone.

May 4, 2010
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
"Libraries need your support"

The library is bloated and quite frankly purchases items I think the majority have come to find don't belong in a library. Video games? Music? Movies? When did it become the taxpayer's responsibility to subsidize the entertainment of a family? 50 computers, internet, printers, scanners & CD burners? I highly doubt the majority feel these are required items either let alone a good use of our money.

July 2010
Troy (MI) Library Home Page

What should libraries do to become relevant in the digital age?

They can't survive as community-funded repositories for books that individuals don't want to own (or for reference books we can't afford to own). More librarians are telling me (unhappily) that the number one thing they deliver to their patrons is free DVD rentals. That's not a long-term strategy, nor is it particularly an uplifting use of our tax dollars.
.
Here's my proposal: train people to take intellectual initiative.

Once again, the net turns things upside down. The information is free now. No need to pool tax money to buy reference books. What we need to spend the money on are leaders, sherpas, and teachers who will push everyone from kids to seniors to get very aggressive in finding and using information and in connecting with and leading others.

Seth Godin
January 9, 2010
Blog

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Libraries are essential to the betterment of a community.

The problem is that it has become a numbers game. The more people you having coming in the more tax money you get. So the libraries that are surviving have a model of operation very similar to that of Barnes and Noble or Best Buy.

So where you have the most use in libraries is where you have the most Internet access and the most new dvd's/cd's/fiction books and some have even brought in coffee shops 'cause that brings in the most regular people. So you have, essentially, in many towns, branch managers making near 6 figures, and the libraries bringing people in not by helping them get jobs or better the community, but by offering them more copies of Avatar or the new Nora Roberts

....[T]his is essentially competing with private business' that are not tax funded, and in a capitalist society that is a bad thing. Not to mention awful for the independent stores that have to compete with Netflix, Best Buys and now the tax funded libraries.

What is bettering the community? That is the question that needs to be asked. And most liberals don't even feel the need to ask that, because the library is automatically assumed to be good.

But just because there is a library doesn't mean it is doing the community any good.

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Yes indeed, in all jurisdictions that I've ever lived in, the libraries have become nothing more than Barnes and Noble type facilities with nothing but lending music, video, and other multi media products. On top of that, nearly all cut back on newspapers, *magazines, reference books, and so on. Of course they have a lot more self-help books, 100 copies of the same popular book that's on fiction best seller list and so on. I agree, if libraries are reduced to the current state, I have a hard time supporting them.*

Huffington Post
June 25, 2010

As a taxpayer, I can only wonder why my local library (in a major metropolitan area) purchased 8 copies of "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," the Brad Pitt/Angelina Jolie movie about married assassins, and 10 copies of Madonna's "Confessions" CD, but only four copies of Kirstin Downey's biography of Frances Perkins, "The Woman Behind the New Deal."

Then I read that the Baltimore County, Maryland public library has more than 5,000 video games. As bothersome as that was, nothing topped the Osceola County, Florida's inclusion of Splatterpunk in its collection.

"The Splatterpunk genre, also known as 'extreme horror,' contains novels that revel in torturing and mutilating ordinary humans. Graphic acts of sex, violence, and torture abound for their own sake, and punk and heavy metal music are often a part of the backdrop of these stories," according to the library.

Andrew Carnegie is turning over in his grave.

Anonymous
July 2010

The public library has been historically a vital instrument of democracy and opportunity in the United States…. Our history has been greatly shaped by people who read their way to opportunity and achievements in public libraries.

Arthur M. Schlesinger

About the Author

A public policy consultant based in Austin, Texas, Sharon Lawrence has an extensive background in federal, state, and local government. She served as Research Director for the National Association of Counties and worked in various professional capacities for the US Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, National Association of Towns and Townships, Oklahoma House of Representatives, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the US House of Representatives.

Ms. Lawrence earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honors from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Texas – Austin. A highly skilled personal historian/genealogist, Lawrence authored the acclaimed "Tips for Researching Military Service Records" and a detailed history of the US Navy ship LST #705 on which her late father served during 1944 - 1945. She prepared this document for the benefit of her community's library system and others around the country.