Hello, everyone. I’m Toby Greenwalt, and I’m so excited to be with you today. It’s a tremendous opportunity to get to talk to all of you today, and to get to tour the entire span of your state. I really should have had t-shirts made.

I’m here to talk about the changing nature of library service, and how libraries can expand their impact by embracing the inherently connected nature of all that they do.

I come to you from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, where I am the Director of Digital Strategy and Technology Integration. Before this, I was the Virtual Services Coordinator at the Skokie Public Library in the Chicago suburbs. Both institutions have working a lot with this idea of comprehensive culture change.

Story of both positions - department without staff. Because technology pervades almost every aspect of library service, I had to find ways to integrate this organically into my relations with staff.
A few years ago, I started thinking of my work in terms of this sculpture I think a lot about this sculpture “Cloud Gate,” located in Chicago’s Millennium Park. I’ve always shared a certain kinship with this piece, and not just because I’m a huge tourist.

You probably know the sculpture as what you see on the first slide - a seamless thing that looks like a drop of mercury. When I first moved to Chicago right out of library school, it hadn’t been finished yet. You could see all the seams between each of the steel panels.

It took over a year, five discrete work stages, and a huge amount of sandpaper to turn the sculpture into what it finally looks like today. It’s this process that comes to mind when I think about libraries. Our organizations are full of divisions: departments, procedures and rules that compartmentalize the myriad services we provide. In many cases, these seams exist simply because “we’ve always done things this way.” This often results in confusion for the patron, and gaps in understanding between departments. By embracing the holistic nature of what we do, we can start to blur out these edges, and create a sense of continuity between all our services.

We evolve not by creating whole new identities for the library - but by taking what works about our organizations as community institutions and making the total experience of library use as seamless as possible.

I just hit my 10th year of being a librarian. (And I’m sick of all you kids on my lawn.) I’ve been watching this tremendous transition that’s still taking place in library land - and gotten to really observe how we as a profession has gone through this really messy, complex process. But messy in the best way, right?
Aspirational exercise

How do you hope to change your library for the better?

Prompts around the room.
I was initially asked to come out and discuss changes to reference service. What do you think of when you think of reference service?

But part of the transition requires us to think beyond the desk. We don’t have these discrete, sequestered departments any more. Instead, we’ve got to look at all our library services as connected parts of a greater whole.

Because the changes taking place all around desks like these are having significant impacts on the work we do.
Let’s take broadband access, for example. In the last 15 years, we’ve gone from less than 10 percent of all homes wired for high-speed internet to between 70 and 80 percent - depending on whether you look to Pew or the Census for your data.

Buncombe County - 401-600 high speed connections per 1000 households
Guilford County - 201-400 connections per 1000 households
Greensboro: 78,2%
Charlotte: 82%

This has created profound implications for the way people learn, work, and socialize.
The idea that fast Internet can be had anywhere at any time is creating new opportunities to link more and more things to the outside world. While Pew only started measuring smartphone saturation since 2011, we can see its growth on an even steeper curve, almost doubling in just 3 years.

This has tremendous repercussions for the library. We’ve seen wireless sessions rise gradually every month since I started at CLP. In addition to requiring me to upgrade our capacity at each location, it’s led me to consider just how important wifi is as a library resource. Due to the number of essential services that are more or less online-only - everything from job applications to government services, I made the call to remove the library card requirement from getting on to our wireless network. If a fine due to an overdue or missing item is preventing one of my patrons from doing what they need to do, I would much rather not pile on to their problem.

Likewise, there’s the issue of Bring Your Own Device. As this trend continues, people are more likely to make a beeline for empty tables and meeting rooms rather than coming to us to ask questions. How do we engage this group if they’re less willing to abandon their workspaces?

These aren’t the only implications of the mobile wave. More and more devices are coming with web connections - the much-vaunted “Internet of Things.” All of the data these devices are collecting and measuring is creating a whole new type of literacy - and it’s going to force libraries to reexamine their traditional stances on patron privacy. Our traditional black-and-white approach to patron privacy is becoming far more nuanced. How do we use data to design better services and build stronger tools?
Because we can ignore these trends at our own peril. All of these disruptions are having a cumulative effect on the traditional reference model. Here’s the PLDS trend report on reference transactions per $1000 spent. You can see the steady decline in reference transactions over the past decade. At Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, we’ve had an over 20% year-to-year decline in questions asked - and they’re representing a much smaller percentage of our overall ROI.

Does that mean we’re less busy? I think our answer is likely the same as yours: Nope. We’re busier than ever. Over 685,000 people walked through our doors in the last quarter. But the way in which we’re busy is changing. As it stands, it’s easy for these changes to take place around the reference desk, rather than with it.
What are some of those trends?

* New Learning Models. We’ve already seen a shift to more active, group work in K-12 education. We’re seeing further implications of this in flipped classrooms, open courseware, and the MOOC movement. We see the same thing in the business world - coworking spaces and startup entrepreneurship are turning the act of starting a business into a whole new type of creativity.

* Social activity continues to grow, creating a host of personal and curated channels that people can use to engage with one another. How does the library fit into these spheres, and present its value in a way that’s organic to patron comfort levels?

