NEW CASTLE
LIBRARY DISTRICT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Administrator's Message

by Sandra Collins

Public libraries were founded on the amazing concept of sharing. If the cost of providing library services is shared by all members of the community and access is provided to all, access is not dependent upon each individual's ability to pay at the time of service. Libraries have expanded on the concept throughout their history through such activities as: Interlibrary Loan (sharing collections with any library in the state, country, or world in some cases) and regional shared Integrated Library Systems that share information about regional collections to users in the region and permit users to request items for delivery to their home library (i.e. Federated Library Systems) or in some cases, to libraries outside the region who share the ILS (Altoona and Scranton). New Castle District has just joined with the Seneca, Oil Creek and Erie/Crawford Districts (SNOE) to open our Overdrive collections to all residents in the 4 districts. The move increases the number and variety of e-materials available to all residents of the 4 districts.

Our public libraries, in their best iterations, have always tried to make it easier for users to access our material and services. As consumers ourselves, we all recognize that in today's busy and uncertain world the more seamless we can make the customer's experience the more it reduces stress for all. No library has an unlimited budget. Sharing with each other increases the pool of resources for the people we serve. And those we serve, do not care where the material comes from, but they do appreciate quick and efficient access.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

~ Helen Keller ~

Assessing the Value of your Program: Going deeper than just the numbers

by Neva Lila

Programs are a huge part of the public library. Weekly Storytimes, Book Clubs, Summer Reading Program, and a variety of other programs, require librarians to spend countless hours planning and organizing programs. But how do we know if that program is effective? How do we value the success of our program? Do we say, "Wow, I had 50 people attend, that was a great program!" How about, "Oh no, only one family showed up, that program was not successful!" It is a quick and easy way to evaluate your program by counting the attendees. Some librarians may think they have only this one tool to assess whether the program was successful or not. After all, the numbers are what the state is asking for most often. Some libraries' funding depends heavily on attendance of programming. Yet, does this tell us the value of that program? Does this tell us how effective the program actually was? If you provide a highly enriching program to the public, and only a few families attend, yet one child walks away with a life-changing experience, is that program less worthy than a program that had a high number of participants?

Attendance

Attendance certainly is one valid tool to assess a program. However, it is just one of many tools, and for people who put a lot of time and effort into programs, it may not be the best way to determine how effective your time was spent. It will not tell you how much the attendees took away from your program. It will not tell you if your goals for the program were achieved. There are many reasons why it is important to implement different assessment tools: they can inform the design and improvement of programs and/or services, demonstrate ROI (return on investment), demonstrate impact of libraries to the community, and shape policy at the district/state level.

Other Tools of Assessment

As I learned in my one-month training with Dr. Mega Subramaniam, there are many other tools you can add to your toolbelt when developing and assessing programs. Some of these tools to analyze your program are: analyzing artifacts, interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, talkback boards, and self-assessment. When talking about these different assessment tools, an excellent place to begin is at the Connected Learning Alliance, which is a wonderful website that provides many ideas that librarians can utilize when developing and assessing programs.

Connected Learning

According to their webpage "Connected Learning combines personal interests, supportive relationships, and opportunities. It is learning in an age of abundant access to information and social connection that embraces the diverse backgrounds and interests of all young people." This process is almost magical. A student is interested in something. She discovers a relationship between the interest and a practical aspect of that interest that then becomes a potential opportunity. Key words are interest, relationships, and opportunities. When these three intersect, magic happens, and that child can find future opportunities; meaning she may find career options she never even thought of before.
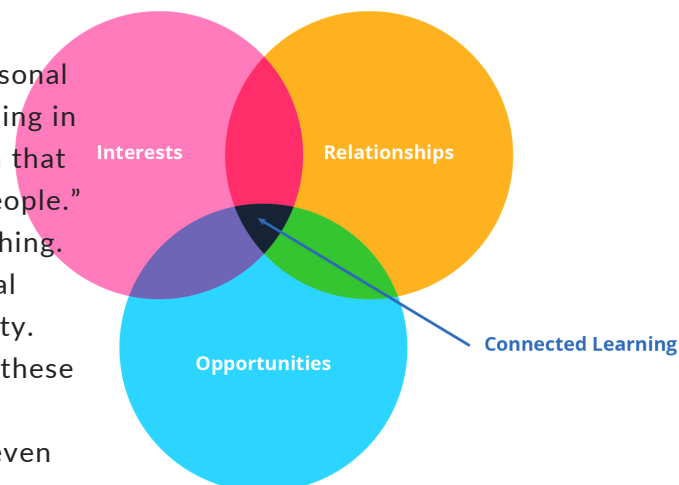
Artifact Analysis

