# Books Vs. Space. What Really Counts:

Collecting meaningful statistics to make better decisions.

Jessica A Madureira

## ABSTRACT

Library industries have transformed over the last several years. Although books remain a core library service, users are visiting the library for reasons other than books. Libraries will continue to survive and thrive, As long as they continue to fulfil various needs and ensure they possess the expertise to measure and illustrate success and value.

This paper takes the ideas gained from visiting libraries across the USA; who have opted to reduce book collections in order to introduce additional spaces and are continuing to successfully experiment with different methods of data collection. These ideas will be delivered in the form of several recommendations that Western Australian public libraries could choose to adopt.

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Nicole Wilson- Spring Valley Public Library Las Vegas
Veronica Storey-Ewoldt Anythink Libraries Denver
Pam Sandlian-Smith Anythink Libraries
Rosemary Lavery Boston Public Library Spokesperson

## LIBRARIES VISITED

Chattanooga Public Library

Denver Public Library

Anythink Libraries

Boston Public Library

Spring Valley Public Library

New York Public Library

Queens Public Library (Children's Discovery Centre)

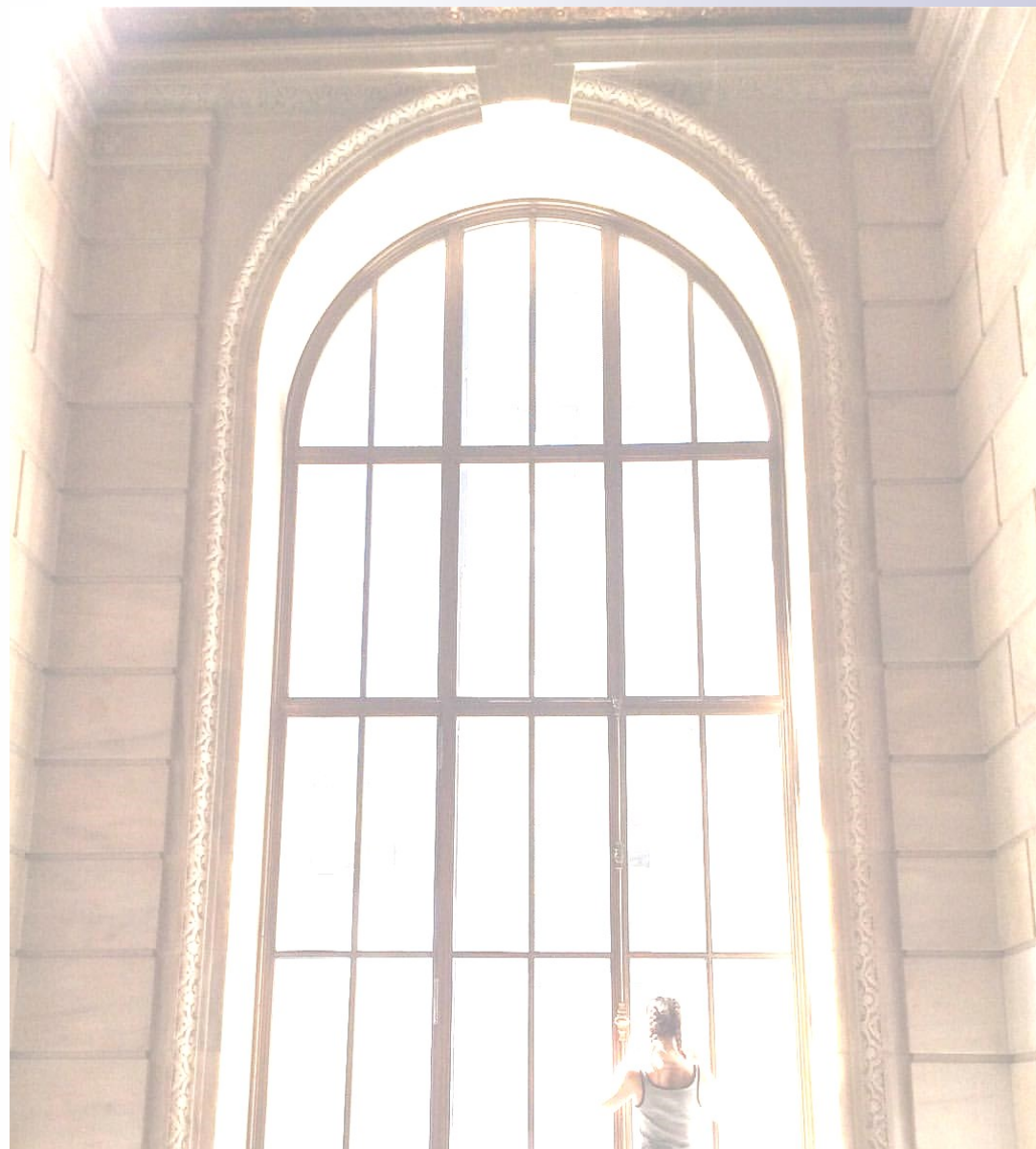Columbus Public Library

Ohio University Library

The Library Of Congress

Athenaeum Library

Salem Public Library.

# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

As a library professional, I like many librarians, struggle with the challenges of accurately articulating the value of a public library to the community it serves. One of the main causes is the ongoing struggle to collect data that is of value and provides enough meaning to assist in relevant future planning. This inability to demonstrate our worth, results in a detrimental effect on successfully gaining external support from stakeholders in the form of funding. Subsequent, this has a direct impact on our resources and the level of services we provide.

In order to seek solutions to this dilemma, I successfully prepared a proposal and won the Kay Poustie Scholarship which provided me with funding to travel to the USA. The purpose of my trip was to visit some carefully selected public libraries, where new innovative ideas have been implemented and are proving successful in addressing these challenges.

My proposal *Book Vs Space. What really Counts? Collecting meaningful data to make better decisions* argued that public libraries have, for too long focussed on measuring quantitative outputs (such as circulation statistics) and maintaining high volume print collections.

In order to succeed it is recommended that libraries investigate the benefits of reducing print collections and introduce new innovative spaces. These spaces will attract non-borrowing users, and implement new methods in quantitative and qualitative data collection, in order to measure success.

Areas of interest were;

- **Methods used for data collection**

- **How libraries capture those who are only interested in using the library space**

- **How to identify what statistics to collect**

- **How results from data and statistics leads to outcomes set beforehand**

To explore these areas of interest I chose to visit locations that could provide documented evidence of success and innovation.. This report refers to five main libraries that demonstrated different methods of qualitative data collection as well as incorporating new ideas in the design of library spaces. Some of these libraries were able to illustrate how design can influence the types of data collected or how design has been influenced by their result.

**Boston Public Library   *  Chattanooga Public Library**

**Denver Public Library  * Anythink Libraries   * Spring Valley Public Library**

Although other libraries were visited, the selected five were able to offer the most accessible and valuable information  to compile this report. While on tour, I was also able to attend the 2016 International Federation of Library Association's World Library and Information Conference in Columbus, Ohio. Information collected about the sessions I attended, at the conference, has also been provided in this report.

The reader is furnished with information gathered from a tour of the public libraries listed above, along with some of the key findings and recommendations that can be applied to Western Australian public libraries, where relevant. This report will also give insight into; what business public libraries really are in and what might be the public library service offering in 2021.



DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY



ANYTHINK LIBRARIES



SPRING VALLEYPUBLIC LIBRARY



CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## IFLA Attendance

2017 International Federation Library Associations

World Library and Information Conference
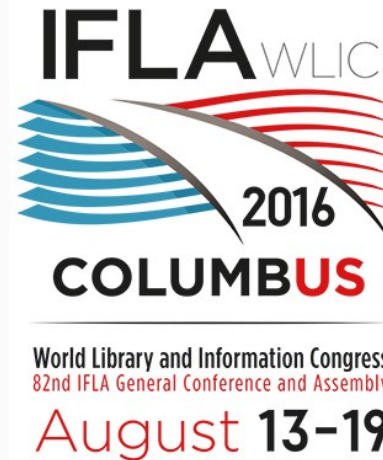
**Poster** ITeam: Flick the Switch On.

## BACKGROUND

In 2015 the City of Swan Libraries delegated their managers, into what was referred to as, 'Enabling Lines'. This concept allowed each Branch Manager to be responsible for an area, that impacted all branches, such as budgeting and training. I was assigned the role of Innovation. Partnering with two colleagues, we developed and implemented the "iTeam"

The iTeam consists of a group of staff members whose aim was to embrace and encourage innovation. The iTeam has implemented several innovative ideas and have developed a system, that has proven to be successful, in library service operations.

I had chosen this success as a basis, for my poster submission, to the World Library and Information Conference and was able to present this poster at the conference in Ohio.

While at the conference I was able to attend several sessions that allowed me to gather information on my proposed topic.



IFLA WLIC 2016 COLUMBUS
World Library and Information Congress
82nd IFLA General Conference and Assembly
August 13-19



iTEAM
FLICK THE SWITCH ON

CREATE
Three leaders were appointed with the task of incorporating innovation into everyday operations.

