

Cleveland Public Library

Design in Management

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Executive Summary

Historically, the Cleveland Public Library, which turns 150-years old in 2019, has served as a service-oriented information source for Ohioans by providing free public access to its collections and services. Today the Library continues its service-based posture by offering an eclectic assortment of resources, programming, and learning tools for its users.

Libraries throughout America and the world are going through a major period of transition. Long a bastion of culture, learning and bedrocks of the community - libraries face funding cuts, a dramatic shift in user attendance and expectations and a variety of competing alternatives, largely search engines and book stores. For the Cleveland Public Library, recognized as one of the top research libraries in the United States, the numbers tell the story. In 1992, the Downtown hub of the Cleveland Public Library system had over 1 million visitors and 173 employees; while as of 2011, attendance had fallen to just under 600,000 visitors and there were roughly 33% less employees. Corresponding to the collapse in attendance and reduction in headcount has been drastic funding cuts, most significantly in 2009, after the state reduced the local government funds available, including those of libraries.

While the Cleveland Public Library asked us to address more spatially oriented concerns/issues, throughout our research we determined that the spatial issues were secondary to the following cultural issues related to communication and trust. These

cultural issues were evident in three separate relationships - "Administration and Staff," "Staff and Staff," and "Library and The Public." Firstly, there are communication breakdowns between high-level administrators and front-line employees, leading to culture of fear and misunderstanding by library staff. Secondly, responsibility and initiative is lacking in many ways - no sense of team, a high level of insecurity, and unfamiliarity with one another. Finally, and most importantly, words don't match actions. Culture of fear, disconnect and skepticism. "Access" to materials isn't enough. Extraction of content and value is of huge importance.

The Problem

The Cleveland Public Library's traditional bureaucracy and value chain needs to be dismantled to allow trust to be restored at all three levels of engagement and the library personnel to become the heart of the value proposition versus the books themselves.

Central Ideas

The Cleveland Public Library's traditional bureaucracy and value chain needs to be dismantled to allow trust to be restored at all three levels of engagement and the library personnel to become the heart of the value proposition versus the books themselves. Using spatial alterations and impactful organizational changes, CPL can transform itself from a transaction-oriented vault of materials to an experienced-based enabler of knowledge-sharing and content exploration.

More specifically, spatial changes include utilizing the upper floors of the Louis Stokes Wing; changing the main building's security desk into a welcome desk staffed by both a security guard and a library personnel greeter; moving bookshelves to the center of the floors to allow for natural lighting; playing music in the corridors and stairwells; removing large librarian desks; and adding more meeting spaces and

allowing them to be private; creating comfortable seating that encourages patrons to linger.

Director Felton Thomas posits that he has an open door policy, yet library personnel feel that they must first submit all new ideas and proposals to their immediate supervisor, with the approval process repeating at every managerial level until it reaches administration. Thus, a change to the Cleveland Public Library's bureaucratic communication system is recommended in order to facilitate a better understanding between library staff and administration, and to foster autonomy for librarians. One suggestion includes creating a proposal process whereby library personnel can directly submit their feedback to administration, rather than having to first get the proposal approved by their immediate supervisor.

Additionally, performance reviews should be a part of the developmental process for both the supervisor and employee, ie. 360 degree feedback. Clarity about expectations, reality of achieving set expectations and the resources to successfully complete objectives is of the utmost importance. This is of huge concern as we've heard of instances where departments are extremely short-staffed and due to the inflexibility of the library's current system, they are expected to operate at the same level as they would at full-staffing. Some personnel decisions have not been clearly articulated in the past, including staff members being moved to branch libraries and reprimanded for leaving the building minutes before 6pm to catch a

bus. This has led to a decreased morale amongst employees, a sense of “holding out until retirement” versus seizing the day as a new opportunity to encourage learning and work in a place that values them.

Our aim is for The Cleveland Public Library to position the library staff as the heart of its value proposition. This includes allowing personnel more autonomy and power over their respective departments, including programming and events.

Staff should be responsible for coming up with monthly or bi-monthly creative extensions of their department materials. Granting them ownership over display cases is not enough. Allow library staff, including clerks and assistants, to come up with ideas for display tie-ins, such as a workshop, event, or collaboration with another department. From our research, we found that most staff liked the idea of having more creative responsibilities. At the mention of extending her display case into something bigger, one librarian assistant told us that she was “getting all tingly inside” because she was so excited at the thought of doing more creative work. Many of the staff already have passion for what they do; allow them to express that passion to create a more integrated, engaging user experience.

In order for the staff to be able to react quickly and incorporate current events in their department extensions, the marketing department’s requirement of a two to three month lead time must become more nimble. The current turnaround time does not allow for rapid response to changing consumer trends. In sum, processes internal

to The Cleveland Public Library must become more nimble and adaptable in order to better meet user needs in 2019.