When we librarians form programs inspired by Connected Learning, we can then develop assessment tools to assess whether the program is achieving its set goals. The first tool we can utilize is artifact analysis. This concept is simple in its execution: observing any artifacts produced by the students in a program. Were the students able to complete the task given? Did they demonstrate skills you taught during the program? Any artifacts produced during the program can be an important source of assessment.

Interviews

The second tool in our toolbox is interviews. Personally, I have found an interview to be one the best ways to get a better understanding of how a participant is feeling about the program. When thinking about including interviews as part of your assessment, you should make sure to be deliberate with the questions you formulate beforehand. What are the main objectives you want to learn from the interview? What information is the most important to learn from? An interview is very useful because it can be conducted in a variety of ways. It can be very structured and executed by a neutral person who is not part of the program. But it can also be a deep process where the person leading the program engages in a long conversation with individual participants, or it can be very informal. The best way to execute an informal interview is to evaluate what the top question is that you want to ask and what the number one thing is that you want to learn from the interaction. After you figure that out, you can then formulate a set of other questions that will help you offer an even better program. An informal interview can simply be when a person who you know has participated in a program, walks into the library, and in a limited amount of time, you ask them the number one question you want to find out about.

As mentioned earlier, interviews are the number one assessment tool I have been using recently, in particular informal interviews. I wanted to understand how our Grab 'n' Go activity bags were being used by the families who took them. I came up with a series of five questions to help me understand if the bags were helpful and engaging. So as a family was leaving with their second bag, I casually asked them about their thoughts. Even though it may have come off as casual, I had a series of five questions I wanted answers to, and if there was only time for one question, I would only ask them the first question. My top five questions were:

1. Did your child/children attempt to do any of the activities in the bag?
2. If so, what activity did they attempt first?
3. Was the activity able to be completed? If so, did it hold their attention?
4. Were the instructions easy to understand and follow?
5. Did the child find any of the other activity pages/crafts interesting?

After the conversation, I would jot down what the caregiver had said, and after looking at all the feedback, I was able to redesign the bags based on these answers. For example, some caregivers told me the coloring pages were not interesting to their youngest children, while others told me their preschoolers loved the scissor skill activities. One caregiver helped me understand which enrichment activities their children preferred.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are small group interviews that discuss and build on ideas. The group explores ways to make a program more effective. For example, think about a focus group of caregivers helping to develop a summer reading program that can reach a wider variety of students. It is a great way to develop ways to reach students within your service areas who otherwise would not participate. Building a diverse focus group could be particularly helpful when wanting to create more inclusive programming.

Surveys

The fourth tool is the survey. It can be used in multiple ways. Offering a pre-program survey will help you understand the participants' knowledge before the program. Afterward, offering a post-program survey helps determine what skills they learned, or what can be improved upon. A survey might also be given to caregivers. This is a great way to assess whether their needs are being met as well. Also, think about developing community partner surveys when running outreach programs. Surveys are a great way to get an understanding on how participants are feeling; however, the questions need to be very specific and thought out. Make sure the questions you are including in your survey get to the heart of what you want to assess by being specific in the way you ask these questions.