* Digital literacy: Of course, just because information is online doesn’t mean people know how to use it. Not only do libraries have to work to impart the value of the deep-web resources they curate, but they have to work more to teach users how to make sense of sources that span multiple media types - and then respond in kind.

What other trends have you noticed? What changes are you seeing take place in your community?

All these behaviors are indicative of a much larger trend in the way people think, work, and socialize. Instead of this very straightforward model of gaining mastery in one thing and moving on to the next, there’s a lot more magpie activity moving around. People pick up a little bit here, a little bit there, and synthesize it all into something new.
With all of this, it’s easy to feel completely overwhelmed - and the next thing is breathing down our necks. Shortly after I took this photo, my son showed me how to use the multitouch gestures on my iPad. This was 2 phones ago. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, I will tell you a secret: everyone feels this way.

Rather than get caught up in specific things (like how much better my kid is with a tablet than I am), it’s more important to consider the larger behaviors being shaped here. University of Tennessee-Chattanooga librarian Jason Griffey sums this up rather well with the statement “experiences become expectations.”

As persistent access to robust computing power and human networks becomes more widespread, it’s going to shape the ways people expect to interact with the world. You’re seeing this in the maker movement right now: DIY culture is making it easier to customize your experiences and design products to your exact specifications. All of these outside experiences are shaping patron expectations for library service. But this phenomenon goes both ways: by embracing the connected nature of all the work we do as an institution, we can change people’s expectations of what a library can do.
Our challenge is to lean in to this process, and turn it into an opportunity for wider library service.
The same tools and skills that are changing information-seeking behaviors are also tremendous opportunities for us in libraries. It gives us the opportunity to take the important work that we do, and place it in context within this information ecosystem. Because this is happening in a quick, social way, we can make our role in the process visible to a much wider audience.
Right now, most interactions can be summed up like this.

Once the transaction is finished, there’s no way for the library to pick up where the previous interaction left off. If the patron comes back in, there’s nothing to guarantee that a staff member will remember their preferences - if that staff member handles the transaction at all. It’s something of a forced amnesia - where library workers and patrons alike are forced to start from scratch every time they come back to the library.
Digital tools are making it easier to create a better collective memory. Having constant access to portable technology and pervasive, powerful Internet access makes it easier for all of us to document and share our lives with one another. Regardless of how you feel about this phenomenon, it presents an opportunity for us to make reflection another component of the transaction.

If this is happening publicly, then our users become just as much a part of the inspiration cycle. This probably happening already in every one of our libraries. We’ve got to make this process more visible, so we can lay better claim to those things our users accomplish using our services. By doing so, we’re reinforcing the point that the library functions as the hub of a community. And we’ll have a ready pile of evidence to point to when dealing with our stakeholders.

If we can do this internally – and with our user’s permission – we can do a better job of providing customized services, and make the library experience more of a fluid, ongoing relationship. This will not only buff out the seams from transaction to transaction, but over time it will make for a comprehensive library experience that runs from cradle to grave.
The net result is a more agile organization:

None of this means the traditional methods are going away. Rather, there’s a spectrum we have to examine in order to provide the right services at the right time. Furthermore, it’s this our role as a traditional organization with a long history and institutional heft that better prepares us to steer our users through a world of constant change.

It’s funny that way - the more responsibility I get, the less my job actually deals with day-to-day technology, and more about creating the capacity and flexibility for dealing with any type of change. But change isn’t about flipping a switch - it’s about evolving gracefully.
Putting theory into practice

- Cultivating Staff
- Designing Services
- Building Community

Everyone on board so far?

OK, enough theory. Let’s talk about putting this stuff into practice. I’m breaking this morning’s session into three parts.

In “Cultivating Staff,” we’ll examine ways to build a culture of innovation within your organization - and we’ll talk about what to do once you’ve opened the floodgates of creativity.

In “Reimagining Services,” we’ll talk about ways to carry this culture of innovation into our day-to-day work, and to make our libraries more dynamic without overwhelming ourselves in the process.

And we’ll wrap up by “Building Community” - and talk about how our organizations can turn outward with these fluid practices, encouraging wider collaboration and participation from our community partners. All of this serves to position the library as the heart of the community’s information ecosystem, and a driver of collective action.

As my director Mary Frances Cooper puts it, “the library is something we do together.” We’ve got to own our role in this process.
In thinking holistically about all these elements, I've found myself taking bits and pieces from a number of major initiatives currently taking place in library land.

Lankes
Harwood Institute: Innovation Lab
IDEO Design Kit
Outcome Measures


What we’re talking about today will borrow liberally from each of these, and back with some examples from my current and past work. I hope you’ll find bits and pieces of your own to draw from in your own work.
Throughout all this is the concept of jamming econo. This term comes from an 80's punk band called the Minutemen. This was a trio of California dudes who didn’t have a lot of money, but hopped in a van and toured the country anyway. They didn’t really know what they were doing, but they let their enthusiasm for their music provide them with the momentum to get through.

