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Sexual Assault Survivors and Information: Needs and Recommendations

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Abstract

his paper examines the information needs of sexual assault survivors, with a focus on the kinds of information these individuals may be seeking and how libraries can best assist survivors with their information needs. The paper begins with an overview of sexual assault as a pervasive problem in society to form a basis of understanding of what a sexual assault survivor may be experiencing and the kinds of barriers that may affect their information seeking. The information needs of sexual assault survivors are complex because of their experiences of violence and trauma. These factors often result in mental and physical health challenges and potentially distressing information-seeking experiences. To best serve sexual assault survivors in libraries, I recommend a trauma-informed approach to librarianship, which underscores the importance of safety, empathy, and empowerment for the survivor. A trauma-informed approach to librarianship can assist sexual assault survivors in remedying potential distress through forming trust, validating their experiences and identity, valuing their voice, and ultimately supporting their healing.

Keywords: sexual assault survivors; information needs; information seeking; information barriers; library services; trauma; trauma-informed librarianship

Sexual assault survivors have complex information needs and their positions as survivors of trauma and violence make any information seeking complicated. This paper will address the information needs of sexual assault survivors and offer recommendations of practices that could be employed to best serve these individuals. I use the term "sexual assault survivor" to mean someone who has experienced sexual assault. In Canada, sexual assault is defined as "all unwanted sexual activity, such as sunwanted sexual grabbing, kissing, and fondling as well as rape" (Women's Legal

Education and Action Fund (LEAF), n.d.). Sexual assault can affect anyone regardless of age, race, gender identity, and sexual orientation, among other facets of personal identity. Therefore, it is important to recognize the complexities of how various aspects of personal identity interact with one another to make up a person's lived experience. This paper discusses sexual assault survivors on a more general level; however, keeping intersectionality in mind is very important as various aspects of a person's identity can make their situation more complex. These kinds of complexities are beyond the scope of this paper, and future research into these themes is important for all sexual assault survivors of all identities to move toward a future where sexual violence no longer exists. I would also like to note that I am not neutral on this topic. I am a sexual assault survivor and I have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a direct result of being sexually assaulted. I have had information needs of my own in this respect and I have found seeking information has been, at times, very distressing. However, when I have found information that I connect with, it has always been powerful in terms of understanding my own experiences. This paper comes from my own personal investment in this topic and the themes and recommendations I discuss here are grounded both in my reading of the literature on the topic and in my own position as a survivor. I recognize that this topic can be very upsetting, and so I would like to remind any reader of this paper to take care of themselves and to reach out for help and support if needed (please see the acknowledgements section at the end of this paper).

This paper examines the information needs of sexual assault survivors by first considering sexual assault as a pervasive problem in society and the complications that sexual assault survivors may be experiencing. It is important to consider this context because trauma and violence are part of the survivor's experience and we must recognize that these factors make their situation complex and potentially distressing. Once this contextual understanding has been formed, we will turn to the information needs of sexual assault survivors. Finally, I will recommend a trauma-informed approach to librarianship and information services, which I argue can be beneficial for supporting not only sexual assault survivors, but also survivors of trauma more broadly. The trauma-informed approach to librarianship can help librarians and information professionals support sexual assault survivors in ways that assist the survivor in their healing and reaffirm the position of the library as a safe space for all community members.

Context and Considerations for Sexual Assault Survivors

It is important to first establish a basis of understanding before examining the information needs of sexual assault survivors. By forming a basis of understanding, we will have a context with which to recognize the potential difficulties that sexual assault survivors may be facing in their lives and the potential difficulties they may experience in seeking information. Sexual assault, and sexual violence more broadly, are pervasive societal problems. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) reports that “an American is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds” (n.d.). Sexual assault can affect anyone, but it does disproportionately affect women. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice (2000), “the female proportion of sexual assault victims reached 90% at age 13 and 95% at age 19” (p. 4). Additionally, a 2018 survey on intimate partner and sexual violence found that “1 in 5 women experienced completed or attempted rape during her lifetime” (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, p. 1). To bring things to a Canadian context, the 2020 report *Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse in Alberta* found that “forty-five percent of adult Albertans have experienced some type of sexual abuse in their lifetime” and that “two in three females and one in three males in Alberta experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime” (p. 6). It is important to note here, though, that these statistics do not account for those who identify as non-binary, transgender, or gender non-conforming; the *Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse in Alberta* report (2020) states that “less than 1% of the sample identified their gender as transgender or non-binary. Due to the low number of completions for this subset of the sample, those results have been excluded from an analysis” (p. 4). This point reminds us of the importance of future research to understand the experiences and the needs of those who are often excluded because of the gender binary. Additionally, people of colour and transgender folks are at high risk for sexual violence and, unfortunately, members of marginalized communities are often underrepresented or misrepresented in statistical data (Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE), n.d.). Finding accurate statistics on sexual violence can be a major challenge because sexual assault is often underreported, and so many instances of sexual assault may never be known. This point is particularly relevant to sexual assault survivors from marginalized communities who are more likely to feel unsafe reporting their assault (SACE, n.d.). Nevertheless, the statistics that we do have show that sexual violence is a large issue that affects many lives.

