Blog Post Samples

Patrick Hogan

Below is a sampling of Patrick Hogan's writing for the American Library Association's TechSource blog. Links are shown but not active. The blog is no longer active.

Fountaindale Library to Build Dream Space for Digital Media Creation

September 25, 2012

The Fountaindale Public Library in suburban Chicago will start work this week on a dramatic new facility for patrons' digital media projects. Fountaindale is in a [new building](#) that opened in March 2011. The basement was left unfinished, leaving nearly 7,000 square feet open for new possibilities. Called Studio 300, the space will include:

- 6 sound recording studios,

- 2 video recording studios,

- 3 group collaboration rooms with integrated technology, dual monitor workstations, and videoconferencing equipment.

The budget for the project is $3 million. A big chunk will go to expanding HVAC systems for the space. The library is working with its architectural firm for the building, Nagle Hartray Architecture, which brought in [Shen Milsom & Wilke](#) for audiovisual consulting and design. The plan is to open Studio 300 in spring of 2013.

Offered the blank slate of the basement space, the library administration and board soon honed in on the concept of creating digital media. Scanning the library marketplace, they took noted of the digital media labs and maker spaces sprouting across the country. Paul Mills, the library's executive director, believes that a digital media space fits with libraries' traditional role. He referenced comments of Jamie LaRue, Douglas County Public Library director, that libraries have always been more than repositories. Mills said, "Libraries can help patrons create things that are important for them or for their church, their family, their business, utilizing tools that are now available." Audio or video content

requires high-powered computers and specialized software packages. To record, you need studio space. To get started, many will need classes, online courses, and other information services that libraries offer.

Mills said that networking with fellow librarians has been invaluable in planning the space. He talked with several Chicago area librarians with digital media labs. He toured the [YOUmedia Chicago](#) space in the Harold Washington Library. "Our profession is so willing to share expertise," Mills said, praising the YOUMedia staff for "multiple hours" sharing their insights and experiences. While few libraries have a 7,000 square feet and a budget to build it out, Mills encourages librarians to explore their options with digital media. "Do things on a different scale to fit your resources and the interests of your community," he said.

Coming soon- an opportunity for learn from fellow librarians creating maker spaces. ALA TechSource will host a series of free webinars, starting with a presentation from the Westport Library (CT) on October 15. [Register in WebEx.](#)

services, including accessibilty, content creation, and reference. For a taste of what's covered, check out the recording of her [November 2014 webinar](#). Visit Nicole's web page for [Apps4Librians.com](#) for additional information about the course, a self-study version, and her other offerings.

Reporting from the LITA National Forum

October15, 2012

 A week ago some 300 librarians gathered in Columbus, Ohio for the LITA National Forum, where the focus was on technology, despite the distraction of [BeardCon.](#)

The annual Forum is an idea-generator with project-focused presentations and plenty of time to mingle with colleagues. I attended a couple programs that showed how showed how practical applications of technology solve basic library problems. Take incorrectly shelved books, for instance. Librarian Stacy Brinkman and associate professor of computing Bo Brinkman, both of Miami University of Ohio, presented the

ShelvAR app for Android devices. It helps shelvers scan the shelves for misplaced books and place them properly. A good augmented reality app harnesses the computer power in processing large amounts of data," Bo explained, "to support the human strengths of visual and spatial analysis and inductive reasoning." To prepare the collection for the ShelvAR app, staff labeled the books in straight line with codes generated from LC numbers. Pointing a smartphone camera at the line of tags, the app shows green checks for properly placed books and a question mark for misplaced. By tapping the screen, a pointer suggests the proper placement of the book.

A pilot project still in beta, ShelvAR's preliminary testing shows that it saves time and reduces errors, especially among new shelvers. Videos demonstrating use of the app are on the ShelvAR website. An API is available, and code is posted to github. The app is not open source and is currently in one-year provisional patent phase. It's possible that Miami of Ohio will file a patent. Students involved with the project will be working on an iOS app in the coming months.

In another presentation, Lisa Santucci and Jason Paul Michel from Miami University showed how their use of "data visualization" screens. In addition to API-driven news from traditional and social sources, screens satisfy student needs by displaying the availability of reserved rooms and computers. Surveys showed that students were using security cameras in the 24/7 library to avoid long lines for coffee or save steps when looking for available rooms or computer workstations. The computer availability maps were made possible through LabStats from Computer Lab Solutions

and the work of talented colleagues from the sim lab creating maps in Google SketchUp. A Drupal View module allows the screens to display covers of recently returned books. At present, the screens are on carts, allowing for portability.

