

## Technology Focus Group :: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries

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6-7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 17 attended by five participants

### Attending

- John Profitt (IT for Alaska Heart Association)
- Jon Papendieck (marketing and website company)
- Inger Deede (marketing and website company)
- Dov Margalit (IT)
- Emily Reeve (research librarian, Anchorage Library)

### Access to Information: Where do you get your information?

- Daily Beast blog
- All online, no paper, no radio, no television. Before I get out of bed, iPhone :: Twitter, RSS Feeds, GoogleReader (like traditional “wire service” - fast way to visit 30-40 websites without visiting the actual pages) AlaskaTweets.com, NPR website. Podcasts.
- New York Times homepage. Take a five minute break and read an article. Public radio in the car.
- Entertainment - online to search for information about local events; read the Press occasionally
- Read books for entertainment or in-depth research. Books? mostly software how-to manuals.
- None of the participants take the local paper; all get the large majority of the news, entertainment and other information on-line. TV at home only used for DVD's (not cable or broadcast television).

### Current Use: Do you use the library?

- Have a card and “think” about the library a lot. Hours are not convenient late at night when I would have time to go.
- I visit maybe once a year. “I feel guilty... I want to use the library, but never go.”
- Went three times in the last year for a local community group event.
- Would visit more if it were like the bookstores in Seattle; would be great if there was a bakery/coffee shop at libraries. Best would be dispersed, neighborhood branches - smaller, inviting, like local coffee shop on the street.
- Need more places that you can drop off books around town - at the grocery store, at Kaladi's.
- A Netflix service for books would be convenient.
- Need books that are very current and technical and would like to have them for a long time.
- I got a library card when I first moved here – it was kind of automatic, and I thought it might be a way to meet people. But I never go. It's not in the “map” of my life: Midtown is too hard to navigate by bike. I don't use it not because I don't want to, interior environs are lovely (except for the entry). But now I'm a new dad and will bring daughter to library often.
- Make the library a better community interface. Use the knowledge of local people as stock-in-trade.

### The Future: How can it improve?

- The technology stuff they've got is very outdated. WiFi stinks in Loussac. I.T. is poorly managed (“one person for the whole system? – oh my”). Given what the future looks like, this must be upgraded: computers, (independent) servers, WiFi, access to the internet, bandwidth, I.T. capabilities, independent website.
- The Municipal computer system has a very different mission than what a library should be. Library has to be open, consumer driven. Muni system is based around muni needs.
- Navigating the traffic to get into the Loussac Library is difficult (intersection at 36<sup>th</sup> is horrible). “Physical access to the library is totally annoying.”
- I love the idea of on-line audio books – never knew it was an option. I'll start downloading tomorrow.

- We drive to the University to see an art show. We go to First Friday. People are willing to get out, even in the middle of winter, if there's a bit of social scene, and interesting things to learn and do. Why not the library?
- Easier computer interface for patrons. Windows isn't necessarily difficult but public-use patrons have difficulty. "Needs to be dead-simple: two buttons: 1) internet, 2) book search"
- Google and Wikipedia are widely understood, user-friendly; the card-catalog process uses a different approach. Library website interface should be geared more toward Google-like search processes.
- "Get as far away from the Municipality as possible". That's the giant sucking sound in the numbers. Library's I.T. systems are not set up as a public-service organization. A library is a very high-contact public service, different business, different model. Do what the museum did: City owns facility and nonprofit operates it.
- Over time, nonprofits accrue all of these missions that the community wants someone to do and they become overwhelmed. Like so many nonprofits, you have to ask the question, why is it here, who is it serving, what are the top three things you can do and you have to drop everything else. This is like a design issue: keep it simple. Too many programs, all underfunded. When you do a whole bunch of things not very well, it's going to get worse. Define who you are and why should people support you.
- Kids programs, early learning, are critical.
- Community engagement platform. Publicize services. What if the library was a center/nexus point for social networking (it's growing). People with common, shared interests gathering.
- The library is the place to house that interaction safely. It's a trusted space. Safe, managed, community space. Library should be a community space. People have knowledge, wisdom that are not in books, not online. A library could be a clearing house for people as resources.
- Virtual-Physical network. People who meet virtually can meet in-person at the library. Twitter. Second Life.
- Library as physical place, repository for information and nexus for community.

#### **The Future: Where do books fit into the library?**

- Kids books. Moms bring rolling luggage cases to check out 50 books.
- Anchorage genealogy society, genealogy collection remains popular.
- No matter how amazing the technology is, when I want to sit down and finally read a book, I want to curl up on the couch. Books may be a declining portion of the library's mission, but books will never die. "Books - a vacation from the screen."
- Only "books" I read are computer manuals. Manuals come out, they're only good for six months. I need to be able to mark up the margins, and keep them in front of me when I'm working.
- Provision of books is an increasingly competitive market – was a time when libraries had cornered the market. "Life is so busy." For most people the calculation is simple – one trip to a comfortable bookstore (or order on-line) to get a book I can keep forever (or sell); vs. drive to the library (when it's open), hope to find a book I want, then have to go back to return it, maybe with an overdue fine. Library has to change this formula.

#### **The Future: Convenience, spaces, community gatherings/facilities.**

- Smaller libraries peppered around town. Each venue would have a unique quality. A blending of Kaladi Brothers and library (e.g., feature books) would be great. People could pre-order books have them show up at Kaladi and you could read there.
- Automated book locker would be cool.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Mall could have a library reading room. There's a branch in the Dimond Mall.
- Social spaces – fireplace, comfortable seating, coffee and a book. Barnes + Noble, other bookstores do this well.

### **The Future: Improved marketing of library**

- Be reminded of your library online. Library presence/campaign online, e.g., index library info on Google search engines. “Also available at your local library” link.
- Daily News ads (if you’re interested in this ... it’s at your library).
- Capitalize on dead spaces where you can grab somebody’s attention to make library services more visible. Get people’s attention when their standing in line at Kaladi’s, e.g. a screen with images of featured books – the grocery line check out phenomenon.
- Library card PLUS. Build relationships with local business. When you get a library card, you also get coupons, discounts to local businesses.

### **The Future: The Economy - Libraries as job centers?**

- Library staff often become computer/job application teachers and hand out lists of local job centers.
- Currently library staff is being asked to help people write resumes. Library staff not really set up for this function – would be great if Nine Star, JobCorps or other job-training orgs could partner with libraries?

### **The Future: summary**

- Convenience
- Community
- Core users - kids
- Publicize + Educate About Services (Raise Visibility)
- Books