LEARN 75%
The project results were used to explore how to best engage and implement change

BRAND
The team decided on branding and created merchandise and uniforms

Meet
Monthly meetings are held to disscuss ideas and work through their feasibility

ACTION
The small group ran several projects to start the ball rolling.

RECRUIT
Recruitment into the iTeam was carried out as a formal process similar to a job application

Share
After investigating several online share sites, the team decided to use Trello to share their ideas

REPORT
The iTeam report progress through a monthly digest called the BizzyBee Digest

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**SESSIONS ATTENDED**

Bringing the 'Maker Movement' to Libraries and Beyond - Idea Foundry

What comes after the "Third Place"? Visionary Libraries – spaces and users - Library Buildings and Equipment (SI)

Connecting Reference to the Wider Community Reference and Information Services librarians are key players in communities' access to information - Reference and Information Services.

All about E-learning towards: Connection. Collaboration. Community. - Education and Training Section joint with Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section and Information Technology Section

Guidelines for Library Service to People Experiencing Homelessness: Overview and Examples - Library Services to People with Special Needs

Government and Parliamentary Libraries as innovators: supporting communities of practice - Government Libraries with Library and Research Services for Parliaments

**FINDING**

## Four Space Model

The Four Space Model is a concept brought forward by Danish LIS-scientists Dorte Skot-Hansen, Henrik Jochumsen and Casper Hvenegaard Hansen. The model consists of four overlapping spaces, that transforms a library, from a once passive collection base space, to a more active space for experience, inspiration and a local meeting point.
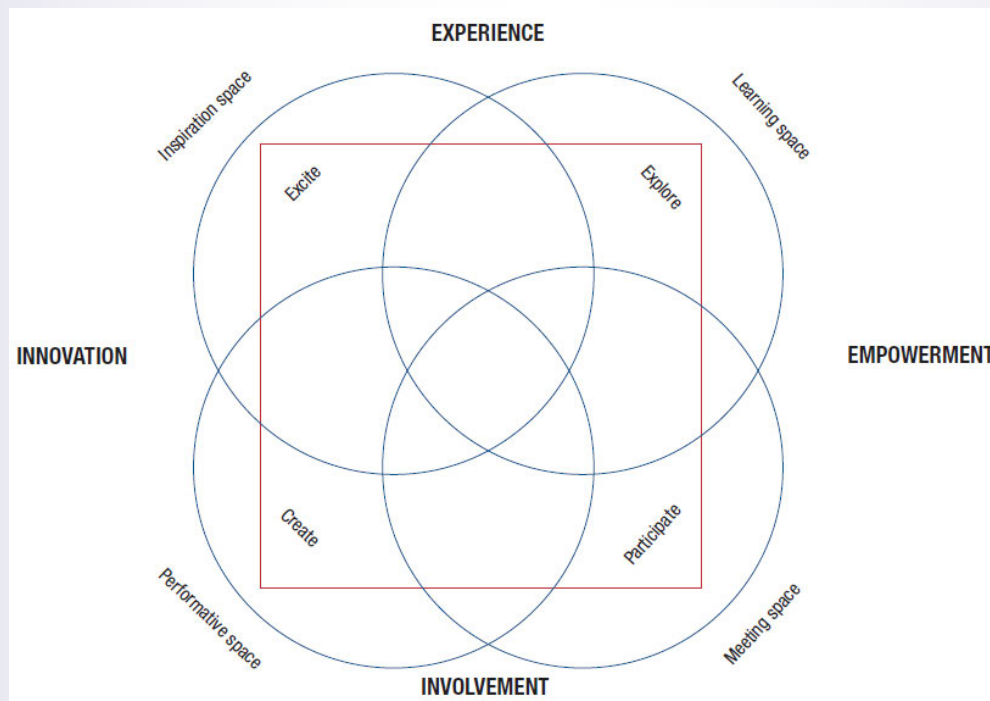
This Model is now being used throughout the industry to assist library design and support libraries in achieving their future goals in spaces, that encourage experience, involvement, empowerment and innovation. The concept is not to be mistaken as physical rooms, but more of what could be achieved in these spaces. The figure provided below is an image that illustrates the concept.

**Inspiration Space**

Meaningful experiences such as storytelling and artistic expression.

**Learning Space**

Discover and explore, increase competencies, unrestricted access to information and knowledge.

**Performative Space**

Interaction with others, access to tools that support creativity, games, writing, workshops professional and learners.

**Meeting Space**

Open public space; A place between work and home, non-committal, accidental meetings or organised meetings.



The idea for public libraries, is to attempt to design their library to incorporate, on some level, each of these spaces. The model ensures that design is carefully and purposely thought out and allows professionals to communicate effectively with planners and architects during consultation periods. After visiting several libraries in the US and attending the IFLA session *What comes after the Third Place? Visionary Libraries – spaces and users - Library Buildings and Equipment (SI)* I was able to gain insight into how this model has been successfully executed.

For further information on an interesting, and complex way to measure these spaces, please refer an article written by Petter von Krogh & Jannicke Røgler, titled *Double force. Applying indicators and qualitative measuring to the public library learning space*

# 1. BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## (Johnson and McKim buildings)

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Boston Public Library is the third largest library service in the United States; also one of the oldest free libraries on the continent. Recently the central branch underwent a $78m renovation to rejuvenate the central library.

- The Johnson and McKim buildings are nearly 92,904sqm (including non-public spaces)
- The BPL system consists of the Central Library and 24 branches.
- The renovation of the Central Library first phase was nearly 4,367sqm
- The renovation of the Central Library second phase was approximately 9,291sqm
- 262,107 BPL cards are active currently
- The BPL averages 13,500 transactions daily

Their staff are specialised in different areas such as; arts, reader services, research services, business and special collections. Staff are dedicated to each 'zone' or space within the library.

This Library was selected on account of their principles around the design of their spaces and how they focused on designing a library for people and not books.

**Planning of the new library included these goals**

1 Revitalise program spaces and improve user services.

2 Connect the library to the city.

3 Create an inviting first impression.

4 Strengthen connection to McKim building.

Work began on a new strategic plan referred to as *The Compass*. The document was approved by a Board of Trustees in 2011 and included the 'Principles for Excellence'.

Out of eight principles, four are particularly interesting.

**User-Centred Institution**

**Community Gathering**

**Access and Innovation**

**Fun**

### 1.2 ISSUES & CHALLANGES

The Boston Public Library suffered from lack of funding, impacting their staffing levels and resources. The Library began to identify the need to improve both the services and physical space of the Children's Library, at the Central Library and from there, the project grew in scope, as other areas were included.

Considering it's location, within the city of Boston; the library needed to ensure it was able to cater to the needs of a large and diverse community.

A large proportion of this community was made up of teens who were more interested in a space they could utilise outside school hours, than borrowing the print collection.

The library renovations were also a way of challenging the pre existing ideas of what a library building has to offer, by experimenting with different spaces which offered something else, for the non traditional users. Traditional readers advisory service has always been challenging in this branch, due to the sheer size of the building, especially when it came to forming one-on-one relationships.

Measuring the success of the library is significant, in the ongoing funding and monitoring of the services impact on the community. The library service needed to be able to justify the cost of renovations and show evidence that it was worthwhile

## 1.3 FINDINGS

The Boston Public Library's Johnson and McKim building demonstrated design magnificence and gave testament to what can be accomplished, with a generous budget and an agreed vision. The spaces were uniquely identifiable and had clear purpose. They were able to achieve an innovative environment and yet not lose sight of practicality.

- Both the *Planning Goals* and noted *Principles of Excellence* were focused around 'people' and not 'books'

- **The Children's Library** was located in a separated room within the library. The room encompassed all the services that a whole library would have to offer, but in this specifically designed room it was all targeted to children and parents.

  > Print collection was shelved on easy to reach shelving

  > An area put aside for storytime as well as a separate room for activities that were loud and participative

  > Sensory areas/activities for smaller children or those with disabilities

  > Specialised staff

  > Computers for children

  > Lounging and café areas for parents and children to enjoy

  > Bright environment that was engaging and exciting

The children space was able to be closed earlier with its own entrance offering a different door count statistic that could be tracked.

- **Teen Central** follows the same principles as the children's area. A space that allows teens to make their own, with services targeted at their needs. The Library has embraced the concept known as HOMAGO a space for teens to Hangout, Mess around, and Geek Out in. Gaming lounges, Computer labs, café style seating, specialised print collections, specialised staff and an environment that was trendy, non judgemental and flexible.