The library is carefully considering wall mounts in strategic locations. As an editor for Marshall Breeding's Smart Library newsletter, I read about the latest product development in libraries from the safety of my office at ALA headquarters. Spared the messy implementation, I found a couple presentations to be real eye-openers. Josh Petrusa of Butler University and Courtney Greene of Indiana University presented on implementing discovery services at their institutions. Josh, a former film student, noted that implementation of discovery follows the traditional story arc of a horror film with multiple build-ups of tension and releases. Butler, a member of the PALNI consortium of private academic libraries in Indiana, implemented Primo. Indiana University implemented two discovery layer projects EBSCO Discover Service and Blacklight. "Know your data," Josh warned, "especially if you're in a consortia." Courtney found that out when odd results left her wondering where on campus the secret bunker filled with globes was. I think the confusion of data had to do with creative use of MARC local fields. My conclusion was that digging into MARC records when implementing discovery is inevitable. Discovery of ebooks in libraries is no less challenging than developing a business model for them. Kathryn Fedrick of Skidmore College presented on her beta project customizing Vufind for ebooks. Skidmore has access to 300,000 ebooks spread across more than 40 sources. Kathryn installed VuFind on an Amazon's EC2 server and uses a MySQL database indexed by Solr . Kathryn is testing the implementation with a set of 140,000 records. Among the challenges are managing the records files and the poor quality of vendor-supplied ebook records. Loading ebrary records into the catalog has generated a spike in ebook usage, but the project creates additional workload for catalogers.

Eric Hellman's keynote speech made case for a public sector of ebooks. Current players in the emerging public sector include e-book vendors, the Internet Archive, Project Gutenberg, Public Library of Science, Europeana, Digital Public Library of America, WorldCat, and BookShare. What has been missing is an effective way to bring copyrighted material into the public commons. Eric's company company Unglue.it fills that role through crowd-funding pledge drives with the goal of releasing works

with a Creative Commons license. A business model for library lending of ebooks is in professional conversation, and Eric's speech reviewed four options.

1. Pretend it's print. The familiar model in place now is compatible with existing businesses and institutions, but depends on a false scarcity.

2. Advertising. Distracts readers and doesn't deliver sufficient eyeball for advertisers.

3. Subscription platforms. A good fit if books are expensive, they trend to "big deal" market dynamics--- more content at greater prices with customers buying more than they need.

4. Sell to the public commons.

Drawing from the ideas of economist Hal Varian, Eric examined the impact of book lending to sales. When the cost of circulation is less than the cost of duplication, libraries will encourage wider reading, and publishers will benefit from increased book sales. When the cost of circulation exceeds the cost of duplication, however, libraries are not needed. There are two types of readers, Eric explained, those who buy and those who borrow. Borrowers are willing to accept inconvenience in return for free reading. Thus, the ebook lending paradox. In order for libraries to be good --add value in a publishing economy-- they need to be bad, putting up a wall of inconvenience. "Yuck!" Eric said. Karen Coyle's recent post [“Success Paradox”](#) reaches a similar conclusion. If a library's ebook lending program becomes popular, the associated escalation of costs would make the service unsustainable. Eric believes that library ebook lending is transitional and won't work in the long run.

Ebook lending was among the topics Sarah Houghton addressed in her keynote on technology and customer service. As director of the San Rafael Public Library, she has made a decision to discontinue the library's vendor-provided ebook service when the contract expires. Prominent among her reasons is a belief that the service is not consistent with the Library Bill of Rights. Instead, she is looking to opportunities in the public commons Eric references as well as locally produced content.

Noted human-computer interface researcher Ben Shneiderman delivered a keynote on visual analytics, social discovery, and the power of networked communities. In a presentation rich with examples, he shared his Visual Information Seeking Mantra: Overview first, zoom and filter, then details-on-demand. " It's not machine driven algorithms that solve problems, it's people," Shneiderman said. Visual analytics helps users confirm what they know and spot what they don't know. The human eye is trained to pick up anomalies. A visual interface can show outliers that would be missed in a data set or highlight errors in the data. "Information visualization gives you answers to questions you didn't know you had." he said. With a a visual representation of congressional partisanship, Shneiderman showed the power of the tool NodeXL an open source Excel template for social network graphing. I could only see a few programs, more info is on the Web.