Observation

Observation is a wonderful tool to use in collaboration with other tools. During Storytime you can observe children follow along with the instructions. You can observe them demonstrating their knowledge of colors after reviewing them, or learning finger rhymes. In a different program, you can observe a student who was taught how to code succeed in guiding a robot to complete a simple task through the code she created.

Talkback Boards

Talkback boards are another way to elicit comments from patrons. They are a great way to get an instant glimpse at how effective a program was. By providing simple prompts on a poster or cardboard, the participant answers the question as they are leaving the program. For example, students can place a dot on the statement that represents how they feel immediately after the program, such as,
Today I...

- Learned that it is okay to fail.
- Tried something new.
- Worked with others to solve a problem.
- Didn't give up even though the problem was hard.
- Did something I would like to do again next time.
- Discovered an interest or talent I didn't know I had.
- Am more curious about something I wasn't interested in before.
- Did something I want to do for work in the future.
- Got bored with the thing I was doing so I looked for something else to do.

Self-Assessment

Another tool that many librarians may ignore or forget, yet may be the most important one, is self-assessment. It is a great tool as a self-check into how well you may be meeting your goals. It is important to reflect upon the programs you offer. When you take time immediately after a program to write down and answer questions for yourself, you will be able to be more honest with yourself, which will be a great technique to improve upon future programs. As you reflect on ways you were able to support youth, ask yourself questions such as,

- What do I wish I should have done better this week?
- What am I most proud of?
- Were there any occasions this week when someone asked me a question and I was unable to assist or connect them with the resource they were looking for? What were they asking, and what factors made it difficult to help?
- What opportunities do I wish I could provide youth, but currently can't? What are the obstacles to this? Are there any workarounds or creative solutions I haven't tried yet?
- What was I most frequently able to assist with, and what type of support did I feel most confident to provide? Why do I think this?

When thinking about all the tools shared here, it is important to keep in mind that within these tools, there are many ways you can utilize them. That is what makes these tools so wonderful! They can be adapted in ways that best serve you, your community, and your library.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, the most important thing is that we as librarians have made a long-lasting impact on children, youth, and families. If only one family comes to a program, but that child has a life-changing experience, the program is actually more successful than a program with 200 attendees that did not have an impactful experience. There are many more tools than what has been shared here; however, if you develop a program based on Connected Learning and incorporate some of these assessment tools when you are evaluating your program, you will produce a better program and will be able to understand how effective your program was. Incorporating multiple techniques will give you a well-rounded understanding of your program, how it was executed, and how to improve upon it in the future. Counting attendees is one way, but that is just scraping the surface instead of digging deeper into providing excellent, thoughtful, and intentional programming!

Helpful Resources

There are many helpful resources you can turn to.

- If you are interested in learning more about the tools described here, you may access the recording and slides from Dr. Subramaniam's presentation during the Pa Summer 2021 Session Series.
- This article by Connected Learning Alliance provides a much deeper understanding of connected learning, how to execute a program with connected learning as its foundation, and how to evaluate it.
- Here is a helpful resource related to artifact analysis, and how to build a rubric.

There are also many wonderful resources to help in developing interview questions, surveys, and talkback boards.

History Resources for Your Library and Your Patrons

by Morgan Smith

Being cooped up for the past year is definitely taking its toll on everyone right now, and even though places are slowly opening back up, some people may still not feel comfortable with going back to 'normal.' This is one of the many reasons that it is important to keep up with digitalization and virtual programming. As library staff, we need to adapt to growing trends and use them to the advantage of our patrons; not only the ones who are local, but the ones who cannot physically come to our libraries because of distance. I have recently had several inquiries from patrons who are farther away and cannot travel to the library that needed information from our materials. In these instances, I used our scanner to digitize the books and documents I found and sent the pertinent information to them through email or shared PDFs.