“Logos” of the Service

In the specific case of the Cleveland Public Library the product is not merely the book, the artifact. The product is the content in the books and the capability of librarians to deploy that content for the public. In our digital world, libraries lack of attractiveness if we considered that value comes from the artifacts. However, in our approach we see the value of the library coming from the librarians, by taking them as information experts to the next level, from transactions to interactions and engagement with the public.

“Pathos” of the Service

The librarians’ ability to take the content from the books to the public, serves the purpose of libraries as learning hubs. An interactive and user-friendly library is the library of the future. Providing access and expensive collections isn’t enough anymore.

“Ethos” of the Service

In our approach, librarians are at the heart of the value chain of public libraries, given their set of skills and unique expertise in database management, reading references and historic collections. This value proposition is hard to imitate by online search engines and e-readers. However, to enhance the interactions between librarians and the public the spatial issues must be overcome. Small changes in space,

signage, furniture, lighting and allowing music and food in special areas, would impact the users eagerness to visit the library and stay there for longer than usual.

“Coherence & Unity” of the Service

Books without human interaction minimize the purpose and mission of public libraries. Extracting content from the artifacts to the public in a user-friendly environment creates communities of learning and engagement in a cohesive and sustainable manner. Our recommendations are not for isolated topics, rather we are aiming to create a systemic change to which the culture and space are inclusive and interconnected in order to fulfill the library's mission and vision for the future.

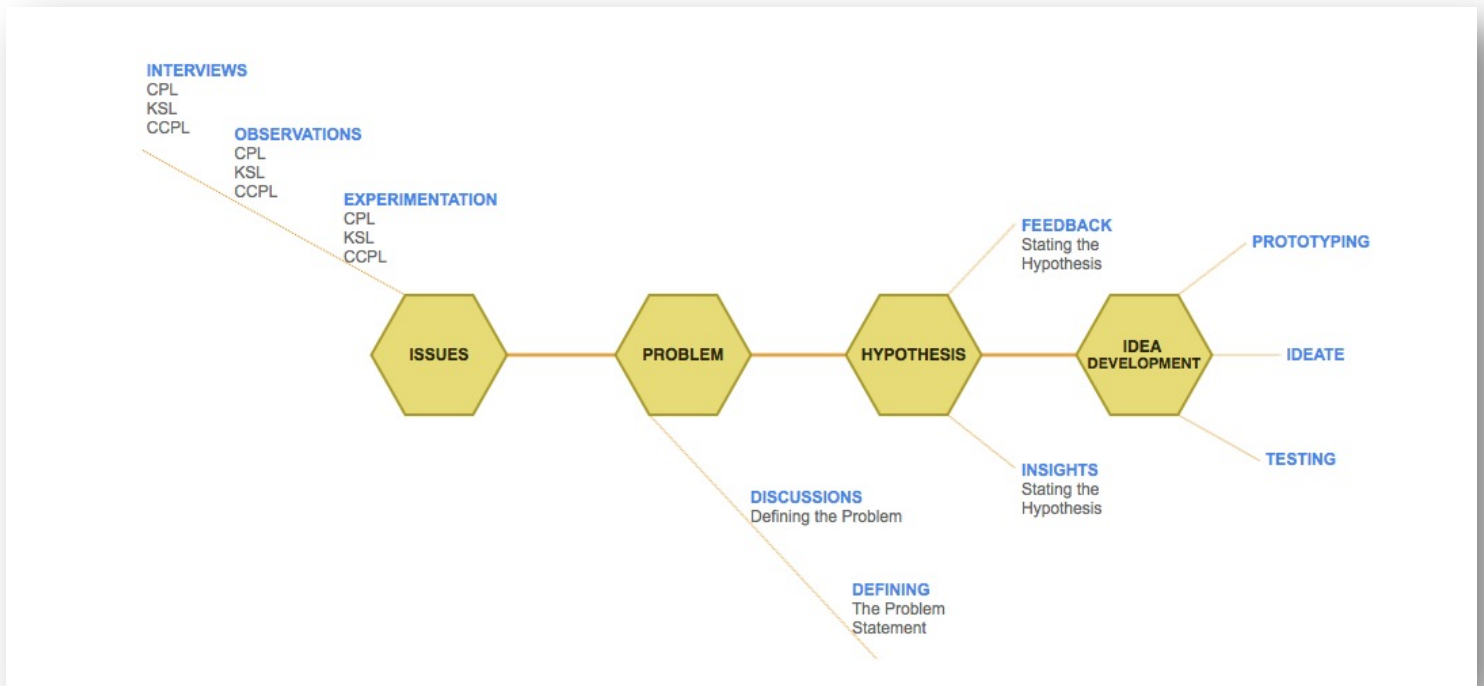
The Business Case for This Solution

While Director Thomas and many of the staff have asked us to tell them what a library will look like in 2019, we have focused on what a library should feel like in 2019. The traditional experience of going to a library to get a book is over and a sense of urgency is necessary to transition from that expected experience to an expectation that the library brings to life the content of the artifacts through demonstration, hands-on activities, and upselling of the content of the books and knowledge of the staff. In the short and long-term, the library will be able to be nimble and embrace new ways patrons receive information and will continue being able to deliver a value-added experience from their expert staff.