Sexual assault is a traumatic and violent crime and can have lasting negative impacts on survivors. Trauma can be defined as "resulting from an event, or series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014, p. 7). The traumatic effects of sexual assault on a survivor can be devastating in these respects, particularly for a survivor's mental health and emotional and physical well-being. Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are common amongst survivors. A 2014 report from the U.S. Department of Justice found that sexual assault survivors were most likely to "experience moderate to severe distress resulting from their victimization" as compared to victims of other violent crimes (p. 3).

Information Needs of Sexual Assault Survivors

It is important to keep in mind that although a survivor may have health needs, care needs, and information needs, they may not choose to pursue fulfilling these needs because of the possible emotional distress this could cause them. Munro-Kramer et al. (2017) state that

> survivors, more often than not, elect not to pursue any post-assault care. Sexual assault often goes unreported and/or untreated despite the high rates of sexual assault and the health issues surrounding it. In fact, only a minority of survivors seek post-assault health services. Thus, it is important to explore alternative interventions to help survivors access post-assault resources and care. (p. 298)

While these authors discuss the needs of survivors in a health context, I would extend their ideas to an information context as well, and thus understanding the potential barriers that affect the ability of a sexual assault survivor to seek out information is important. Potential barriers for survivors include pervasive myths and stigma about sexual assault, such as victim-blaming, feelings of shame and guilt, and being unable to name one's experience as sexual assault (Munro-Kramer et al., 2017, p. 298).

Westbrook (2009) reminds us that survivors of violence and trauma have information needs that are more complex than everyday information needs because of the highly stressful nature of trauma and the distressing effects of trauma on a survivor. Westbrook (2009) notes that "the needs themselves differ because the nature of a crisis is to compress and heighten stress while the crisis itself can impact the individual's focus, priorities, and perspective" (p. 299). In other words, trauma makes the information needs and the information-seeking behaviour different and complicated. Trauma changes one's brain and dramatically affects how one sees oneself and others; thus, trauma can have a huge impact on one's behaviour, thinking, and perceptions (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 8). This factor of trauma can make seeking information difficult for a survivor, but it can also make the situation difficult for an information professional to provide service to a survivor.

In terms of actual information needs, the work of Finn et al. (2011) and that of Skinner and Gross (2017) provide insight into the kinds of information needs that sexual assault survivors may have. In their research on the information needs of abuse survivors, Finn et al. (2011) note that many abuse survivors seek information to understand what constitutes abuse to form an understanding of their experiences and to integrate their experiences into their own personal identities. This process is powerful because "understanding the nature of abuse requires survivors to incorporate agency and social representations into their own perceptions. Moving toward safer living is usually impossible until information on the nature of abuse is integrated into survivors' construction of their own identities" (p. 939). In this sense, information can imbue meaning by helping a survivor of abuse understand what has happened to them, understand themselves as a person who has experienced trauma, and, importantly, understand themselves as a person who can heal from trauma. I would extend this notion of understanding to also include sexual assault survivors as sexual assault is a form of abuse. For example, the websites of local sexual assault centres tend to provide information on what sexual assault is, what constitutes consent, and many other topics related to the sexual assault survivor's understanding of their experience and the larger nature of sexual assault, which suggests that there is a need amongst sexual assault survivors to make sense of their experience (see, for example, the topics for learning at sace.ca, which is the website of the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton).

