Communicating Library Value in a Digital Era

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What We'll Cover

- Why do we adopt emerging technologies at the library?
- What are the elements of a memorable tech experience?
- How can we manage our costs?
- How can we effectively communicate the value of the library?
- Your questions!

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Technology Has Long Been Part of the Library Experience

- Desktop. 1980s
- Internet. 1990s
- Mobile. 2000s
- Cloud 2000s
- Screenless. 2010s
- AI-powered. 2020s

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1985

Library Patrons Trying Out Computers

IF you have never used one, a computer can seem intimidating. All the buttons, the related equipment and the unfamiliar language are enough to frighten away the uninitiated. If you don't have access to one, however, you're increasingly locked out of a world that depends more and more on computers.

But Long Island residents only have to go to a public library to gain access to a computer and begin to learn to use it, a total of 197 computers are available for public use in about 40 libraries in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Computers were first made available for public use in 1982 in the Mastic-Moriches-Shirley Community Library. The purpose of the computers was twofold, officials said. They were primarily intended as an educational aid for youngsters. Students from elementary-school to college age flocked to the computers to play educational games and develop their own programs. The second function of the computers was to provide exposure to nonusers, especially adults who were wary of them.

"There is a reluctance, especially on the part of adults, to use computers," said the library's director, Robert Verbesey. "Since we had plans to automate the card catalogue and other aspects of the library, we

The New York Times / Tony Jerome

Kathleen Deerr, an employee at the Mastic-Moriches-Shirley Library, explaining computer

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Current Emerging Technologies

- Virtual Reality
- Augmented Reality
- 3D Printing
- Internet of Things/smart devices.
- Artificial intelligence

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What do we like about money?

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Money is Awesome!

- More possible entry points.
- More room for error.
- Less need for cost offsets.

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What do we like about technology?

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Technology Word Association

- Convenience.
- Speed/productivity.
- Novelty.

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What Role Do Libraries Play in Emerging Technologies?

- We are the great equalizers!
- Mission alignment.
- We help our communities navigate disruption.

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Working under financial constraints.

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Cost Concerns

- New tech can be expensive.
- New tech is often unproven.
- Emerging technologies can be quickly outmoded!

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When Do We Invest in a Technology?

- Prohibitively expensive for individual, but organizationally affordable!
- Expensive is a relative term!
- Shelf-life factors into determining expense!

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Working with a Limited Budget

- Eliminate options that are "too expensive" from plans.
- Determine if cost offsets are necessary.
- Identify low-cost and free alternatives
  - Open source.
  - Options for non-profits.
  - Repurposed equipment.

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Leverage Non-Profit Status

- 501c3 can be helpful—talk to your Friends!
- TechSoup: technology product philanthropy.
- Many software companies often discounted or free software to schools, libraries.
- Money saved in library operations can translate to patron-facing services.

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Think Mobile!

- iOS (2017), Android (2018) are augmented reality platforms.
- Great for spatial data.
- Easy to repurpose or multipurpose.
- 85% smartphone ownership = BYOD potential.
- Generative AI + VR is imminent!

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Mobile, App-Based 3D Scanning

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Inexpensive Augmented Reality Options

Merge Headset

Merge Cube

CospacesEDU

Books & Coloring Pages

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AR-Powered Search Results

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Thinking creatively.

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## When You're Broke, You Need to Be Imaginative!

- Identify inexpensive entry points for emerging technologies.
- Identify new efficiencies for existing services.
- How can reimagining/redesigning a program save money?

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Ex: Reimagining 3D Printing

- 3D printing is costly!
  - Printer.
  - Filament.
  - Maintenance kits.

- 3D design can be quite inexpensive!
  - Free software.
  - Existing IT infrastructure.
  - Same proof of concept.
  - Option to print…in 2D!
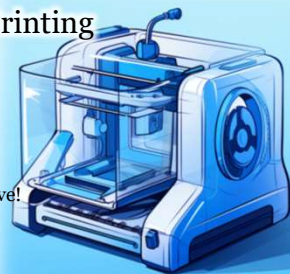
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2D Printing To Manage Costs!

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Create convenience where you can.

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Virtualization as a Convenient Option

• Notary services.
• Digital library cards.
• Text/chat/email.
• Programs—where it makes sense!
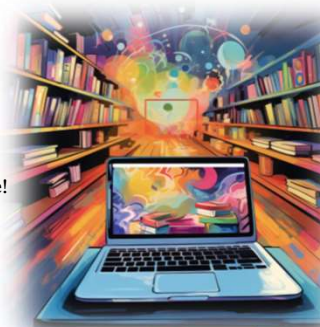
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Improving Your IT Infrastructure

- Expanded Wi-Fi.
- Charging stations.
- Zoom-friendly spaces.
- Telehealth options.