Teen Central also has the ability to shut at different hours and offer its own traffic count, with it's own entrance doors.
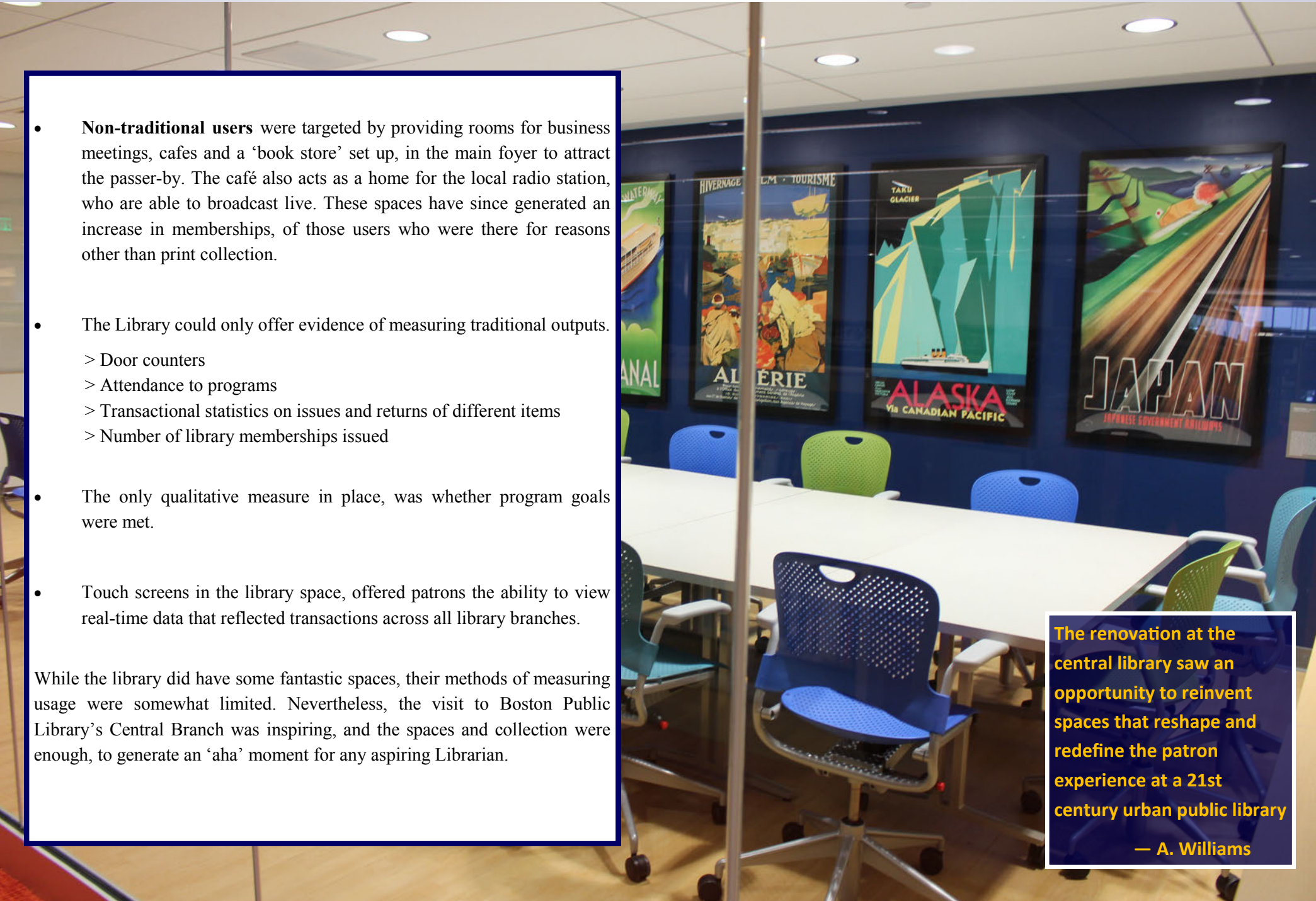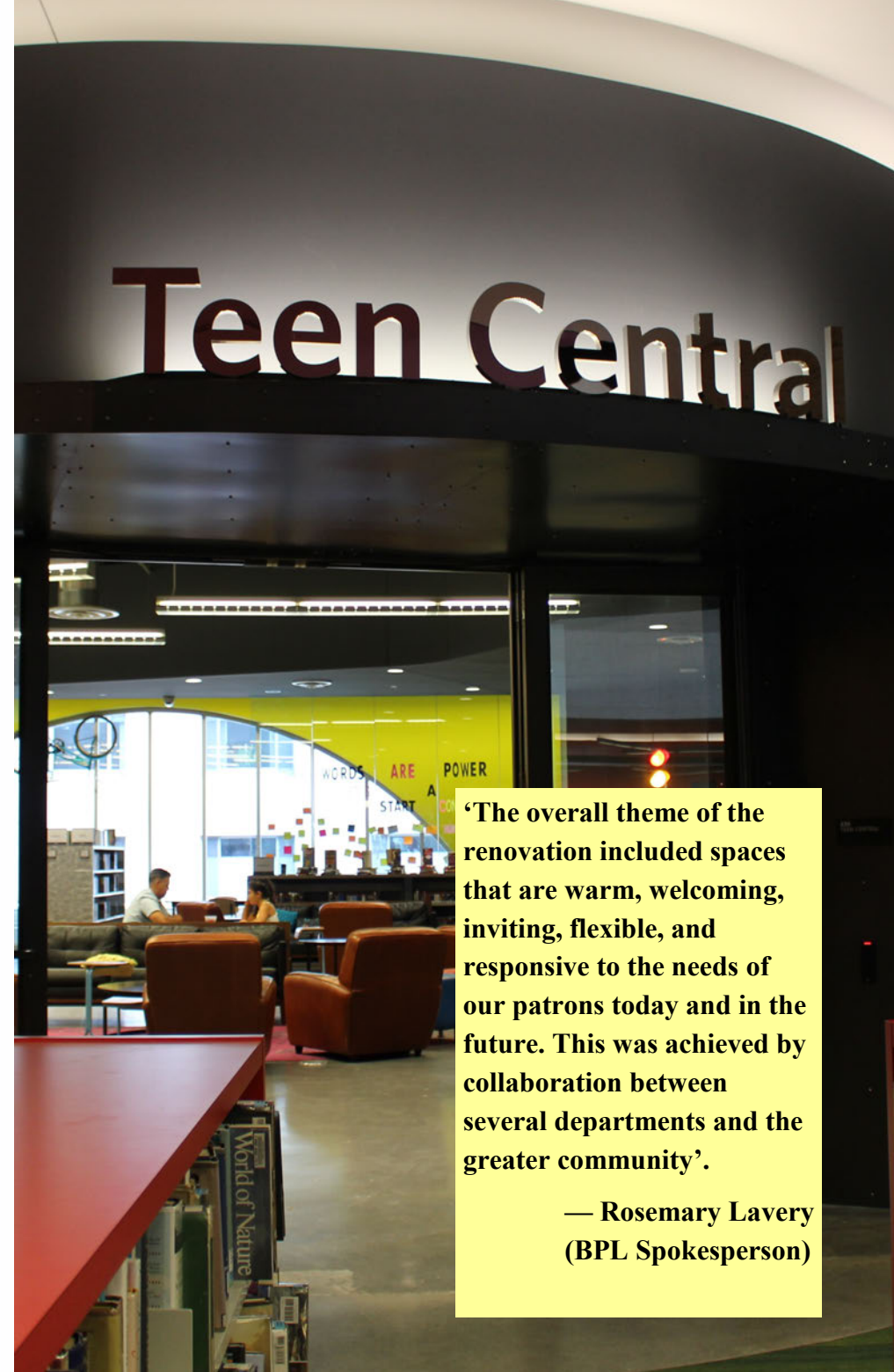


'The overall theme of the renovation included spaces that are warm, welcoming, inviting, flexible, and responsive to the needs of our patrons today and in the future. This was achieved by collaboration between several departments and the greater community'.

— Rosemary Lavery (BPL Spokesperson)

- **Non-traditional users** were targeted by providing rooms for business meetings, cafes and a 'book store' set up, in the main foyer to attract the passer-by. The café also acts as a home for the local radio station, who are able to broadcast live. These spaces have since generated an increase in memberships, of those users who were there for reasons other than print collection.

- The Library could only offer evidence of measuring traditional outputs.

  > Door counters
  > Attendance to programs
  > Transactional statistics on issues and returns of different items
  > Number of library memberships issued

- The only qualitative measure in place, was whether program goals were met.

- Touch screens in the library space, offered patrons the ability to view real-time data that reflected transactions across all library branches.

While the library did have some fantastic spaces, their methods of measuring usage were somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the visit to Boston Public Library's Central Branch was inspiring, and the spaces and collection were enough, to generate an 'aha' moment for any aspiring Librarian.

**The renovation at the central library saw an opportunity to reinvent spaces that reshape and redefine the patron experience at a 21st century urban public library**

**— A. Williams**

## 2.    CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY (CHATTANOOGA)

### 2.1 BACKGROUND

In Tennessee the Chattanooga Public Library offered great examples of how activating and/or repurposing spaces can revitalise a library, offering new services to the community and as a result, increasing the worthiness of its existence.