Despite budgetary concerns of the Cleveland Public Library, our ideas and recommendations above can be implemented on a small or large scale over the course of the next few years. However, as we were told by the administration, some current budget allocation decisions are being made as if it were 1992 and not in accordance with the current strategy and vision. We do not anticipate that the library would need additional outside money, but reallocate money from the large materials spend (\$12 million in 2012) and spend monies on the spatial and staffing recommendations that we have made. On the staffing side of the equation, it is not

necessarily calling for hiring more people (yet), but engaging the staff in development opportunities and team building.

Design Process flow



Conclusion

From the onset, we were thrilled to be chosen to work on this project - we went in with an open mind to address the problems posed by the sponsors, but soon felt that we had the opportunity and obligation to raise questions surrounding what we felt were and are the true problems facing the Cleveland Public Library. We recognize that all organizations struggle in the face of change and during budget-cutting times, but as Millennials looking to use the "library of the future" - we believe that it is imperative to address the communication and cultural issues within this storied organization. While the Cleveland Public Library has tried to quickly adapt to the technological changes of our times, they may have rushed too fast, forgetting its most important asset in the process - its dedicated staff. Famed management guru Peter Drucker said, "The most valuable assets of a 20th century company (or organization) were its production equipment (or artifacts). The most valuable asset of a 21st century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity." Re-instilling a greater sense of loyalty and pride in the employees, and allowing personnel to further develop competencies and take greater ownership of their respective departments will not only make for a better relationship between management and staff, but the library as a whole to the community it desires to serve.

Appendix

Design Brief

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Executive Summary

Historically, the Cleveland Public Library, which turns 150-years old in 2019, has served as a service-oriented information source for Ohioans by providing free public access to its collections and services. Today the Library continues its service-based posture by offering an eclectic assortment of resources, programming, and learning tools for its users. Its goals moving toward 2019 include redesigning underutilized spaces at the Main Library to meet the needs of users in 2019; understanding and reacting to shifting user needs and expectations; and forming communities of participatory learning that encourage engagement and sharing of knowledge.

The Library faces several impending decisions surrounding its use of technology, space and people in the promotion of its vision, which includes acting as the driving force behind a culture of learning. The Library needs to develop a community that rethinks the traditional notion of what libraries are and adhere to its mission of being the "People's University." It can do so by leveraging its research capabilities and transferring its vast knowledge to more participatory mediums of learning.

It is evident that there is a disconnect between what a library is perceived to be by the public, what it is intended to be by its administrators, and what it actually is in 2014. Bridging the aforementioned gap is essential to ensure the viability of the Cleveland Public Library going forward. We believe that acknowledging the effects of technology—both positive and negative, on the library's current agenda is an essential step in determining what the library needs to deliver to create a culture of engagement, activity and learning moving forward. It will be something we look at heavily in solving the library's issues of underutilization and in redesigning their current space.

Organizational Profile

The Cleveland Public Library, which turns 150-years old in 2019, is a public library community that operates a main branch in downtown Cleveland as well as 27 regional locations that serve 11 counties throughout Ohio, a mobile library, a homebound service and a library for the blind and physically disabled.

Historically, the Cleveland Public Library has served as a service-oriented information source for Ohioans by providing free public access to its collections and services. Its first librarians established programming for children and youth, and extended its collections to schools, factories and hospitals. Today, the Cleveland Public Library is the third largest research library in the United States, and is the “People’s University”. The organization seeks to be the driving force behind a powerful culture of learning that will inspire Clevelanders to continually learn, and share and seek out new knowledge in ways that are beneficial to themselves, their community and the world.

In addition to the Cleveland Public Library, there is one other major operating library system in Northeast Ohio: Cuyahoga County Public Library. In 2010* Cuyahoga County Public Library was ranked number one in the U.S. for libraries serving populations of 500,000+. Cuyahoga County Public Library has 28 regional branches that serve 47 communities, and offers similar services to the Cleveland Public Library, including resources and support for job seekers, child and youth reading programs, and delivery services. The Cleveland Public Library’s service offerings are more vast than Cuyahoga County Public Library’s; some of its unique offerings include language classes, art exhibits, and 3D printing services.

Due to digitization of its collections, the Cleveland Public Library’s main branch has several floors of empty, unused space. The library aims to utilize this space in a way that serves the evolving needs of its users.