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Differentiating ourselves from big tech.

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The Power of the 1 on 1 Tech Appointment

- Why not the genius bar?
- Service personalization.
- We're not selling anything.
- Community trust.
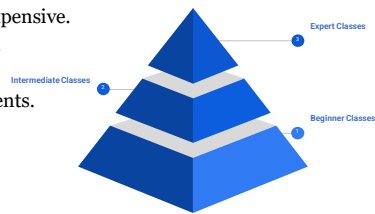- We respect user privacy!

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Communicating value.

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Incrementalism

- Less ambitious = less expensive.
- Manage costs over time.
- Make better bets.
- Let users drive investments.

Expert Classes

Intermediate Classes

Beginner Classes

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Limited Shelf-Life: High Return on Investment!

- Batch photo scanners.
- VHS, Betamax conversion.
- CDs, Vinyl.
- Organizationally inexpensive.

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If You're Charging, You Need to Deliver Savings

- Fine free, fee free?
- Compare to consumer alternatives.
- Old school: fax, copy, print.
- New school: 3d printing.
- Easier to decrease offsets than increase them!

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The Library of the Digital Era is a Small Business Engine!

- We are a worksite.
  - Wi-Fi.
  - Interview spaces.
  - Training location.
- The new computer literacy.
  - Collaborative work environments.
  - Social media marketing.

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There's value, and there's values!

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We Value Our Staff!

"If we don't see work, we start to doubt the necessity of that work and the people who perform it."
-Rachel Ivy Clark, "Work Made Visible".

- We're a service industry that undercounts services!
- Syracuse University's TrueValue Calculator.
- Communicating the availability & true cost of digital collections.

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Gen Z and Millennials: How They Use Public Libraries and Identify Through Media Use

- Love browsing physical shelves at library—but attention is focused on social media environments. Digital collection opportunity!
- Searching for community.
- May have outdated or inaccurate view of library.
- Values-driven decisions.
  - Social good, environmentalism, privacy.

Kathi Inman Berens, Ph.D. and Rachel Noorda, Ph.D.
Portland State University

Gen Z and Millennials
How They Use Public Libraries
and Identify Through Media Use
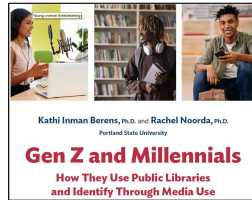
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Sustainability and Technology

- Repair cafes.
- E-waste events.
  - The new shredding day!
- Library of Things.
  - Thermal imaging.
  - Air quality detectors.
  - Blood pressure monitors.

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What is our most popular technology class? What can we learn from this?

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Cutting the Cord!

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AI Has All the Necessary Components for a Memorable Tech Experience

- Disruptive tech that we can help navigate.
- Novelty factor.
- Lots of inexpensive entry points.
- Potential for efficiencies.
- Library can differentiate itself from big tech.

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Demystifying AI for Our Communities

- Introducing them to popular tools.
- Teaching ethical concerns.
- Privacy implications.
- Safe experimentation.
- Critical access as "free" options recede.

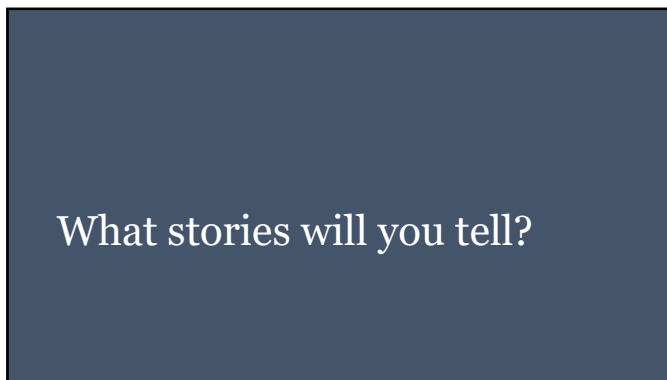40

Talking to stakeholders.

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Data vs Stories

- Data can help drive organizational decision-making.
  - "We completed twenty-five 3D prints last month."
- Stories can help drive support.
  - The case of the custom pasta shaper.

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What stories will you tell?

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