The Chattanooga Library was on the verge of closure. It was underutilised, mismanaged, and costing more than it's demonstrated worth. The Library was receiving almost $6 million in funding ($34 per capita) which was more than most libraries visited, but were not able to provide evidence of how this funding was being put to positive use. Rather than closing, the Mayor decided to hire a group of innovators, to help revitalise the library. Corinne Hill was hired as the Executive Director. Corinne was well known in 2008, when she was named a 'Library Journal Mover and Shaker' and then in 2014 she was awarded 'Librarian of The Year'.

### 2.2 ISSUES & CHALLENGES

- The Library needed to justify the ongoing need for funding or offer positive qualitative and/or quantitative data to address the issues of mismanaged funds.

- The existing staff at the branch were in need of  retraining and reinvigorating, however, long term staff were resistant to change and re-skilling

- The library space was filled with excessive large print collections and other spaces were being utilised as storage, for unused or unwanted objects, that were too difficult to discard, due to lengthy organisational processes.

- The library relied on traditional forms of data collection; measuring outputs, such as circulation and attendance. The library was not performing well and the stats reflected this through a decrease in programs and reduced circulations loans.

**2.3 FINDINGS**



- Due to limited funding, recruitment advertising utilised social media forums including Twitter and Facebook. The theory of the recruitment plan was to hire smart people and then allow them to express themselves verbally and in practice. New staff were passionate, knowledgeable, and willing to break the mould; most of whom were already well known innovators in the library sector. Staff with a shared vision, perform better and are eager for change and more willing to learn new skills.

- The building was given a facelift, paying critical attention to the exterior, ensuring it was clean and welcoming. An old fountain that had been out of commission, was given a new lease at life and gardens were revitalised.

- Inside the library space an unsuccessful book sale corner was removed, to create a café area with library branded coffee beans; staff were re-skilled to act as baristas. This was a significant change in the library's services and demonstrated how collected data influenced the decision of redesigning library spaces. Today, what was once a unused area [that came at a large cost] is now a café that users enjoy and even generates revenue.



- The library staff started to remove old unwanted objects and were able to clear up an entire floor, which was then repurposed as a maker space. The area was rebranded as, 'The Fourth Floor'; 1,300sqm of space to create, engage, learn, produce, and share. With its own Facebook page, the space has proven very popular.

- Collections were weeded meticulously and items that were not circulating were no longer kept. This opened up floor space in the library, to offer more places for comfortable seating and displays. Concerns about getting rid of too much were alleviated, when circulation statistics increased.

- The introduction of the fourth floor, the café space and the floor space opened up more opportunities of measuring. The fourth floor introduced more forms of qualitative measurements with production and knowledge becoming more of a focus.

## 3. DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY (DENVER)

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

Denver Public Library is situated in the centre of Denver's cultural vicinity called Civic Park. The Library is surrounded by beautiful monuments, museums and open space, where the city holds many of its festival events, including Labour Day and Independence Day.

The Denver Public Library is currently investigating ways to incorporate more spaces into their library and exploring different forms of measuring methods, whilst attempting to capture data, other than the habitual outputs.

With a population of 620,000 Denver has a total of 520,000 card holders. The library, children's library, Western History and the Genealogy Library are all housed in the same building.

### 3.2 ISSUES & CHALLENGES

- Denver's Central Branch Library possessed a large volume of print collection that showed poor circulation.

- The Central Branch is large with multiple stories and a floor space of 52,100sqm. This posed some challenges when it came to measuring usage and understanding customer behaviour, but also offered opportunities in the development of distinct spaces.

- The staff at in the library needed to investigate methods of data collection, that were a balance of quantitative and qualitative, in an attempt to demonstrate library usage and impact.

## 3.3 FINDINGS

- **Tracking the traffic**

A concept put foreword by Tord Hoivik Track the Traffic [TTT] is a cheap and simple method or tool to gather data that gives a numerical picture of how users actually use various parts of the library. TTT provides both quality data (types of use) and quantity of use which can then be combined with door count statistics and length of stay to really start to illustrate how the library is performing.

The actual implementing is quite simple and all that is required is

- **A floor plan- That can be divided into functional zones that are well defined and describe the zones; its purpose, its size the number of seats etc.**
- **A time plan and set of rules for observation**
- **A list of activities to be observed**

Staff need to be committed to taking part to gain the full benefits of this method. They are required to walk through the library at agreed times and record how many users are in each zone and their activity.

For full potential, this should be done over a series of days and then the information is collated, with other statistics, in order to generate a picture of how users are interacting with library space and collection. Simple, yet effective! Denver Public Library has implemented this method of measuring and have already demonstrated benefits around the capture of space usage and client behaviour.

In April 2016 the Library took part in recording the activities that were taking place in their spaces. Figure 1 shows the list of activities that were recorded with a total number of people engaging in that activity for each floor. The biggest numbers are seen, using the space for technology with the biggest number of those, browsing the collection on the first floor [238] which consists of New books, music, movies, teens and children's items.

| Activity | 3rd Floor Total | 2nd Floor Totals | 1st floor totals | 4th Floor Totals | 5th Floor totals | 7th Floor Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attending program | 0 | 4 | 74 | 45 | 0 | 0 |
| Browsing the collection | 41 | 91 | 238 | 30 | 20 | 0 |
| Charging device (sitting/ standing next to an outlet) | 22 | 16 | 31 | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| eating | 18 | 13 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Meeting with others | 21 | 36 | 58 | 37 | 2 | 0 |
| Reading | 130 | 98 | 95 | 22 | 5 | 0 |
| Research, Studying, Writing | 66 | 32 | 14 | 27 | 32 | 0 |
| Sitting/Standing alone | 45 | 53 | 99 | 74 | 8 | 1 |
| Using Laptop/ipad | 184 | 135 | 73 | 56 | 34 | 0 |
| Using library PC alone | 18 | 6 | 79 | 622 | 18 | 0 |
| Using library PC with others | 4 | 0 | 7 | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| Using MFDs | 7 | 0 | 6 | 26 | 1 | 0 |
| Using Microfilm/fiche | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 |
| Viewing art or display | 3 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 23 | 15 |
| Waiting for a staff member | 0 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 4 | 4 |
| With a staff member | 31 | 3 | 90 | 57 | 30 | 0 |

Figure 1—Results from Traffic tracking at the Denver Central Library Branch in April 2016.

Tracking has also identified the fourth floor (Which houses the public PCs) to be the zone that attracts the highest precent of users. This may suggest, that the print collection, is not the most sought after service, for the community it serves. Figure 2 is a breakdown of the number of customers per floor. Figure 3 is an image taken to show the facilities on each floor.



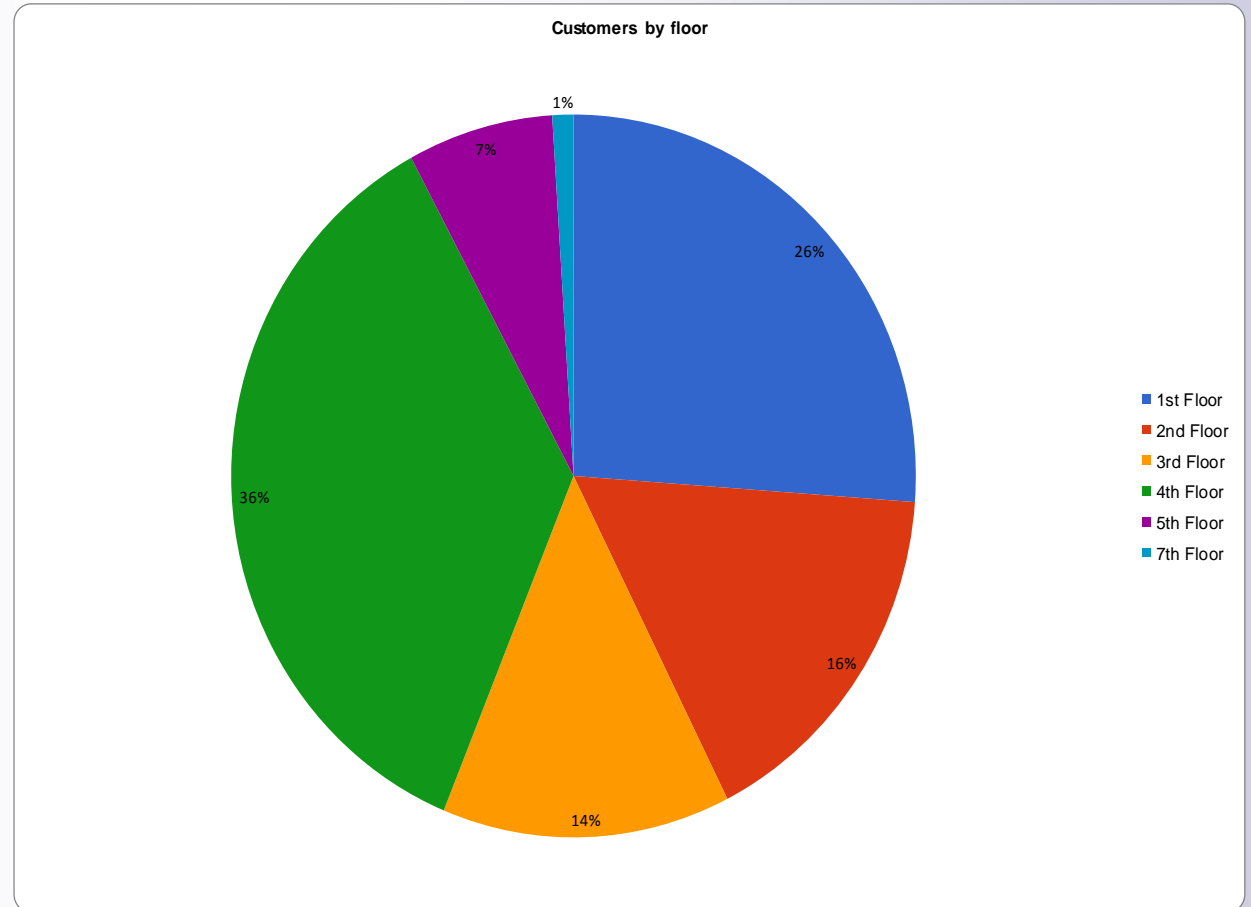Figure 3 — A Poster found at the entrance of the Denver Public Library Central Branch.



