Community discovery and ideation: Creating smart libraries

MARY LOU CAROLAN, CORNWALL PUBLIC LIBRARY
BETHA GUTSCHE, OCLC
Mary Lou Carolan
Library Director/Innovator, Cornwall Public Library

Betha Gutsche
Program Manager, WebJunction, OCLC
GOAL: Co-create a space with the community for participatory, active learning and social engagement.
Active learning in libraries is...

- Everyone can participate.
- Learning happens by doing.
- Challenge is constant.
- Everything is interconnected.

participatory, informal, interest-driven and relevant to real life
Hands-on activities

Children’s Learning Garden, Lewes (DE) Public Library

STEM program at Wilton (NH) Public Library

Learning happens by doing.
DIY becomes DIT (doing it together)

Learning is social. Everyone can participate.
Active learning is for all ages

Early learning and play

Digital media lab

Makerspace

Alphabet Tree, Early Learning Space, Allen County (IN) Public Library

Digital Media Lab, Laurel (DE) Public Library; by Tameca Beckett

You can make it by Fabrice Florin on Flickr
Challenge is constant

Learning garden

Culinary literacy center

Working together to co-create solutions
Active learning space is... open and inviting

Projects-in-progress are left lying around

Tools are visible & accessible

Messy is okay
Active learning space is... flexible

The caster is your friend

Movable shelving

Modular tables

Mobile reference pod

Movable Library Shelving by Group3 Planners on Flickr

Tables, chairs, pod: Demco.com
COMMUNITY DISCOVERY

Authentic exploration of community needs and aspirations
The community is the expert
“We are a town where everyone knows everyone, you can charge on your local account just about anywhere you go, and deals are still made over coffee and a handshake.”

Discovery Tools:
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Topical Focus Groups
  - Intercept Surveys
  - Online Surveys
  - Observations
  - Visioning/ Idea Workshops
- Open Brainstorming
- Dot Boards/ Wish Trees
Survey >> Dot Board
(James Kennedy Public Library, IA)

- Health & Wellness
- Food and Culinary Arts
- Performing Arts & Movies
- Fine Arts
- STEM
- Upcycling & Recycling
- Hobbies & Crafts
- Gardening & Outdoor Activities
Wish Tree >> Dot Board
(Madison Public Library, SD)

1. What do you like about your community?
2. What do you think would make it better?

Four options: gaming space, teen space, maker space, and business incubator
Asking Questions
(Bertha Voyer Memorial Library, TX)

• If given the opportunity – what would you do to build a better library?
• What could your library do better? What do we do really well?
COMMUNITY IS THE HEART OF THE LIBRARY

Mary Lou Carolan, Cornwall Public Library
WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?

Who are the stakeholders?
Who are your partners in education?
Who would care if the library was no longer there?
If people don’t get who we are and what we do…. how much longer will they support us?
- Connections
- Relationships
- Conversation
Community Conversations
Community Conversations

All are welcome!

Come talk about your aspirations for the Cornwall Community with local community leaders

facilitated by
Library Director Mary Lou Carolan

Wednesday
May 25
6:30pm
in the library community room

www.cornwallpubliclibrary.org • 845.534.8282
You can’t really see the old, worn carpet but I am pretty convinced a murder took place here. Ack!
…this came directly from our community discovery process and initiated our Small Libraries Smart Spaces plan.

BEWARE: Once you get started, it is hard to stop!

Practice: “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”
What’s Next?

This space will be transformed into a “Smart Space.” Designed to be transitioned throughout the day for different audiences and activities including: a teen tech space, tech training area, makerspace, and a homework/small group workspace.

This re-imagined space will provide for a more efficient, flexible and vibrant use of our current floor plan.
When the community discovers who we are and what we offer, they will love us & fight for us.

It’s that important!
Wish Tree Activity

Think from the perspective of the persona you’ve been given and respond to these questions:
1. What do you like about your community?
2. What do you think would make it better?

Write your answers on a post-it note and place it on the Wish Tree.

Photo: Madison (SD) Public Library
Wish Tree, by Lisa Martin
IDEATION

The power of suspending judgment and opening the floodgate of ideas
Select 3-4 items from community input to explore further.

Expand the possibilities of those items through brainstorming.

Narrow choices (dot voting) to top 2-3 ideas.

Evaluate these ideas and pick one to prototype.
Post-its and a beginner’s mind
Ideation Activity

How might your library create active learning opportunities around ____________ idea?

Hint:
- Think beyond the obvious
- Dissect the idea
  - What are people’s feelings about it?
  - What is the essential experience behind it?
  - What activities are related to it?
Brainstorm rules

- Defer judgement
- Encourage wild ideas
- Build on the ideas of others
- Stay focused on topic
- One conversation at a time
- Be visual
- Go for quantity
# Rating the ideation ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEA:</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instinctively, how excited are you about this idea?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How innovative and fresh does this idea feel?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How practical, feasible and realistic is this idea?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROTOTYPING AND BEYOND

Making ideas tangible and ready to move into action
The humble prototype

Transfer key ideas from post-it notes to tangible objects for users to test.
Prototypes from our participants

Makerspace mock-up

Mobile, flexible computer lab

Fun with cardboard and tape!
Before transformation…

Racks of CDs, DVDs and audio books
"SkillShare has provided a great opportunity for us to connect people with other people and with other ways of learning,“
—Jenni Johnson

After: Activated for multi-use

Something is always happening at SkillShare
Acknowledgements

- The Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces project is made possible in part by a grant from the **Institute of Museum & Library Services**, LG-80-16-0039-16.

- **Association of Rural & Small Libraries** (ARSL) is working collaboratively with WebJunction on all phases of the project.

- **Project for Public Spaces** (PPS) provided subject expertise, consultation and instruction.

Thank you!