I feel like this is particularly applicable to library services - especially for small organizations, or spaces with constrained budgets. The ability to keep things simple, build a steady stream of small successes, and filtering out that which is deemed unnecessary can go a long way toward setting an example for your staff and your patrons alike. As people start to take notice, you can build on this growing enthusiasm to introduce new ideas and redefine the concept of what libraries can do for their communities.
And just to reiterate, the technology component runs parallel to all of this, but there's no one thing that's going to solve all your problems. The technology you use has to complement the things that are working best for you. We’re reaching the point where Incremental change is the norm, rather than one big change followed by long stagnant periods. We should embrace technology the same we’d embrace any other raw material.

Here’s an example. When I was at Skokie, we were constantly dealing with patrons needing to see the database or the catalog record we were working on at the desk. Swiveling the monitor caused a tangle of cords, and no one was really comfortable with bringing them around the desk itself. So we installed second screens that staff could turn on to show the public what was on their screen. It’s a simple solution that works to draw our users more closely into our process of finding information. We’re not just getting the answer for them, we’re modeling how they can do it themselves.
The stuff we’re discussing today is designed to provide some evergreen principles for making our organizations more flexible, responsive, and creative.

There’s some recent history here that makes this culture shift all the more important to my organization - and helped convince me to pull up stakes and move to Pittsburgh. In the early 2010s, Pittsburgh was continuing to struggle with its decades-long depression brought on by the collapse of the steel industry. The Great Recession had hit the city pretty hard, and the entire city was faced with massive budget shortfalls - and CLP was no exception to this. Realizing that they would have to close several branches without external financial support (Carnegie’s original charter only guaranteed 40 grand from the city per year), they pushed for a millage referendum - and won with over 70 percent of the vote.

With the public’s clear support, CLP set about to reexamine its role in the city’s information ecosystem - and to redirect the inertia that comes with being a 125-year-old institution. They launched a new strategic plan in 2013, created the position of Director of Digital Strategy and Technology Implementation, and brought me on board in early 2014 to help them bridge the gap between their physical and virtual services. Since then, I’ve been helping them build new capacity in their staff, develop new tools and rework legacy services, and embed the library in the community that speaks to our users at their point of need. After the referendum was passed in 2011, CLP made a promise to never look back. Since then they’ve been working to embed their value in every service they provide - and to make their impact visible to their stakeholders, no matter how much the world shifts around us.

I love the mission statement for CLP for exactly that purpose: no matter how these concepts change - and all four of these things are definitely changing - we have a
With that in mind, let’s jump in to the question of reimagining staff behavior.

Assuming you’ve bought into all this theory of creating more flexible models - you’re here, at least, and I haven’t scared you away yet - what staff behaviors contribute to this idea of a more innovative, responsive organization?
Of course, in order to push things forward, you’ve got to figure out how to leverage what you already have.

For one thing, you can look at formal assessment tools, like the Edge Benchmarks. Another great example I’ve been using for tech competency is the rubric that WebJunction publishes.

Formal assessment tools are great for seeing how your staff and organization stack up against national standards.

But how can we jam econo with our capacity-building? How do we give our staff the power to learn from one another, and to model the behavior that we want to see from participants in a learning organization? More importantly, how do we move from competency - with service, with technology, with knowledge of our resources - to confidence, the ability to truly use one’s best judgement?

A big part of this is figuring out how to unlock capacities in staff - finding new ways to get them to work together, and giving them the tools and the trust to work through problems and fill gaps.

So much is changing so quickly. More than anything else, it’s best to help staff feel ready to adapt on the fly - no matter what comes along.
I’d like to use this four-stage model as the framework for building capacity in staff. Let’s start with Inspiration.

To rewire staff thinking and build new capacities, you’ve got to work to create a safe space for staff to engage in these problems. Legacy procedures carry a lot of weight, and that can make things really intimidating.

What are the challenges in engaging your staff?
My undergraduate degree was in anthropology. Because of that, participant observation has been the tool I bring to almost every aspect of library work that I do. Because I’m responsible for technology, I have to engage with staff at all levels, and in almost every department. The more of this I’ve done, the more I’ve realized that some of the most valuable interactions have come in informal gathering spaces - Hallways, break rooms, and so on. It’s a great way to get a sense of how procedures translate into practice. People are often far more willing to be candid if you can approach them on this kind of level ground.

Leaving prompts in these informal spaces is a good way to keep people’s gears turning, and to promote the kind of lateral thing that helps staff better think through organizational issues. Putting it on paper (or whiteboard, or post-it note) can lead to interactions between staff who don’t normally see one another due to opposite shifts. Furthermore, setting up low-impact, low responsibility spaces like this can help you introduce larger tasks down the road.

Fundamentally, this is all about power. In order to create this kind of flat, interdependent organization, staff have to feel comfortable enough in their own role and their own ability to make themselves heard. This is a small step, but it’s certainly not the only one.
This can be a delicate process. A lot of staff aren’t going to be as inclined to share - even in a somewhat anonymous “safe space.” This method is also leaving a lot up to chance. If a certain staff member doesn’t use the break room, you risk losing their insight. A whiteboard or a piece of paper can help kickstart these conversations, but by design they’re very temporary. Inspiration is one thing, but folks need to tap into some kind of collective brain in order to move from “oh, that’s interesting” to “hey, let’s do this.”