Figure 2 — Breakdown of customers by floor . The fourth floor shows the highest precent with this being where the public PCs are kept.

Spaces around the library were targeted for different purposes and user groups .

The children's library was well designed with multipurpose areas and specialised staff.

The maker space was branded as the Idea Lab and had opening hours for different age groups running different programs to meet the needs of the community. Spaces such as the Idea Lab can offer services across all age groups and is significant in ensuring libraries are getting the most value from the spaces they provide. For smaller libraries it may be seen as exclusion, to create designated spaces. To address this, spaces could be designed to be multipurpose and have the flexibility to meet the needs of different user groups on different occasions.
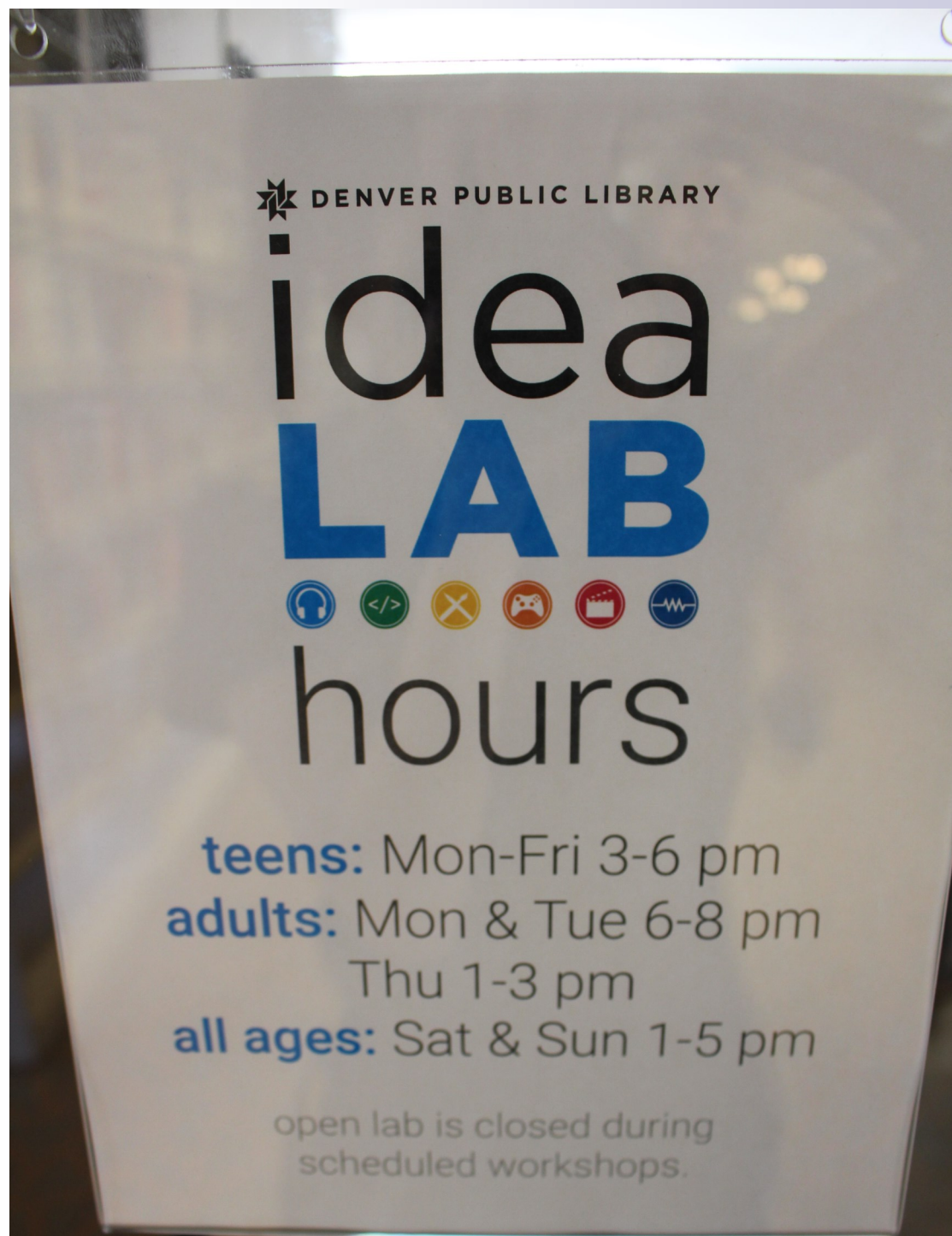
# 4. ANYTHINK LIBRARIES (ADAMS COUNTY)



## 4.1 BACKGROUND

The Anythink Libraries system is made up of seven branches, servicing a population of 350,000 in Colorado's Adams County where 70% of the population is under the age of 50 and is made up mostly of young families with children. Over the last few years the service has gone through a massive transition period, which resulted in a reinvention of services, and their spaces. The process was initiated to address a number of challenges the service was experiencing. The service has since demonstrated success in multiple areas and have also developed unique methods of measuring qualitative data.

## 4.2 ISSUES & CHALLENGES

- The Rangeview Library District, up until 2005 was known as the Adams County Public Library system and serviced Adams County in Denver Colorado. However, they had a long history of being poorly funded with a budget of $4 million for a population of 350,000 bringing it to about $8.75 per capita. The library staff did everything they could, within limited resources, to run the library system.

- Staff moral was poor and they lacked the expertise in data analysis and visionary planning.

- The library space was being used inefficiently and floor space was taken over by shelves that were packed with a high volume print collection. There was no flexibility to run different programs and no place where customers could sit quietly. Despite this large volume of print material the circulation statistics were dropping. Staff were finding it difficult to let go of books, and hoped that a large collection would mean high circulation statistics.

- Limited data collection or poor choices in collection, offered no accurate understanding of community needs or possible directions. The library service continued to run despite decreasing circulation statistics, however this led to challenges in funding requests. It was agreed that they were unable to provide any qualitative data and the quantitative data they did posses, identified a struggling service. It was clear that the library needed to make some drastic changes, in order to address these issues and overcome their challenges.

Soaring

Majestic

Colorado

Nature

Inspiring

Creative

Pioneer

Whimsical

Casual

Playful

**4.3    FINDINGS**

In 2004 there was a major breakthrough that saw the Adams County Commissioners write legislation, enabling the library system to become a special taxing district, introducing a mil levy in order to fund the new library system.

Once the organisational transition occurred, a Board of Trustees was formed who had the authority to manage finances, set policy and recruit/dismiss the Library Director. The budget improved to around $11 million as a result, almost three times that of the previous year.

After years of poor reputation being linked to the Adams County Library and then moving over to Rangeview Library District, the community was confused and not overly excited about the service altogether. The staff took part in an intense visioning process that revitalised them and their services.

This Visioning process was developed by a hospitality expert Peter Robinson who named the process GASP- Graphics, Ambience, Style and Presentation. It is a process of visioning an organisation's personality, culture and style of service. Everyone is asked to list ten adjectives for each of the four areas, as they relate to the anticipated vision for the organisation; these are then complied to find trends or patterns. In the case of the Anythink Libraries the key adjectives were: Soaring, Majestic, Colorado, Nature, Inspiring, Creative, Pioneer, Whimsical, Casual and Playful. These were used as the key ideas when planning design, program and services, instead of personal likes and dislikes.

The Board agreed that this new exciting vision was not reflected in the existing branding as the Rangeview Library District and in order to seriously market this change and change public opinion, they needed to be radical. As a result the library system was rebranded as the Anythink Libraries. The move that cost the Board $135,000 included a new logo, monument signage, staff t-shirts and an awareness campaign. Whilst the cost may seem fairly large, it was miniscule compared to the cost of Colorado University who recently spent $780,000, just to achieve a new logo.