With respect to practical information seeking, Finn et al. (2011) found in their study that the main categories of information seeking among abuse survivors are "police information, legal information, and community resource information" (p. 943). In their research on the information needs of sexual assault survivors, Skinner and Gross (2017) found that sexual assault survivors have information needs related to finding legal information, information about reporting to the police, physical health information, and mental and emotional health information. Information needs could also be related to the process of healing from trauma, and so a survivor may seek information about trauma itself, responses to trauma, the effects of trauma, and overcoming trauma (Skinner & Gross, 2017). Additionally, survivors may also want information about self-care and well-being, and in this vein, may want to know about community and mental health resources that are available, such as sexual assault centres, support groups, and counselling or therapy services (Skinner & Gross, 2017).

Supporting Sexual Assault Survivors: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Librarianship and Information Services

What can librarians and information service professionals do to support sexual assault survivors and their information needs? First, a note of caution is required here as librarians and information professionals are not social workers, counsellors, or psychologists, and do not necessarily have the knowledge or experience to act in these roles for sexual assault survivors. As Westbrook (2015) reminds us:

> people in crisis situations are generally struggling with so many daily life and self-identity issues that harnessing control in terms of information interactions is particularly daunting. Librarians can proffer information as a tool in both self-

> identity construction and problem resolution. They are not social workers but neither do they abdicate professional responsibility to that or any other profession. (p. 19)

It is important for librarians and information professionals to keep this in mind to avoid overstepping their role. Even with this caveat, librarians and information professionals can still do their part in supporting sexual assault survivors with the tools and skills of their profession. Wilmoth (2008) states that "positive social change will be accomplished if libraries are universally known as places where survivors can begin their healing process with the assistance of caring, knowledgeable staff" (p. 13). To move toward achieving this goal, I recommend implementing a trauma-informed approach to librarianship and information services, which can help serve sexual assault survivors and survivors of trauma more broadly. The US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) outlines the principles of trauma-informed care as the following:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Eades (2020) argues that the trauma-informed approach is well-suited to librarianship because of the very values of librarianship itself, which underpin the notion that the library should be a welcoming space for all. Additionally, we as community members perform a major disservice to trauma survivors if we do not take trauma seriously (Becker-Blease, 2017). In terms of day-to-day work practice, librarians and information professionals can begin becoming trauma-informed by educating themselves on trauma itself and what survivors can experience in order to build a foundation of understanding, support, and care for those who have experienced trauma. An important component of building this foundation is to shift our thinking to be more open-minded and empathetic;

this is a “movement away from thinking ‘What’s wrong with this person?’ And instead asking ‘What happened to this person?’” (Sharkey quoted in Ford, 2019, p. 22).

As the above SAMHSA (2014) principles state, establishing a strong sense of safety and trust is key for the comfort of the trauma survivor and emphasizing these points can also be a starting point for trauma-informed libraries. Finn et al. (2011) note that “in most situations, individuals’ respect for and understanding of survivors’ abuse situations are essential to developing trust in the information interaction” (p. 936). Additionally, the effects of trauma, and especially interpersonal trauma, make it such that a survivor may not necessarily feel safe interacting with others. This makes establishing trust even more important for the safety and well-being of the survivor (Pemberton & Loeb, 2020). For sexual assault survivors, “the continued aftermath of symptoms following victimization that include hypervigilance, intense fear of the perpetrator, fears related to another attack, and anxiety regarding issues related to disclosure create continued feelings of being unsafe” (Pemberton & Loeb, 2020, p. 121). To help remedy any fears a survivor may have, and to foster safety and trustworthiness, an approach of “acceptance, validation, belief in their experiences, and having a non-judgmental stance” can help a survivor feel more at ease in their healing process (Pemberton & Loeb, 2020, pp. 121-122). Along similar lines, Munro-Kramer et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of creating a culture of caring as being integral to a successful information interaction with a sexual assault survivor. In practice, creating safety and trust could take the form of signage in the library that explicitly denotes the library as a safe space, specifically as a safe space for healing. Visually marking the library as a safe space could help remind a survivor that they are safe, and that the library is here to support them, but without necessarily placing any pressure or expectation on the survivor to disclose their experiences if they are not comfortable doing so. In making this recommendation, I speak from my own experience as a survivor; when I see that a place is specifically marked as safe, I immediately feel more comfortable being there. Through a reference interview with a survivor, Wilmoth (2008) reminds us that confidentiality is an important part of establishing trust and safety and that this shows respect for the survivor and their situation. Wilmoth (2008) recommends that “a librarian who suspects that a patron is a survivor of sexual assault should make every effort to get that person in a private area for the reference interview" (p. 11). These steps could help confirm to a survivor that the library is a safe space for them, and that librarians and information professionals themselves are safe people to interact with.