Digitization is a powerful and useful trend for libraries, museums, and historical societies. Power Library's PA Photos and Documents is a great resource to share with your patrons. It houses online/digital copies of photographs, books, and documents on multiple subjects that include art, history, yearbooks, genealogy, and more. It is not only a good program to promote to your patrons, but it is also a good program to consider using for your own library as well. New Castle Public Library currently has our yearbook collection and Cascade Park collection digitized and available for viewing on PA Photos and Documents. We are working on putting more of our resources online as well as I go through and inventory the History Room in search of more material to share.

Other resources that utilize digitization that are worth sharing with patrons are virtual museum tours. Library Journal published an article about some of their favorite virtual tours that range from ancient artifacts to paintings to aquariums located **here**. These are both fun and educational tools that take the patron away to a new city without leaving the comforts and safety of home. These kinds of virtual exhibits are becoming more popular these days and using them is a great way to keep spreading information to people around the world.

Please feel free to share any interesting digital resources you have found! I would love to see what else is out there (I'm sure there's too many to count). Also, if you want more information on PA Photos and Documents, please don't hesitate to contact me and I will help however I can. My email is msmith@ncdlc.org. You can also contact the PA Photos and Documents Digitization Specialist directly. Her name is Nicole Joniec and her email is njoniec@hslc.org.

IT News

by Ron Davis

Hello Everyone. I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy. It's been busy with District requests lately and getting the equipment to the Libraries. If you have not submitted your request yet please do so ASAP so that arrangements can be made to get the equipment you would like.

We have been experiencing some issues with email and some emails not being deliverable. Please take a look at the following article to help avoid having issues in the future.

Email Blacklists 101: What You Need to Know

Getting the Word Out About Tutor.com

by Apryl Gilliss

The New Castle Library District is pleased to be able to provide the new resource Tutor.com to patrons of district libraries. What do the district libraries think about Tutor.com so far?

"What we here at the Community Library of the Shenango Valley (CLSV) love most about Tutor.com is the variety of subjects that they are able to provide help with for all ages, including people with job hunting and resume help," Charissa Sentney, adult services librarian, said.

Versatility is what New Castle Public Library's Youth Services Manager Neva Lilla likes most about Tutor.com. "I tell parents of younger children they can turn to Tutor.com to help with any kind of homework questions," she said. "I've mentioned it to teens needing help with papers and SAT prep, and I have even recommended it to adults looking for jobs or who need help with a cover letter or resume. This is a resource that anyone can take advantage of and it's really easy to maneuver through the website."

Director Leslie Pallotta at Cranberry Public Library said she is happy that we offer Tutor.com now. "We've been asked multiple times in the past if we offer a live tutoring service and the answer has always been 'unfortunately, no,'" she said. "Now we can say 'YES!' The added bonus is that there are resources for adults, including job search and resume assistance."

Kathy Kline, director of North Trails Public Library, said "I really like the one-on-one attention that is given to each person who uses it no matter the reason."

Mars Area Public Library Director Caitlyn Boland said that "Mars has an active community in terms of parents who are on top of making sure their kids are getting all the help they need academically and otherwise in order to succeed in life." She said, "It's great to see so many tutors meeting at our library on a regular basis (outside of COVID). Knowing that tutoring is such a high priority for our community, it's great to be able to offer an additional resource that not only can be helpful for those who are already actively involved in tutoring services but also can be helpful to those who haven't yet made the connection. I love that Tutor.com helps bridge the gap between families who can afford to pay for private tutoring and those that can't."

While library directors and staff members are happy to have this resource, there's still work to be done in getting the word out.

New Castle Library District Consultant Amy Geisinger checked the statistics in early April and found that only 26 sessions of Tutor.com have been held so far in the entire district. I asked district directors what they were doing for publicity so all can share their ideas for promoting Tutor.com.