The fresh branding of the library trickled through all aspects of the organization. The new branding did not stop at just a logo; operational changes followed and it transformed the way the branches were managed, from the inside out.

The logo is a scribble, which represents the beginning of an idea. Staff titles changed radically to Branch; 'Wrangler' 'Concierge' or 'Guide' and the Branch Managers are referred to as 'Experience Experts'. To end the confusion over whether we have 'members' 'clients' 'users' or 'customers', they introduced the term 'Anythinkers'.

**The Anythink Libraries are not just radical; it's revolutionary for us in the library industry**.

In order to combat the issue of space [or lack of] The branches took part in an intensive weeding process. They had spent some time monitoring the collection to assess what areas get the most use and assessing the possible reasons of why some print collection had such a poor turnover.

One reason identified during this process was that the collection was not easily accessible, as a result of overcrowding. The team at Anythink decided, that in order to get the collection circulating, they needed to reduce it. The subjects on their shelves of significant concern were those in medicine, health and travel, which had a median age of 1997. After reducing the titles, the collection usage saw an increase of 38%, demonstrating that a reduction of the collection, induced a positive reaction

Anythink Libraries had a clear vision of what they wanted to be. It was more important for them to provide space and ambiance for the community to gather, connect, and spend time browsing, thinking and relaxing, than it was to be a public library with the largest collection of books.

The benefits of reducing stock continued, when the removal of print collection made way for an increase in spaces. Areas were then converted into useful spaces for different users to participate in different activities. This introduced the ability to collect qualitative data where patrons were able to learn new skills, create, produce, connect, grow and experience new things.

'We are a public library, not a book warehouse' — Veronica Storey-Ewoldt

Public Service Director for Anythink Libraries.

The Anythink Libraries removed the Dewey Decimal system and introduced a thematic system by incorporating the ideas around wordthink BISAC.

BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications) is a classification system used in many book stores. With 52 broad categories the publisher more than often, decides where the item should be by fusing together subject headings with classification. The argument among many was around whether or not libraries were losing their complex and well thought out classification system by doing this?, and was the new system just as superior as Dewey? Marshal Shore a consultant who helped with the change argues against this. Shore states that libraries are missing the point and need to realise it is not about which is more superior, but more about the user experience.

Anythink's Director Pam Sandlian-Smith stated that the users would comment that when they visit bookstores, they were able to find things easily and would like that ease of use in libraries as well. It took 1,000 hours of staff time to make the change but it was well received.

"The elegant simplicity of the system becomes evident immediately. People love the idea of simply finding all their favourite books together under a word heading, which is so easy to navigate," (Sandlian-Smith)

Since this time the Library has witnessed many positive outcomes. The collection was reduced, funding for new materials and interlibrary loans decreased, yet there was an increase of 38% in circulation. This data suggests that a large collection does not increase borrowing statistics.

They are now a seven branch system, servicing a population where almost half are 'Anythinkers', this equates to a 50% increase in memberships.

A mother blogger shared her excitement when the Darien Library in Connecticut displayed books in what she said was in a way "that makes me feel less like a moron and more empowered to find what I'm looking for on my own". She went on to say, "the Library, which in my mind used to be a little intimidating and kind of like a disapproving Mother, is reaching out to ME. 'Library' is saying to ME that she wants to be like ME and doesn't expect me to be like her anymore."

 —Barbara Fister, *The Dewey Dilemma,* retrieved from *The Library Journal, 2009*

Many Western Australian public libraries continue to measure program success based on attendance numbers and level of interest during the booking stage. In order to truly understand and identify the value of libraries and their impact, we need to look beyond this and aim to meet pre set outcomes. Experience needs to be a driving force in program development and designing spaces. Studies have shown that people who have had transformative experiences at their local library, are more willing to support them (*Introducing Anythink, A New Style or Library.* September, 2009)

The Anythink Libraries have purposely marketed their library service to be an 'Experience Library', where spaces are carefully divided into 'Experience Zones', with staff referred to as 'Experience Experts'. This concept is not limited to space; the libraries strive to provide programs that offer interactive experiences, which can be as simple as craft activities, watching baby chicks hatch, fashion shows.

One of their most successful experiences noted was accidental. In 2013, they organised goat herders to bring their goats to the library, to address an issue with lawn overgrowing in the library yard. "Almost immediately, the goat herders turned into information professionals, answering every question under the sun about goats. Library staff quickly became goat experts as well. For days, people came to watch, pet and feed the goats, demonstrating that live experience zones can be the most rewarding".
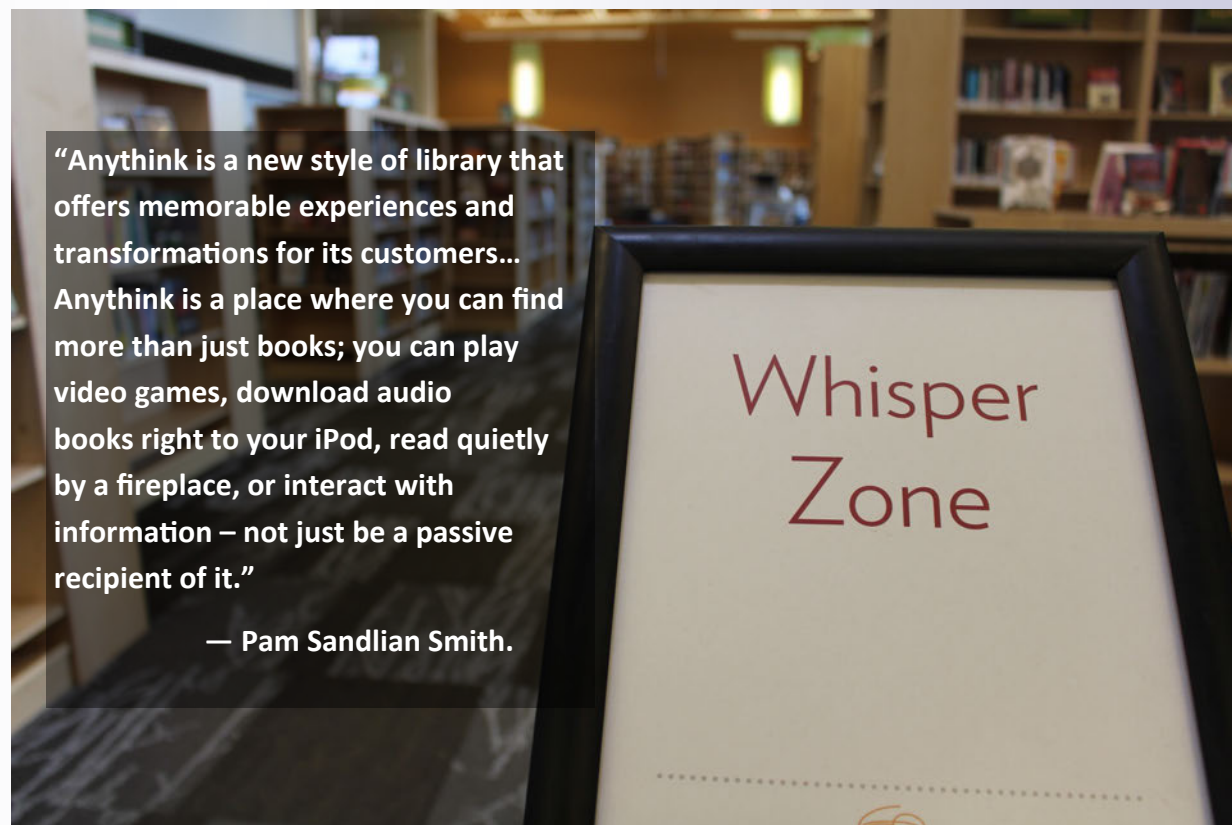
"Anythink is a new style of library that offers memorable experiences and transformations for its customers... Anythink is a place where you can find more than just books; you can play video games, download audio books right to your iPod, read quietly by a fireplace, or interact with information – not just be a passive recipient of it."

— Pam Sandlian Smith.

In order to plan, track and measure these experiences the library used a level system. The system categorises programs into a level and identifies the level of involvement from staff and patrons, as well as the expected outcomes.

This method of measuring is a great tool for planning services and programs as well as measuring them. Some programs can begin at a low level and as they build momentum will move up the scale. It also helps to recognise the significance of some services that may be overlooked.

An example of this would be, book displays. Some library systems do not recognise the significance of a good quality book display or, they consider it to be a worthless task. Anythink Libraries include this as a program on a low level, as they acknowledge that it impacts the experience of the user in the library.

Another usefulness of this method is to identify the strengths of staff. Staff performance can also be measured against where they fit in, amongst these experience levels, and can use their skills to be involved heavily or still be involved with minimal skills.

I have attached an example of the experience matrix in the appendix to clarify the concept. The images provided here are an example of different experiences witnessed whilst on tour.