The SAMHSA (2014) principles underscore the importance of community in supporting the trauma survivor and of the empowerment of the survivor in affirming their own identity and in reestablishing their place in the community. It is important to recognize that while trauma may happen to an individual, trauma itself does not exist in a vacuum, but rather as part of systems of oppression and power (Becker-Blease, 2017). For sexual assault survivors, relevant systems of oppression and power include rape culture, which can be defined as:

> The societal conditions that allow sexual violence to take place. These societal conditions include, but are not limited to, (a) tolerance of sexual harassment and violent pornography, (b) the belief that women who have consumed alcohol are sexually available, (c) restrictive ideas about masculinity (e.g., men don't cry), (d) the belief that women should be responsible for keeping themselves safe (e.g., victim blaming), (e) jokes about rape, and (f) the belief that certain groups are better than others (e.g. sexism, racism). (Conley & Griffin, 2016, p. 279)

To combat the beliefs that rape culture perpetuates and to emphasize the role of the library as a place for community and empowerment, libraries can be places of "connecting personal experiences to broader social systems that give rise to trauma and oppression, victim/survivor empowerment, and relationship building" (Becker-Blease, 2017, p. 133). To achieve these ends, libraries can form partnerships with organizations that share these values and that have resources and knowledge about these issues, such as local sexual assault centres. These kinds of partnerships could offer educational opportunities for staff and they could also take the form of providing information, awareness, and education for library patrons. In their research on sexual assault survivors, Skinner and Gross (2017) recommend having a variety of resources that are readily accessible within the library if a sexual assault survivor is in need of information and support. The library collection itself is also relevant, as mindfully selected materials on trauma and healing could also be of help to survivors (Skinner & Gross, 2017, p. 31). Furthermore, the creation of library guides or resource lists pertinent to sexual assault and trauma could also help to spread awareness about these issues within the larger community and could assist a survivor with their information needs without the need for a face-to-face conversation, which may be distressing for some survivors (see, for example, the resource list prepared by the Oak Park Public Library (2021) in Illinois for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, among other similar efforts by public and academic libraries). With respect to the empowerment and voice of the survivor, libraries could also include the voices and wishes of sexual assault survivors (who are comfortable doing so and with proper permissions) by reaching out to sexual assault survivors in developing services and programming. This point of giving survivors the opportunity to voice their needs, concerns, and perspectives is supported by the research of Munro-Kramer et al. (2017), who found in their study of sexual assault survivors on university campuses that “it is imperative that we include survivors’ voices while looking for alternative ways to serve their needs” (p. 304). The hope here is that by implementing trauma-informed practices that emphasize empowerment and community, libraries can support sexual assault survivors on an individual level, but also help to create awareness and understanding of sexual violence in society on a broader level.

Conclusion

Sexual assault survivors have complex information needs that stem from their experiences of trauma and violence. It is important for librarians and information service professionals to understand these needs and the contexts in which these needs exist to provide thoughtful and careful service to sexual assault survivors. A trauma-informed approach to librarianship can help librarians and information service professionals provide service to sexual assault survivors in a way that is mindful of their experiences and that validates their identities. The main takeaway of a trauma-informed approach is to treat others with the respect and care that they deserve, and in a way that acknowledges their trauma, values their voice, and supports their healing. Understanding the information needs of sexual assault survivors and implementing an approach that is mindful of the experiences of this vulnerable community is significant because this helps to reinforce the position of the library as a safe space.

Acknowledgements

To any sexual assault survivor reading this: know that you are loved.

If you feel you need support, please see the resources linked below as they may be of help to you. Please take care of yourselves and one another.