I ended up looking at a number of tools to serve as an online back-channel for these kinds of conversations. And Slack ended up being the one I finally implemented.
Slack is a fairly new tool for online collaboration that launched a little over a year ago. At its base level, it looks similar to a chat room. You can set up individual channels for specific topics, and even set up private back channels and direct one-on-one conversations. But it also integrates external services like Dropbox, Google Docs, and more.

They just released a nonprofit program, meaning organizations with less than 100 active users can get a standard plan for free. You can check this out at slack.com.

This is really refreshing on both sides of the managerial coin. If you’re a front-line staffer, this gives you an outlet to contribute to conversations that might otherwise be locked behind a meeting room or an email.

For managers, this is an opportunity to tap into hidden talents buried within the organization. Who’s participating heavily in the conversation? Who’s hanging back? Taking the birds-eye view can go a long way.

Issues:
- lack of structure
- curation - channel explosion (you can follow or unfollow as many channels as you like)
- moving things to the next stage (building in mechanisms like Trello, or directly intervening in the conversation)
If you prefer a more structured discussion, tools like Ideaseale or Idea Informer allow users to post individual topics as a magnet for larger conversations. People can vote them up or down, and folks can post comments to contribute to the overall discussion.

This encourages more structured thinking about the big issues and prompts in your organization. It's certainly a bit more rigid than Slack. This may also be useful as a tool for soliciting feedback from members of the community.

In either case this is another case where curation is key - if you just let a tool like this hang out there, you’re quickly going to have a lot of posted ideas that live past their sell-by date.

The key point to this is that it’s all self-moderated. By creating a space for these kinds of ideas to take shape, you can help encourage staff to think about how all their individual pieces better fit together.
Let's move into the transaction phase, in which we ask the question “what do we do with all this stuff?”

It’s easy to talk about library issues all day long - after all, I’m standing right here. But how do you turn it into action?
managing tasks: Roadmunk and Trello

trello/roadmunk

tools for making the process more transparent
This act of making people feel like they have a voice can also go a long way toward overcoming resistance from staff.

Q: What causes this kind of friction in your organization?

Much of this stuff is rooted in fear - either of the unknown, or in a lack of skill. No one wants to admit that they don’t know what they’re talking about. This is a perfectly natural tendency. But we’re a learning organization. We should be able to identify these opportunities within our staff just as well as we do with our patrons. Furthermore, it’s not necessarily about teaching a specific skill - though that certainly comes into play. It’s more about creating a comfort level - specifically comfort with not knowing all the answers.
One way to help address this issue is to take advantage of your coworker’s hidden talents. Let’s do a little activity here. This is inspired by a business networking activity called The Reciprocity Ring.

So let’s do an activity. Grab a post-it, and write down something you think your organization does really well.

Now we’ll reverse it: What do you wish your organization had a better handle on?

As you can see, even among the people in this room, we’ve got some unlikely connections, and some great opportunities for finding our shared strengths. You can leverage this kind of matchmaking to create a “buddy system,” giving those that don’t know more of a safety net, and those that do stuff a greater platform for being heard. And depending on the talent at hand, the roles can just as easily be reversed by the time the next project rolls along. What’s nice about his activity is how simple it is. You can adapt it for staff, you can use it to match up patrons with staff, and you can use it in all-public activities - things like writers’ groups, or meetings of small businessfolk in the library.
As you identify skills and areas of need, you can create the mechanisms to overcome these fears and anxieties about change in the organization.

Sometimes that’s as simple as providing people with hands-on exposure to the tools of the trade.
You can also provide projects that can help put skills in context. Staff with identified skills can serve as peer mentors.

Video Shootout

This act of pairing people who may not be at equal levels in the organization really helps to build trust and understanding.
Moving this into the reflection phase - as you build a team that can work more flexibly and openly across preexisting boundaries, it's an opportunity to reexamine those boundaries themselves.

Our organizations have been around for an incredibly long time. If you don’t call out the legacy rules every once in a while, you can end up with arbitrary policies, or behaviors that serve no purpose other than “we thought this was a good idea at the time, and we’ll keep filing reports on it even if they don’t go anywhere.”

Stats as an example - what else do you see?
Case Study:
Patron Experience Focus Areas

PEFAs: Information, Readers Services, Policy/Practice, Programming and Outreach, Collections, and Technology
Case Study:
Policy Review Team

Example: how we took our food and drink policy from a 4-page document to a 1-pager
We’ve now walked through this process with regard to our internal staff.

We can see how to use tools to spark conversations and inspire folks at all levels.
We can use additional tools and prompts to get staff interacting with one another.
We can build transactions and services to facilitate ongoing learning for skills development.
And finally, we can reflect on the entire process to reexamine our past blind spots. This is a snowball effect.

Thinking long-term. How can we use this model to give our staff greater skills even further down the road?