At North Trails, Kline has added the link to the library's website and Facebook page, as well as word-of-mouth marketing. "The biggest way right now I'm promoting Tutor.com is directly working with the school district," Kline said. She had a virtual meeting with the superintendent and principals in her local school district to explain the service. The school district handed out library card applications, and she has added more than 200 new cards to their database as a result. "The school is now in the process of sharing Tutor.com YouTube videos explaining usage," she said. "I've already had high school students ask and use the college prep test section. All are thrilled."

Lilla is also using word of mouth to promote Tutor.com at New Castle. "I have had conversations with just about everyone who comes into the Youth Services department about Tutor.com," she said. "After handing out the information sheet and verbally highlighting the features of Tutor.com to TSS (Therapeutic Support Staff) aides, parents, and other patrons, they express to me that they will turn to the resource when looking for help." She also emailed all the schools, homeschool parents, and the college in New Castle's service area. The responses from the schools have been varied, but one school was very interested and she set up a Zoom meeting to go over the resource's features.

At CLSV, Sentney said staff has been promoting Tutor.com through their website, fliers, in person, and by providing information when new patrons sign up for library cards. "We also partnered with Helping Hands Ministries to spread the word on how great Tutor.com is," she said.

At Greenville Area Public Library, Hazel Parker Librarian and Director Jeanne E. Ball, said they highlighted Tutor.com in their e-newsletter and will be doing a targeted mailing with it and some of their other "school" resources. "The few people I've spoken to about it thought it was a cool resource and liked the idea that they could get help for a particular homework problem, like getting stuck on a math problem," Ball said.

At Cranberry, Pallotta said they have done a press release, email blasts, social media posts, an article in their bi-monthly newsletter, and posters in the lobby of their building. It's also on their website with a special "announcement" about it on the homepage.

Boland says that Mars is currently promoting Tutor.com on social media and have also shared it with their local school district. "The district's promotion of the resource has been so important in terms of helping to spread the word," Boland said.

Client Resource Center
Resources and ideas to build awareness of your Tutor.com program

tutor.com™
A Service of The Princeton Review

https://www.tutor.com/clientcarelib

Are You Ready to Spring into Some Color?

by Sharon Savage

Fall and Winter seemed filled-to-the-brim with dreary days. ENOUGH of the days dreary! I believe that many of us are ready to spark some joy with color-filled projects.Whether outdoors or inside, splashing some color and perhaps a pinch or two of glitter just makes one feel instantly more ALIVE!

It doesn't have to be April to celebrate the rich language and rhythmic rhyme of Poetry. Our libraries can set up spaces to allow patrons to let their creativity flow with a couple of different poetry stations. Teens may let their "Words Take Flight" or participate in a "Poetry Creation Station". All that is needed for these two projects are blank pieces of cardstock (to cut out the bird shapes and/or glue the poems on). Old magazines or newspapers to cut up, origami paper (blank on one side) for poetry wings. Glue sticks, scissors, colored pencils.

> "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."
>
> ~ *Maya Angelou* ~

New Castle Public Library Poetry Station

New Castle Public Library Poetry Station

My daughter, Naomi, cuts colorful cardstock into shapes and writes inspirational quotes on them. She makes bracelets, mostly with loom bands, and attaches the quotes. Teens are "feeling their feelings" this year and perhaps need an outlet to express them. A quiet space and materials may be set aside for creative journaling. This past year or so has certainly inspired many to journal their thoughts and feelings. A journal can help one to "Shine a Little Light" as the Black Keys so richly illustrate through this lyric:

...And show me things I cannot see
Shine a little light on my soul
Go to places that you used to go
But they don't feel the same
See the faces that you used to know
But they forget your name
No one really knows
Where it goes from here
But we all decompose
And slowly disappear...
Songwriters: Daniel Auerbach / Patrick Carney

I purchased some 5x7 inch prepared canvas boards and three bottles of alcohol inks to attempt some "Quoteable Art". I planned on sharing some examples in the article (such as the previous lyric), but inspiration didn't strike (art-wise); it more or less fizzled… *pfft* Hopefully, I will have images to share next time. ☺

Thinking of Summer Reading Club prizes? I truly loved **13 Fun Lego Sets for Readers**. I want the LEGO Creator Expert Bookshop set so badly!