## 5. SPRING VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY (LAS VEGAS)

### 5.1 BACKGROUND

The Spring Valley Branch is part of the Las Vegas—Clarke County Library District and is a 2400sqm building; a branch large enough to incorporate a decent collection, as well as spaces for events and activities. The library services a multicultural community and have incorporated services to meet their needs. Recently, the library services staff underwent a process to develop a new strategic plan, recognising that the library services needed to be revitalised and that next generation performance measures were developed, to align with the bench marks of their plan.

"This strategic plan, Building for the Future, is a guide for deploying library assets – virtual and physical – in ways that advance and amplify the talent and vitality of our region, making even more people successful, happy and engaged in learning, discovery, achievement". Danielle Milam, Development & Planning Director. *V.2020 Building for the Future Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Strategic Plan,* 2016.

"We Don't Library Like We Used To!"
—Danielle Milam
Development & Planning

## 5.2 ISSUES & CHALLENGES

Las Vegas—Clarke County Library District serviced a large and complex community. Understanding the needs of this community was a challenge, but meeting the needs and measuring their impact, was an even larger one.

During the development of this new strategic plan, the library system began to identify many challenges, which needed to be addressed. Libraries were being urged to be both national and international, as a platform for digital content creation and exchange. Additionally it needed to be a bridge for local social, economic and education connections, that are critical to well-being and to be local hubs for learning, creativity and community engagement. ( *LVCCLD 2020.* Danielle Milam, 2009) It is agreed that libraries are already both global and local, material and digital, transformations and transactions, experiences and exchanges. The challenge lies in being able to provide quality evidence of this, in order to maintain the level of service and resources available, dependant on ongoing funding.


Other challenge priorities are;

⇒ A large digital divide, with homes lacking accessibility and expertise

⇒ Increasing numbers of users requiring, English language support and users requiring special needs support

⇒ The schools in the surrounding areas had insufficient buildings and teachers

⇒ The libraries housed a large volume of print collection, although noticed a decline in usage.
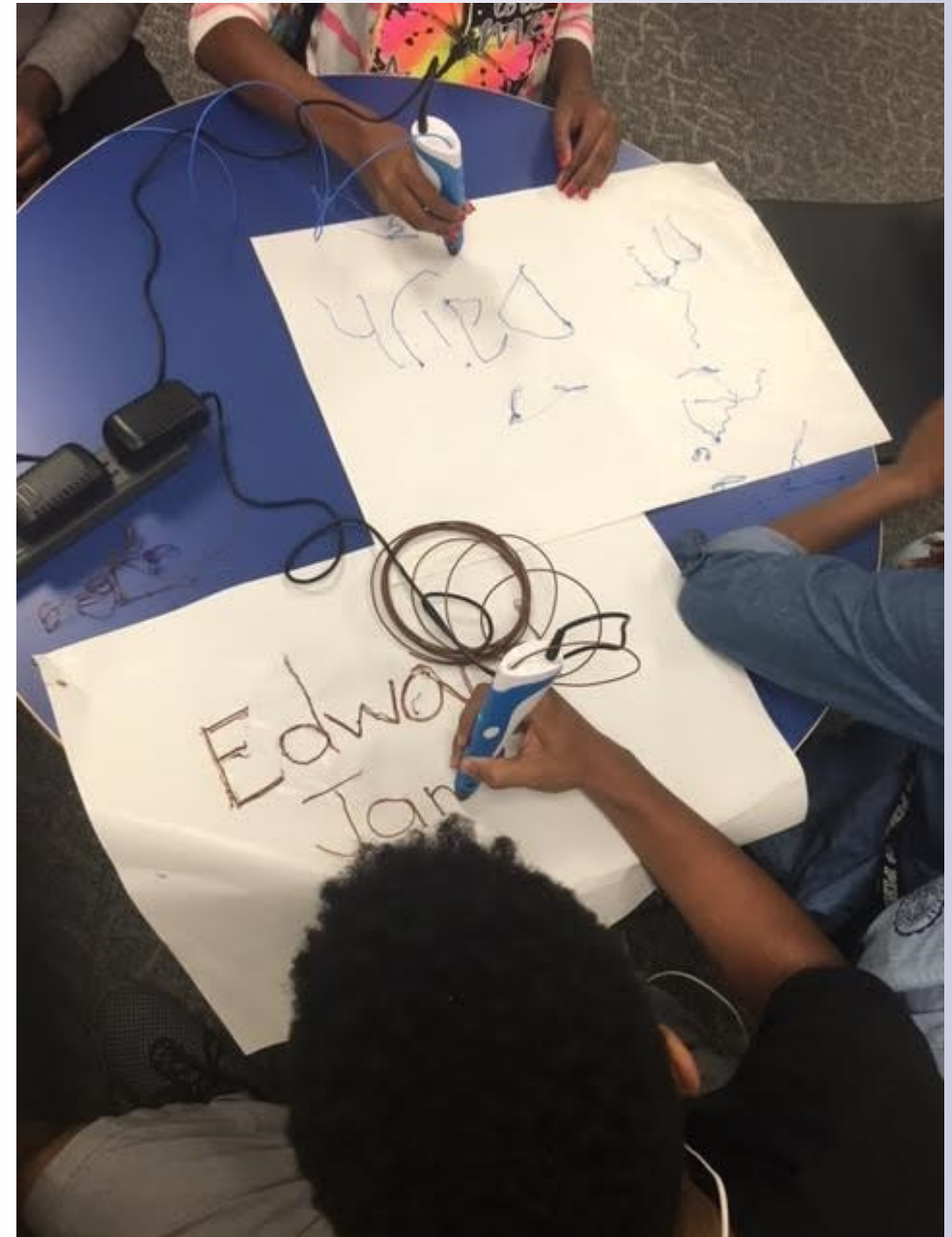
**5.3 FINDINGS**

Las Vegas—Clarke County's strategic plan was an excellent document providing a clear vision of the future of their services. The strategic framework was divided into four main service areas;

> **Limitless Learning**
>
> **Business & Career Success**
>
> **Government & Social Services**
>
> **Culture & Community**

Each of these areas were assessed with these specifics.

- **Current Community Conditions**

- **Future Conditions that Impact our Direction**

- **What do We Own? What Strengths/Assets do we have? What do we already do well? What could we improve with more attention and focus on individual and community impact?**

- **What are Implications for Services? Spaces? Other Resources?**

- **How Will We Define Success?**

From this the libraries were able to plan accordingly, knowing that they all shared a common goal with agreed outcomes.

To address the issue of overstocking books Nicole Wilson, Branch Manager of Spring Valley Library introduced a tracking system to monitor the use of the collection and planned to weed accordingly. The staff were all responsible for certain areas of weeding and after removing a large amount of print material Nicole noticed two benefits. The collection had an increase in circulation and there was a large amount of space cleared to use for other purposes.

The Strategic document also provided a basis for the design of spaces. Nicole was able to refer to the document in order to ensure the spaces noted were included in her library and that she was able to offer a place for all community needs, where practicable. Resource centres were set up to help with non-English speaking users; meeting rooms were available for businesses, music lessons and spaces for all ages. In addition, there were teen rooms and children's areas. Nicole continues to work on capturing the usage of these spaces, as most users do not borrow.



The Bookstore allows Patrons to purchase old stock that is out of circulation.





Music lessons are offered in spaces to help with over inefficient infrastructure at local schools.

The Community Resource Centre is a space that allows community partners offer classes and help on topics like law, health, veteran's assistance, job attainment and more.

Spring Valley Library was able to provide the most information in regards to Project Outcomes. An initiative developed by the Public Libraries Association of America (PLA) and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Project Outcomes distinguishes itself from traditional circulation focussed data, alternatively comprising brief easy-to-use patron-focussed surveys, that capture qualitative data measuring the impact of library programs rather than attendance. Outcomes are the benefit that result from library programs or services that are purposely designed to help them change knowledge,  skills, behaviour, or awareness (Plagman E. Project Manager : Public Library Association. *The Power of Performance: The PLA Performance Measurement Initiative,* 2016)