Management/mentorship
Creating a deeper bench
Giving staff who leave greater individual skills - and making sure others can effectively take their place.
The other part of this is the uncomfortable question of when it’s time for staff who’ve been around for a long time to understand when it’s finally time to let go.
Entrenchment - “30 years of 1 year’s experience” - that doesn’t fly in an organization that’s supposed to be a model for lifelong learning.
Questions?
You deserve a break

Let’s take a quick break. Get some air, stretch your legs, talk to your neighbors. When we get back, we’ll take a look at how we can expand this model to examine our own services, and then to better connect with our community.
Welcome back. Now that we’ve talked a bit about how to get our staff working out of their boxes, it’s time to discuss how to make our services more responsive to patron needs.

I’d like to start by asking you to define some aspirations for this segment: what makes for a good library service?

What gets in the way of this?

We’re going to talk a bit about how we can apply design principles to evaluating our current and potentially new services. This is a really hot topic right now in library land - ALA has been spending a lot of resources creating tools and materials available on ways to think holistically about your own products.
I start my spiel by discussing staff because folks at the front lines are often in the best position to see how certain rules or procedural changes trickle down and affect the overall patron experience.

I saw this first hand when we first launched self-check at Skokie.

Self-check story - people would wait in line just to talk to people.
This was the other side, which had only self-checks.
By putting someone out on the floor to guide them through the self-check process, we helped to demystify the device. It helped speed things up while using fewer total staff.

Reducing staff, allowing them to focus on other aspects of customer service
Playing to needs - children's area - parents with kids who didn’t often have time to wait in a line to meet with a person.

If your staff don’t feel like they have a voice in this situation, they may end up simply gritting their teeth and bearing with the change. This is why you need to make sure everyone has a voice. It’s this perspective that can be key to working through all the smaller details.
I’d like to walk you through the process I’ve used to help design new services and programs at my various libraries. I’d like to use the book-a-librarian program we implemented at Skokie to help illustrate the case. (This photo comes from CLP, but it reflects the similar practice of individualized instruction offered on a by-appointment basis.)

Now, who offers book-a-librarian, or a similar type of service? What works or doesn’t work?

Looking at this as a case study - along with a few supplementary examples - can hopefully illustrate why it’s important to build the capacity for iterative design into our work. Doing so will enable us to answer some of the other big questions like:

How do you design new services and programs from scratch?
Where do you get the capacity to create new ways to provide library service?
How do you know something is working out?
So how do we get inspiration for designing services? How do we develop an understanding of our blind spots?

What do you do?

No matter what technique you employ, there's a scary part: you've got to talk to people. When I moved to Pittsburgh, I made a point to talk to as many people as I could - go grab coffee and or beer with local patrons, artists, businesspeople, and folks from the local universities. I'd ask each person to recommend someone else to talk to, and build my network that way.

As something of an introvert, this was a bit out of my comfort zone. But it really helped me get a working sense of what people valued - both with and without the library's influence.
If you want to pursue this in a formal manner, there are a number of great books that can help get you started.

goal of building empathy - coming around to the user’s point of view.
It’s key to provide the right amount of data to offer context. But you can’t simply use it as a justification for a service you really want to add - it has to be based in patron need.
There are a number of ways to engineer this within your own organization.
Many of the same prompts you can use to engage staff in casual spaces can also apply to public spaces.

Extending prompts to people who use your building
Mixing more serious questions in with the icebreakers can help
You can also perform what’s essentially ethnographic research within your building.

Work like a Patron Day
Service Journey
Photo Stories - University of Rochester - “where is your favorite place in the library?” “where do you get confused?” “Where do you need the most help?”
Online activity - how do you use your social media channels to listen to your patrons, and not just broadcast information? It’s really easy to push promotional information out there via Twitter or Facebook. But these are also really vital listening tools, and a great, low-impact way to absorb the general sentiment about key issues in your community.

RSS feeds and trigger words for local towns, schools, and institutions.

Other local venues - Reddit, Nextdoor, etc.

Ideascale

The important thing here is to keep listening. All of this ties into a concept known as ambient awareness, where all of these bits and pieces we leave of ourselves online contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the people in our network. Even if we’re not engaging with these people directly, we can get to know them by absorbing all the online chatter.

We can then turn our services outward in such a way so that our successes are visible through these online networks. I like to call it “being excellent in public.”
The more you do this, patterns will start to emerge. Between tall the data we saw on the exploding startup scene, and the growth in people using library space to develop their own personal projects, there was this undercurrent of interest from what we called “embryonic entrepreneurs” -

If you’re not listening to the public, you miss out on these opportunities.
But let's get back to the Book-A-Librarian service. We launched Book-a-Librarian service after noticing that while our foot traffic was as high as ever, and our wifi use was climbing steadily each month, the number of people approaching the desk continued to drop. We had tried several techniques to address this.

Directly engaging people when they came upstairs to the reference area. This resulted in more cursory “hi”s, but the net result was the same - people hurrying to claim their favorite workspace before someone else did. We also tied roving - but this created a tension in staff - some were uncomfortable walking the floor with iPads, others were frustrated that they couldn’t use the ILS, and everyone felt the anxiety that came with being pulled away from the desk for too long.