See [archived keynote speeches](#) on UStream.

See slides from presentations mentioned in this post.

Stacy Brinkman and Dr. Bo Brinkman, [Next Generation Collection Management: Using Augmented Reailaity Mobile Applications to Autoomate Shelf Reading and Inventory Control.](#)
Lisa Santucci and Jason Paul Michel, [Data Visualization Walls: Building Visualization Displays with Open Data, Freeware, and APIs.](#).

Josh Petrusa and Courtney Greene, [Doctoring Strange Results (Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Discovery Results.](#)

Congratulations to presenters Alexa Pearce, Nadaleen Tempelman-Kluit, winners with the Forum's Risky Business contest, honoring their project for innovation: [Persona Most Grata: Invoking the User from Data to Design](#)

ALA Connect [LITA Forum](#) pages have slides or links to them from many of the presentations.

3D Printing in Libraries: Inspiration or Distraction?

January 24, 2013

Earlier this month, a good old fashioned blogosphere discussion broke out, complete with active comment logs and trackbacks.

Hugh Rundle started the conversation with ["Mission creep -- a 3D printer will not save your library."](#) He argues public libraries lack a business case for 3D printing. Rather, technolust and fear of missing out are instead the drivers. "Yes, libraries provide access to information sources and creation tools that can be expensive to individuals, but that doesn't mean that loaning or providing access to things that are expensive is what libraries are for," Hugh writes. He highlights a number of projects and opportunities for libraries to support and curate patrons creative efforts in more appropriate ways.

The makerspace movement in libraries has raised eyebrows both curious and quizzical. By extension, bloggers responding to Hugh's post considered the role of makerspaces in the tradition of library service. Read them together, as background for your opinion on 3D printers in libraries, or more generally, the role of makerspaces.

Dave Lankes offered a rebuttal in ["Beyond the Bullet Points: Missing the Point and 3D Printing,"](#) arguing that the 3D Printer was tool for innovation and creativity. "Why in a library? Because that is the core of the library – not the collection – idea creation and knowledge generation."

The debate and a "knock-down philosopher brawl" in comments on Dave's post attracted Andromeda Yelton's attention. In ["3d printing, library missions, and things beside the point,"](#) she shares ideas from her emerging personal philosophy of librarianship, where the library is a fertile ground and spring ideas or new ways of thinking, whether from books or objects from a 3D printer. "Information is a tool. Libraries are experiences."

Offering the academic library perspective, Brian Matthews, assistant director of Virginia Tech's Center for Innovation and Learning, can point to curriculum-based needs for 3D Printing, expanding on a resource offered elsewhere on campus, but still scarce. Beyond that, he advocates for experimentation in ["Search More, Plan Less: In Defense of 3D Printing,"](#), responding to local needs with local solutions despite unknowns of how the technology and user needs will evolve.

What do you think?

If you're attending Midwinter, learn about makerspaces on [Maker Monday](#). Among the events, *Make* magazine's Dale Dougherty and Travis Good will talk on libraries' role in the maker movement at 1:00 p.m.

App Learning for Librarians

January 23, 2015

Nicole Hennig would love to see more librarians reviewing apps.

"Have you noticed how uninformed many of the app-store reviews are?" she asks readers of her recent Library Technology Report ["Selecting and Evaluating the Best Mobile Apps for Library Services."](#) Often people write a review without understanding what the app was meant to do. Or they dash off a technical support question. Librarianship has a long tradition of reviewing books. Now is the time to apply those well-honed skills to apps and help your community find what they need in a chaotic marketplace.

For a general guide to reviewing, Nicole recommends the the thorough [Elements for Basic Reviews: A Guide for Writers and Readers of Reviews of Works in All Mediums and Genres,](#)from the ALA/RUSA CODES Materials Reviewing Committee (2005).

She supplements that guide with her own [checklist for reviewing mobile apps](#).

Nicole Hennig is busy writing and presenting on all things apps for librarians. She will be leading the ALA ecourse ["Apps for Librarians: Empower Your Users with Mobile App Literacy"](#) starting Monday, February 2 (also Groundhog day). In addition to selection and evaluation criteria, she covers a full range of library

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