

WPLC User / Non-User Research Program Proposal
Monona Public Library, Monona, WI
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Project Overview: Purpose and Need

The Monona Public Library is in the early stages of organizing a strategic plan. Technology services that the library provides will be a significant focus of the plan. One element that we feel requires some attention in particular is the suggested establishment of a media production lab / “makerspace” of some kind. As things currently stand, however, we do not have a clear picture of the interest level and / or need for such a service from Monona Public Library patrons. While offering digital media production tools is desirable in theory, we are unaware as to what specific capabilities patrons would be interested in having or what capabilities we could safely choose not to include. It is possible that the range of digital media production services offered at the Madison Public Library’s Central Branch a few miles away is sufficient for what our patrons need.

Before proceeding with the establishment of a media production studio it would be useful to know if this is something that Monona patrons would be interested in and use on a regular basis - essentially, would the purchase and maintenance of equipment be a worthwhile investment? If there is significant interest, what capabilities would we be offering? What level of instruction would patrons expect?

Partnerships

We anticipate working with a number of other groups when collecting data for this project. A primary collaborator would likely be Will Nimow, the Director of Community Media for the City of Monona. Will is responsible for the operation of WVMO, Monona’s community radio station. He also handles several other technology-related tasks throughout the city. In the past we have spoken with Will about the feasibility of organizing a media production lab in the library and what role he could take in it.

We would expect to be in touch with Monona Grove High School, the Monona Senior Center, and the Monona East Side Business Alliance as a means to extend our reach and contact citizens that may normally exist outside of the library’s usual radar.

Project Timeline

We anticipate being able to complete most, if not all of the data collection and analysis within the timeframe laid out by the WPLC.

Methods

- What questions will be asked?
 - Do you produce digital media (Photos, video, music, podcasts/voice recording, animation, none / not interested) of any kind or have you in the past? (Yes, no). If yes, what kind?
 - If you do not currently produce digital media, what kind of digital media would you be interested in creating? (Photos, video, animation, music, podcasts / voice recording, none / not interested)
 - Were you aware that there are media production tools available at the Madison Public Library's Central Branch? (Yes, no) If yes, have you ever used any of these resources?
 - In which areas do you typically need technology assistance? (Digital media production and editing, General use of laptop / smartphone / tablet / mobile device, Use of social media applications (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc), Career searching / job application, Other (blank space), None)
 - If the library created a dedicated space for digital media production do you believe you would utilize this space? (Yes, no) Why or why not?
 - Additional questions as method of data gathering takes shape.

- How will you target the people who need to answer your questions?

Aside from targeting the patrons that are already frequenting the library we will attempt to encourage participation through utilization of our web presence (Library website, Facebook, Instagram) and that of the city. We will encourage participation through advertising on community radio. Direct mail is a possibility but perhaps unlikely due to the project's timeframe.

- What vehicles will you use to capture responses or data?

Methods of data capture will depend on the style of data collection we settle upon. Distribution of a survey / questionnaire via a digital platform (Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, etc.) is likely, though conducting interviews or panel discussions might be a possibility if we can gather willing participants.

- What outside data sources will you use, and how?

We would expect to refer to the latest research from the Pew Research Center regarding general attitudes towards public libraries and what services the public expects.

(<http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/09/libraries-2016/>) We would also attempt to contact other libraries throughout the state that have established media production studios (Madison, Fond du Lac, etc.) to get a sense of their respective experiences and what the response from their patrons has looked like.

Generalizability

- Will your research questions and methods be useful to other libraries in the WPLC community?

We intend to address a question that we believe is on the minds of many small- to mid-size public library administrators in the state - that question being “What kinds of media production tools and technologies do my patrons actually need and want?” We also intend to model use of data collection services that will be accessible statewide for low to no cost. We will document the process and the results, and share them to those libraries that are interested through a white paper and / or presenting at statewide conferences.

- Will your research results be useful to other libraries in the WPLC community?

We expect our results to be useful to other libraries, particularly those of comparable community size and location (suburban communities of 5 to 10 thousand located in close proximity to larger communities).

Anticipated Outcomes

This project will help determine how best the library will focus its resources and if the community has a need and / or demand for the library to provide access to equipment that allows them to create digital content. The Library looks to provide this equipment and, potentially, dedicated space for the community; however, the Library might change how and when this happens based on the data gathered from the community.

The relationship between public library patrons and technology is always changing, and so are patron expectations as to what the library should provide when it comes to technology. We think gathering data on this topic will grant insight into what our patrons do and, just as importantly, do not need.