In doing all this, we learned quite a bit about engaging our users on their “turf.”

Making regular rounds
Posture, Body Language, and Eye Contact
Prompts
Engaging the Campers

But we got some really useful information. Patrons were working on really interesting projects. (example)

Some of these folks did want help from library staff, but it often required a pretty detailed reference interview, and we couldn’t cope with the anxiety of being off the desk.

There’s an undercurrent of personalization here - people want to have experiences that are tailored to their needs. How do balance this with our own priorities, and
Armed with this information, we quickly set out to create a method where staff could better carve out space for themselves to deal with these high-touch questions. Our goal was to launch quickly, and provide a space where we could help people out.

It all started with a skills audit. Using a technique similar to what we used earlier in the day, we put together a document listing who was participating in Book-a-Librarian, and the topics which they felt most comfortable offering assistance.
We then rolled out an online form to help us schedule appointments. This represented our first foray into getting patrons on board with our Book a Librarian service. We ended up leaving a lot up to chance, which ended up coming around to bite us pretty hard.

We found out just how quickly it was to get all the planets to align. We had to match the patron with a staff member who had the right skills, who could also meet with them at the right time. By the time we had that set up, all our study rooms were booked.

However, we found out that there was a demand for this, once we made our campers aware that making 1-on-1 appointments was an option. That may not have happened had we gone with a “soft launch” or a slow rollout. We knew we were on to something - we just weren’t doing it the right way.

By launching quickly and failing fast, we saved ourselves much more time in the long run.
Because we failed fast, we quickly gave ourselves some direction on how to refine our service.

As we were working on this, we started to ask ourselves some other questions.
How do we make this more useful for the patron?
How do we reduce the amount of time we spend setting up appointments?
How do we identify that our work generated a positive outcome?

Any iterative design process is going to go through a lot of ups and downs. This is all part of working out the kinks.
Based on our first failure, we learned that the costs of setting up individual appointments outweighed the benefits. In order to streamline this process, we created a set of “office hours” for each librarian that staffed the reference desk. This meant that each staff member knew that each week, they’d have to block off one hour in order to serve potential Book-a-Librarian questions.

If no one ended up making an appointment for that time slot, the librarian could have that hour back, and we’d release the study room booking so it could be quickly snapped up by one of our campers.

We also kept the study room booked at these times, to save us from having to do this on the fly.

We also streamlined this process by designating one staff member to set up all the appointments. It ended up being far more efficient, and allowed the librarians being booked more time to actually prepare for their appointments. We used the same intake form, but we took a bit more control over the actual times. (We quickly learned that patrons were a bit more willing to be flexible over time slots - valuing the personalized service over the convenience of having their *exact* time slot.)
Here’s another example that we’ve been testing out at CLP. As I’m sure you’ve experienced, teens are a notoriously fickle group, and it’s tough to get them to participate in library activities if you don’t engage them directly. But that didn’t quite work - even if we asked them point-blank if they’d attend something, and they said yes, we’d have a tremendous number of kids flaking out.

So we started thinking about ways to add some more cachet to these commitments.
Finally, here’s where it gets fun. Getting through this entire process allows to really get creative with the ways in which we design services. How do we blur the lines between the service we provide to the individual, and owning our role in community betterment?

Handling follow-up sessions
Identifying new skills for staff to learn
Business cards
Tied into all this was the process of evaluation.
We started this process with very generic follow up questionnaires - was this useful, was the staff member friendly, etc, etc. Sure, it was great to know if people like the service. But it’s easy to get that answer out of a patron. How can we figure out if people are actually learning?

By changing the question to something more focused on an outcome, we were able to get much better information. By asking did you learn anything new during your appointment, we got a whole different set of answers.

Ways to ask questions to measure the outcome:
what did you learn?
What did you do after the BAL session?
To bring this process about full circle, you can then - with the user’s permission, of course - make the outcome visible to your wider audience. This is where reflection becomes inspiration to the next person.

Certificates for basic internet skills classes

Doing this enables you to turn the act of performing the service a way of showing its value to the world. Instead of saying “hey guys, we have book-a-librarian service,” we can say “look at what this guy did - and he did it through the library.”

Once you start couching your services from this perspective, the sky's the limit.
You can take the inverse tack, and make the staff member’s role more visible.

Reader’s Advisory is such a personal thing. I love what they’ve done here in Multnomah County - highlighting the people behind their RA service. By illustrating the librarian’s passions, it makes the connection to the potential customer that much closer.
librarying outside the library

You can take the skills outside the library, and embed library services in the places people actually live.

This is from the Texas A&M library, offering guidance to students during orientation. But the principle is the same - we’re finding out logical places library service might be useful, and we’re going there.

Office park - book club
All of this serves to create connections between our services and the larger population. But how do we go even bigger with this?

It’s easy to steer someone to a collection or a program once we get them talking, but is it possible to set things up in one space that don’t pay off till years down the road?

We started The Labs as a way of providing teens concrete technology and digital media creation skills. Pairing students with creative mentors allows us to provide a welcoming environment for students to socialize, dabble in new tools, and use advanced equipment they may not have access to.