The initiative is designed to address challenges of capturing a library's impact on the community and the struggle to secure funding as a result of poor quality data. It is also a way to minimise the workload for librarians by producing a set of standardised outcomes, which in turn would maximise result impacts. Libraries would have a shared language and the data would be easily aggregated. The main goal for the roll out of Project Outcomes, is to help public libraries understand and share the true impact of essential library services and programs with;
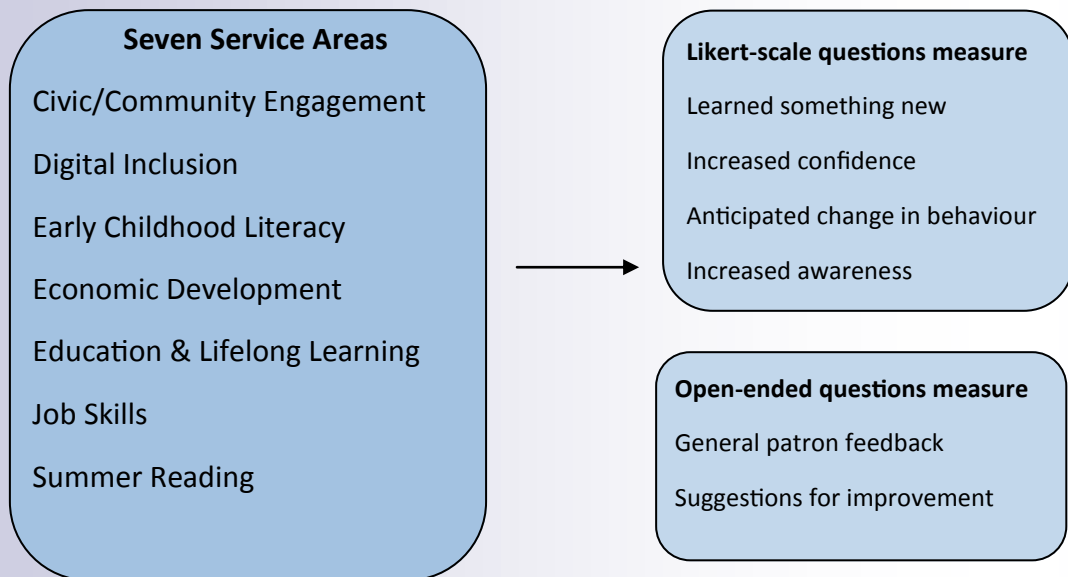
- FREE for all U.S. & Canadian public libraries
- Easy-to-use process & tools
- Don't have to recreate the wheel
- Aggregate outcome data nation-wide

Project Outcomes : Year in Review 2016 Report

Project Outcome Website

In 2011 Public Libraries America President, Carolyn Anthony made Outcome Measurement her primary initiative during her Tenure. The process began with an initial survey to libraries asking them what they currently measured, where they were falling short and areas they found most difficult to capture. In 2013 a Performance Measurement Task Force (PMTF) was formed to help implement the initiative; to begin this process a further 420 libraries were surveyed and any of their existing data was collated and analysed along with their individual survey results and used to show any trends or patterns.

The findings revealed that out of twelve broad service areas, childhood literacy was the highest priority, among most libraries. The team investigated issues relating to specific activities associated with each service area, the community needs those activities seek to address, the target audiences served and the unique challenges to data collection for each service area. Seven service areas were then chosen and the database is then launched, where registered users have access to set outcomes and tools to help them measure programs more effectively.

**Seven Service Areas**

Civic/Community Engagement

Digital Inclusion

Early Childhood Literacy

Economic Development

Education & Lifelong Learning

Job Skills

Summer Reading

**Likert-scale questions measure**

Learned something new

Increased confidence

Anticipated change in behaviour

Increased awareness

**Open-ended questions measure**

General patron feedback

Suggestions for improvement

Please take a few minutes for this brief survey and let us know if, **as a result of participating in the EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY program . . .**

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| You learned something that you can share with your children | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| You feel more confident to help your children learn | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| You will spend more time interacting with your children (e.g., reading, talking, singing, writing, playing) | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| You are more aware of applicable resources and services provided by the library | o | o | o | o | o | o |

What did you like most about the program?

What could the library do to improve your children's enjoyment of reading?

Nicole Wilson Branch Manager of Spring Valley Library in Nevada has registered for Project Outcomes and has used their tools to measure the outcomes of her programs, and found that it has been instrumental in changing the way we design what we deliver and offer and what questions we are asking.

By taking part in this initiative the library have learnt to  identify the difference between outputs and outcomes and have learnt the significance of having a balance between both types of results. The staff have also engaged and have since come to understand, how their job impacts the community and that even the most menial tasks have a role in the over arching strategy. It has also taken the focus off the print collection, and while Nicole acknowledged that this is still a vital service, it is no longer seen as the core service.

Overall Nicole spoke about how easy it was to register and how helpful the online database was. The tools are easy to use and the information provided is relevant and detailed. The project also offers assistance with online webinars and training for staff. The training does not stop at using the database, the team at project outcomes also offer staff training on how to interpret data and use it effectively.

At the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library several comments were used from Project Outcome surveys when they applied for a large STEAM grant. There are an increasing amount of libraries taking part in Project Outcomes to be able to achieve similar forms of success. The initiative is proving to be a success nation wide and has united many libraries that share common goals.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Strategic planning has now become focused on people and spaces. Library collections have decreased significantly and while they remain a core service, are no longer a priority, in the scheme of things. Many of the successful libraries mentioned in this report, started their journey by re-evaluating their services and community demographics, in order to produce a plan that was both relevant and measureable.

- Spaces are extremely important and need to be recognised as 'part of' a library service offering. The spaces seen on tour were inviting, inclusive and multipurpose.

- Collections that are reduced and better displayed/organised have a positive effect on circulation. The reduction of print collection opens up floor space for other purposes. Planning a collection around the user experience is more beneficial than one planned around staff needs.

- Circulation data in some libraries visited was poor, however outputs on program attendance and door visits, showed increasing numbers. This suggests that users are visiting, but not borrowing.

- Radical changes are sometimes necessary to resuscitate struggling services. The libraries visited have demonstrated how drastic changes can bring a library service back from the brink of closure. However, many have also shown evidence that small changes can still have a relatively significant impact.

- Libraries that have experimented in different methods of data collection have been able to articulate their value more effectively. As a result, they have been successful in gaining support from their community and stakeholders. A balance between measuring outputs and standardised outcomes, reflect a library service's impact, more accurately.

## CONCLUSION

Based on my findings, in the case of books vs. space, it has been made evident that the winner here, is space.

Space has become a major talking point in libraries globally and the number of libraries opting to reduce their print collection is increasing.

Whilst conducting this tour, I learnt that libraries are already undertaking transformations. From what was once a building comprising mainly of books, is now a community hub where people learn, grow, do, experience, produce, and find interesting things while connecting with other service users. Books *are* still valuable, however cannot sustain a holistic library service. Whilst they remain significant in libraries, they now augment a growing list of resources. Furthermore as long as libraries are equipped with accurate methods of data collection; quantifying space usage, provided qualitative usage data and articulate the impact of programs, they will be able to justify reducing print collections**.**

So, what business are public libraries really in? From my findings I would argue that libraries are in the business of anything, that may aid in the enrichment of an individual or the community as a whole. What will the public library service be offering in 2021? ...Well, we can only wait and see.

To quote my current Library Manager Debra Summers "I'm Excited"

# RECOMMENDATIONS

### Investigate community needs

Spend time learning about the community your library serves and identify any gaps that exist that could be potentially implemented in your library. There may be an obvious reason why books do not circulate well i.e. a community that is largely non English speaking and lack literacy skills similar to Spring Valley Public Library in Las Vegas.

### Analyse your services

What works what doesn't work? What needs to be dropped or improved? Are we offering services on a 'like' 'dislike' basis, or are we offering services that are actually necessary? Take, for example, Chattanooga's fallen book sale shop, a service that is enjoyed by only a few users, may not be worth the time and expense.

### Develop weeding guidelines around collected data.

Denver and Spring Valley Library both monitored the use of different subjects and allocated areas to staff to monitor closely. Whereas Anythink libraries were more concerned with age and quality. If staff are able to identify trends ,it would assist in the weeding process. Use software to gather data from specific subject areas and identify which items deserve shelf space.

### Embrace innovation

Adopt new ways of thinking, keep the traditions that are beneficial but embrace new ideas that keep us fresh. Boston Public Library was a great example of how innovative spaces can be implemented and traditions maintained. With the newly renovated areas exhibiting the urban library feel and the older part of the building keeping its nostalgic charm.

### Investigate a wide variety of measuring methods

- Explore the benefits of **TTT** method of measuring space usage and customer behaviour, in order to understand how their library gets used and how they can improve their services or design their spaces around the results.

- Explore and implement an initiative similar to that of **Project Outcomes**, in order to standardise outcome measurements maximising the impact of results collected. A project like this would be extremely beneficial nationwide to produce some real results defining the impact libraries have, as well as bringing all libraries together with common purpose.

- Explore ideas around **measuring experience** and look at what level of experience your users gain with the programs your library currently has on offer. Explore ways to increase experiences and measure them accordingly.

### Flexible Spaces

Flexibility is the key for those libraries that are limited in floor space; being able to shift shelving and furniture when necessary, provides more opportunities. These spaces are built around information collected from the community. Designing spaces without analysing community needs may lead to unutilised spaces and a decrease in users.

### Embrace Change

It can be argued that the libraries selected were able to make these changes because they had adequate funding and a large amount of floor space. However, many of the changes that were reported on can be achieved with little to no funding and applied in smaller scale to still achieve positive results. Libraries need to take what they can from this report and explore ways they can apply these ideas, and work with what they have available to them.

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