An interesting article from the Richmond Register about "**The Affects of TikTok on Teen Reading**".

> "…While older generations have gotten ideas for books to read from magazine reviews or perusing the library, teenagers have been utilizing social media. TikTok book recommendations or Booktok are a growing trend and could influence teens to get back into reading during their free time rather than endlessly binge-watching shows."

As Summer 2021 so quickly approaches, I joyfully look forward to the day when we can gather in person. It is great to have the opportunity to share virtually and hear all the wonderful programming ideas your libraries are implementing. Let's be sure to continue keeping the lines of communication flowing…

Capturing the Value of Your Library

Former Erie District Consultant, Marcia Wilking, created an updated "Library Value Calculator" to assist libraries in spreading the news about the potential cost savings provided to community members.

> "2020 was an unusual year and some of the previous metrics libraries used don't adequately describe the services provided during stay-at-home orders."
>
> *~ Marcia Wilking ~*

On her website, **Marcia The Librarian,** you will find the updated library value calculator to download to your website as well as details on how the values were calculated within the tool.

New Professional Development Titles

Leadership Planners Series

From renowned leadership guru Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, author of bestsellers such as *Be A Great Boss* and *Renew Yourself*, comes this unique series of pragmatic leadership planners.
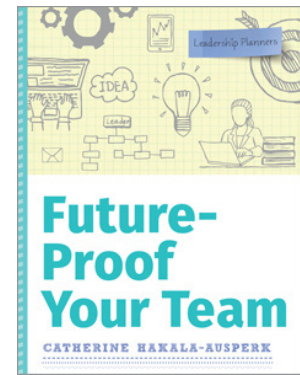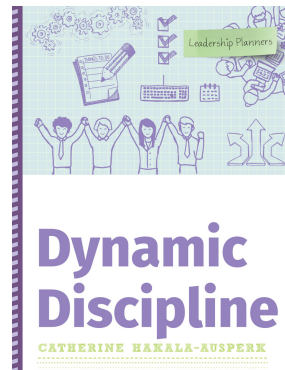
Library Futures Series

Formally launched in 2014, ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries works to identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve, promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future, and build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues
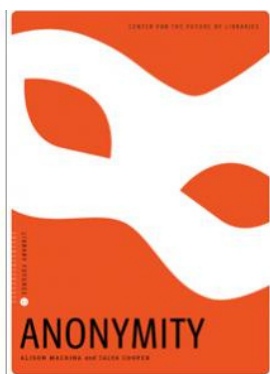
To borrow these titles, please email Deneen Greene at ill@ncdlc.org. Please do not request these titles through AccessPA as these items are only available to library staff within the district and not available to the general public.

Just for Laughs

Shoalhaven Libraries - **Librarian Rhapsody** - Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" parody

Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library - **Check It Out** - Taylor Swift "Shake if Off" parody

Pogona Creative, Orange Public Library, & Chapman University - **Unread Book** - Bruno Mars' "Uptown Funk" parody

Pennsylvania's own Trediffyn Township Libraries - **We Got That Database** - Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass" parody

I NEED A POWER CORD FOR MY VIC-20.

WHY DO YOU THINK WE'D HAVE ONE?

I WAS HOPING YOU'D HAVE A SPARE IN YOUR ARCHIVE OF FORGOTTEN TECHNOLOGY.

WE DON'T HAVE SUCH A THING.

WHAT DO YOU CALL THOSE?

OUR PUBLIC ACCESS PCs?

OKAY, POINT TAKEN. I'LL CHECK IN THE BACK.

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