- The 2010 Hennen’s American Public Library Rankings (HAPLR) data is the most recently published library rankings.

Problem Statement

It is evident that there is a disconnect between what a library is perceived to be by the public, what it is intended to be by its administrators, and what it actually is in 2014. When one thinks of a library, they are automatically driven to its books. However, due to advances in technology and changes in the way people are choosing to learn, books no longer seem to be enough to bring the public into the space. In determining what exactly the library is to its intended user base, its first step is to look at its existing relationship with technology, and the impacts it has already had on readership and foot traffic. Technology is both friend and foe to the library as it stands today, driving people into the building and away from it. Bringing people to the basement but away from all other floors and materials. Giving people a chance to interact with devices and create new things, but perhaps hindering them from acquiring knowledge in a way that is meaningful and can be retained and applied. The problem the library faces is in trying to understand the means by which it will adapt to constant advances in technology in order to fully realize the maximum potential of its space moving forward over the coming years.

Goals & Objectives

We seek to create a space for knowledge transfer, for information to “come alive” (make the tie to books → classes). We seek to help create and facilitate an environment that encourages the merger of experiential learning with traditional learning styles (ie. books, magazines and other mediums). Our goal is to help the Cleveland Public Library embrace technological advancement and its effect on the learning process to ensure that the patrons of the library are able to take advantage of the library’s vast resources.

Northeast Ohioans who seek to engage, learn from, and share information with others will benefit from this project. This includes individuals from all walks of life -- entrepreneurs, book club members, parents, school children and locals who want to learn things from how to make their own beer to how to fix a car.

As a research library, the Cleveland Public Library must effectively balance the needs of the community with research demands. The Cleveland Public Library needs to effectively convey the goals/purpose of altering traditional library space to fit the learning needs of the future, which we believe is much more experience-based and practical.

There are many risks and benefits associated with our proposal. A potentially large risk is that the Northeast Ohio community disengages from the Cleveland Public Library, as it deems the project to be too radical and not fitting with what the community desires the library to be. While there are many benefits, the greatest benefits would be increased foot-traffic through the downtown branch of the library; greater community engagement from employers to unemployed citizens; tangible skills gained by utilizing new experiences focused programming (ie. learning how to weld or cut vinyl) that enable unemployed/underemployed individuals to gain skills necessary to better their career opportunities.

The desirable features of a solution include the ability of the Cleveland Public Library to leverage its existing skills/mission as "The People's University" of Cleveland and transform itself from an artifact driven institution to an experience-based institution that can help transfer the knowledge of the future - both practical and leisure - to enable its users to develop skills and knowledge bases that lead to a greater sense of fulfillment.

Schedule of Work

Cleveland Public Library

2/3/14

Status

- Done
- Started
- Ongoing
- Delayed

Schedule of Work Task	Feb				March				Apr				Comments
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	
Research													
CPL metrics													
Patrons profiles/motivators													
Actions taken by Public Libraries around the world													
Meeting with CPL executive team													
Main Library tour: review of current situation													
Hypothesis													
Issue statement analysis													
Problem Statement (pre-definition)													
Determine flaws in problem statement													
Choose the problem(s) to address													
Set desired outcome													
Testing													
Define all possible solutions													
Select feasible solutions													
Set alternative solutions													
Make a time and resources frame for solutions													
Test solutions													
If necessary go back to the problem's definition													
Conclusions & Recommendations													
Contrast results vs. Desired outcome													
Key learnings from testing feasible solutions													
Analysis of this design process and its results													
Feedback from instructors and CPL team													

Original Budget Estimate

Per the Cleveland Public Library's 2012 Annual Report - \$11,974,278 was spent on Library Materials in fiscal year 2012. If the Cleveland Public Library were to spend 1-3% of that amount on an annual basis for the next three years or roughly \$360,000 - \$1,000,000, a tremendous amount of equipment ranging from 3D printers to meeting spaces could be invested in to transform the library as we know it. In researching other successful libraries that are transforming to meet the learning needs of the next generation, we learned that the Chattanooga Public Library spent \$10,000 to purchase a 3D printer, a laser cutter and a vinyl cutter. Furthermore, it has added an in-house coffee shop and rebranded itself as such. We would anticipate the capital expenditures for this project to range from \$10,000 - \$250,000 - as the variety of options for purchases makes this a difficult number to estimate. Further, the most important and harder to gauge estimate comes on the programmatic side of the equation, as library personnel or outside experts will need to come in to provide knowledge-transfer opportunities for the patrons of the library. While these costs have the potential to be significant, they can be ameliorated by pro-bono efforts. However, we still estimate that these costs would make up the remainder of the allocated 1-3% of the library materials budget that would be set aside for this project.