We’ve put a lot of time and effort into building up the Labs as an enterprise. But we’re reaching the point where some of those kids are graduating from high school, and moving on to college, the job market, and their own creative endeavors.

How do we make sure what we offer through The Labs continues to have an effect on these kids?

How do we design models that highlight the library’s role as a facilitator of lifelong learning?

How do we leverage library assets so that we have the right “hooks” to invite participation from outside learning organizations?

To achieve this, we’re looking backward along with looking forward. Because technology requires a perpetual learning curve, we’ve been looking at our children’s services to identify how we can best tee up tech fluencies that we can run with once they get old enough to participate in The Labs.
All of this contributes to an overall information - and innovation - ecosystem, where the library serves as a flywheel pushing things along.

If you’re seeing people creating unique things in your space, you can leverage their expertise to offer programming that works “through” them.

Lily Born
Allison and Ethan Plummer - Sentinel Box
Connecting patrons to patrons

Developing spaces

Specifically focused on intergenerational activities
Another trick is to see what happens when you take staff out of the equation, and use passive spaces or displays to encourage patrons to engage with one another. How many of our services need to be truly mediated by staff? As a community space, our users have just as much to contribute to the culture of innovation as we do.

We talked about prompts a bit, but you can also leverage your core resources to create new feedback loops.

Awesomebox - Harvard (How it works via RFID scan)
Take a rec, leave a rec
Links to online review/discussion spaces inside the endpages of books - stickers
The more you think about these kind of feedback loops, the more creative you can get with them, and use them to make the information ecosystem - and everyone’s role in it - visible.

Here’s another example from the Westerville Public Library. Someone rigged up a receipt printer to generate book recommendations whenever someone pushes the button.
Other ideas. Who has heard of the Idea Box? My colleagues at the Oak Park Public Library have developed this empty room in their main lobby, which became vacant after their coffee shop vendor pulled out.

Taking inspiration from interactive museum displays, most notably Nina Simon’s work at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, librarian Monica Harris turned the space into The Idea Box, an open-ended area designed to a ever-changing series of participatory exhibits.

One month might have people posing for mug shots with banned books. Another might have them putting pins into a map of where they’ve been. Another might have patrons stepping in for a quick 5-minute dance party. The ultimate goal, in Harris’ words, is to create “surprise and delight.” Once again, it’s the act of participation that makes the space valuable.

You can see this same principle at work. Set up the space, spark interaction, and get out of the way.
audience, teach thyself

As you build these structures, you may find it less necessary for staff to intervene in the more traditional spaces.

I think of my history teaching iPad classes

The Arlington Heights library went even further by holding the class right out on the public floor. Increased the visibility factor - "being excellent in public" and encouraged more people to contribute to the conversation. It reinforces the fact that this is something we’re all learning together.
We can use this opening of ideas to make smaller, ongoing improvements to everything we offer.

And that brings things back to the final piece of the book a librarian puzzle. We were able to tie this back to the person standing in front of the checkout desk. By having someone who could directly engage with patrons as they entered and exited the building, we created a direct line to reference triage, helping to further promote the service to our patrons.

Any questions about how we can better design services?
Think, Pair, Share

1. Think of one of your favorite patrons.
2. What is their typical request? Translate this from a transaction to an outcome.
3. How would you make the library’s role in achieving this outcome visible?
Building community

Hopefully this gives you some idea as to how you can better integrate your services into your patron’s lives. A lot of what I’ve presented so far deals with making our internal library environment a more dynamic, more flexible, more participatory space.

But how do we turn this concept outward? We can show our role in making individual’s lives better, and provide context for our individual services. How do we align this work with strategic initiatives throughout our communities? How do we generate outcomes that embeds the library within community development, and how do we show our impact to our stakeholders?

Let’s start with some aspirations: How do you hope to connect to community life?
Buffing out the seams between library services and community development requires thinking somewhat differently about how we use what's in our toolbox in order to create positive outcomes.

Remember that Reddit conversation? Based on those conversations, and the data we were able to assemble regarding startups and young professionals in the city, we launched Work Nights. Once a month, we keep the library open till midnight, creating opportunities for people to network and collaborate. In this case, we’re offering our core assets - space, expertise, connection - in a way that speaks directly to the user’s need.

And we’re starting to build a community around it. Because coffee is one of the other primary assets we can provide, we’ve been reaching out to local businesses at each branch. In addition to getting additional exposure for themselves, we’ve hosted Q&A’s with them, so attendees can get some insight into the inner workings of small businesses.
With that in mind, let’s think about how we can build more meaningful connections with outside groups in our communities.

Reaching this point requires to think more about creating permeable membranes between library services and outside groups. And that means thinking deliberately about what our users need outside the building, and how to place library services in context.

T Station: Does this work? Is it worth it to dispatch staff - a particularly “expensive” resource to a space where we basically have 5-minutes to connect with our users. Particularly when they’re not in a state to be receptive to what we’re offering.
One step we’ve taken is to start thinking more comprehensively about our data. We’ve been using a tool called PolicyMap to plot out our early literacy outreach efforts in comparison to local day-care centers. This has enabled us to see where we’re doing a good job, and what areas we’re not hitting.

In our efforts to incorporate more data-driven decision making into our work, it quickly occurred to us: we don’t know a thing about data-driven decision making.
It was around this time that my coffee and beer conversations took me to the door of Bob Gradeck, a civic data researcher at the University of Pittsburgh, and the de facto head of the local Code for America brigade. This group of hobbyists, civic officials, professionals, and academics first came together in December 2013 to push for better transparency in government. By making data more open and easier to use, Code for America hopes to demystify “big data,” and use it as a tool for wider public participation.

Peduto administration

This is like librarian catnip, at least for this librarian. Several of us on staff sensed an opportunity here. How could the library leverage its assets in order to create a mutually beneficial relationship with OpenPGH?
Once we identified a potential partner, it’s time to start thinking comprehensively about how to turn this into a working partnership. It’s one thing to simply attend meetings, but to move toward a concrete outcome takes some deliberate thinking.
In the case of our early work with OpenPGH, this took the form of providing space. We ended up hosting the National Day of Civic Hacking at our Homewood branch.
One of the things we did during this day was to start filling out the US City Open Data Census. This was a tool designed to index the available open data resources tied to specific city departments. (I should point out that Asheville is particularly well represented here.)

This was a case where our librarian skills suited us particularly well - sorting through the complex government website to parse useful information? We had that on lock.
If you can keep your roles clear, you’ll quickly gain a much bigger level of trust. This will make it easier for one another to call out the support that the other group provides.

The goal here is to reach a symbiotic state, where you can back one another up, and talk up one another’s goals in a
This is one of our current projects - a question/answer forum modeled after Stack Exchange. People can post questions, folks can earn karma points for answering right questions.

Library staff as moderators and people seeding with content.

Web developer at the library - now becoming a pet project. The parts come together in a way that really ends up being a win-win for both sides.
showing off our partnership visibly.

open data portal new opportunities for us to learn, curate, and contribute data to civic data sets.
A strong set of partnerships should be able to carry one set of activities over to the next one.

In all of this, this enables us to
The Maker's Place - local after school program encouraging STEAM skills and entrepreneurship. Met with Code for America Fellows, witnessed pitches, and asked questions of participants.

Codefest Sunday:
By bringing all these resources together, we can help provide real-world context for both in-school and out-of-school learning - and demonstrate to the community its overall value.
Attracted the attention of other groups.

Code & Supply participating in Work Nights

Again, this was another case where assets we were already providing allowed us to have a clear complement to
What’s next - checking out air quality monitors in partnership with the folks from the Carnegie Mellon CREATE lab.

Starting conversations about environmental health.
We’ll also be building a data component with - you guessed it! - Open PGH.
The final part of this is understanding when to let go of the reins on the partnership. All relationships have a life span,

Sometimes, they can take on a life of their own.
Let’s Speak English is now largely a self-managing group, using library staff to simply handle the room reservations. (OK, staff still participate, but that’s mainly because they’re having so much fun.

The group attendees set their own agenda, create their own activities, and form active relationships outside the meetings.
Group sessions meeting outside the library.

We’ve even had one couple get engaged who originally met at a language discussion group.
Coming around full circle - Let’s Speak English group members - and their families - leading multilingual story times.
Whew. That’s a lot to go through in one morning. In our attempts to reimagine our services,
confidence, not competence

building flexibility in staff
In doing this we can find new ways to blend our legacy skills with born-digital tools.

SYW - 2 separate archive proposals
It’s this mix of traditional and forward-thinking that’s going to help us cement our impact on the overall community. One of those traditional elements - nostalgia can be one of our most useful assets.

In his newest book, Digital Public Library of America founder John Palfrey talks about how libraries are creating nostalgia for the future. Every service we create is a time capsule that patrons today will look back upon years down the line. What memories are we creating, and what things will our future advocates recall fondly?
To reach this point, libraries have to play the long game. Libraries deal in lifelong learning. But many of its existing structures and departments compartmentalize the learning process. We lose a lot by keeping these pieces separate, and it has a dramatic effect on our patrons. Why do our users slip away in the transition from childhood to adolescence, and on to adulthood? Why don’t we have the institutional capacity to grow with our users as they grow, develop, and move from one interest to another?

Bridging these gaps is one of the greatest opportunities libraries currently have.
In sum, I want to remind everyone of Raganathan’s 5th law: the library is a growing organism. Let’s keep growing.
Thank you
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Let's get lunch

OK, who's hungry?
Walking the Talk: Creating an embedded library service action plan
Rules of an unconference:

• This is a safe space.
• Follow the law of two feet.
• Everyone has a voice.
• Keep it pragmatic.
What do you hope to **solve** for your library?

What about holistic librarianship can you apply to your library?

What issues do you hope to tackle?
Framing the topic

- How will you reimagine staff?
- How can you revise legacy services?
- How will you design new services?
- How will you build new relationships?
What did you learn from this exercise?

OK, who's hungry?
How will you put this into action?

OK, who's hungry?
How do you build on what works?

OK, who's hungry?
What will you do tomorrow?

OK, who's hungry?