- From VAW Learning Network: https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/Issue-25/index.html
- Also see the VAW Learning Network homepage: https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/
- Directory of community resources in Canada: https://endingviolencecanada.org/sexual-assault-centres-crisis-lines-and-support-services/
- Resources from RAINN: https://www.rainn.org/national-resources-sexual-assault-survivors-and-their-loved-ones
- Resource list from Oak Park Public Library (mentioned in this paper): https://www.oppl.org/news-events/health-wellness/april-is-sexual-assault-awareness-month/
- My email: sbrown5@ualberta.ca

Conflict of Interest Statement

None declared.

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Indigenous Video Games in Libraries

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Abstract

There is a recent movement known as Indigenous Futurisms that examines Indigenous perspectives within the context of technology. Related to this, video gaming continues to be one of the fastest growing forms of new media, yet diversity in the industry is still an issue. This is especially apparent with a lack of proper representation of Indigenous video game characters and Indigenous storylines. While this is starting to change with the recent rise of a handful of Indigenous owned gaming studios and creators, there are still challenges around accessibility for gameplay. Video games made by Indigenous creators and/or with Indigenous characters are for the most part non-existent in most public library collections. In discussions of decolonization in libraries, video games as a popular form of media are often overlooked and not viewed as valuable educational tools to encourage literacy and creativity. This paper suggests changes that can be made to ensure that video games that share Indigenous Knowledges and traditions or are developed by Indigenous creators are made accessible and are represented in library collections and spaces.

Keywords: Indigenous, Video Games, Libraries, Representation, Education

Recent awareness of the “Indigenous Futurisms” movement, defined by Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon (as cited in Killick, 2021) as Indigenous perspectives in the context of technology, has increased, particularly related to video games. While video games are increasingly prevalent in popular culture, libraries are behind in ensuring that there is Indigenous inclusion in their video game collections. American scholar and video game designer Elizabeth LaPensée, who is of Anishinaabe and Métis descent, has written extensively on video game studies and advocates for them as a tool for Indigenous sovereignty and cultural expression (Lohne, 2020). However, little scholarship has been written about the study of Indigenous video games and their lack of inclusion in library collections, but libraries should include this discourse as part of their efforts towards decolonization.

This paper provides an overview of Indigenous video games and the academic scholars that are examining and writing about Indigenous representation and inclusion in the video gaming industry. It covers a history of Indigenous video games while outlining the problems of representation and then provides examples of more recent games that are addressing problematic representation. Finally, this paper suggests ways that Indigenous video games can be included in library collections and spaces by examining ways to access the considerable educational benefits and knowledge that can be learned from Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous cultures.

Before continuing, I would also like to situate myself and acknowledge that I'm a multiracial transgender settler living on the unceded, ancestral, and stolen homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples and that I have taken time to reflect upon and acknowledge my own privileges. As noted, I am not an Indigenous academic, so this paper is meant to be a starting point for a larger discussion.

Indigenous Representation in Video Games

Historical Indigenous representation in video games is problematic, resulting in Indigenous People have little control over settler narratives. Early video games that involved Indigenous Peoples were from the viewpoint of settler colonialism, and gameplay was focused on how many animals or natural resources could be extracted and used from the Land. For example, the 1970s video game *The Oregon Trail* exemplifies how Indigenous Peoples' claims to the Land are erased in favour of a settler-colonial lifestyle. The game's main objectives include gathering resources such as food, weapons, and raw materials and having access to transportation while preserving one's life as a settler. There is no narrative in the game that includes the proper and respectful inclusion of the traditional Indigenous Knowledges or Ways of Being towards resources or the Land (Miner, 2020). Instead, Ikenberg (2020) argues that stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples as guides, traders, or hostile attackers of precious settler wagons and lives are pervasive. Indigenous Peoples are woefully misrepresented in this form of digital media, as in many others. Other video games involve the subgenre strategy of 4X, or Explore, Expand, Exploit, and Exterminate (Hafer, 2018). Games such *Europa Universalis* and *Civilization* have players gather materials and living things such as wildlife, plants, berries, wood, rocks, metals, and other resources that are then used, traded, or sold to sustain a character's health points. Indigenous Relationality and histories and how Indigenous Peoples inform respectful approaches to the Land, animals, cultural objects, spirits, the air, and whole ecosystems are not considered. Prioritizing Indigenous voices in video games could instead add nuance to traditional game mechanics through the sharing of sacred and cultural stories that demonstrate respect and relationality to the Land.

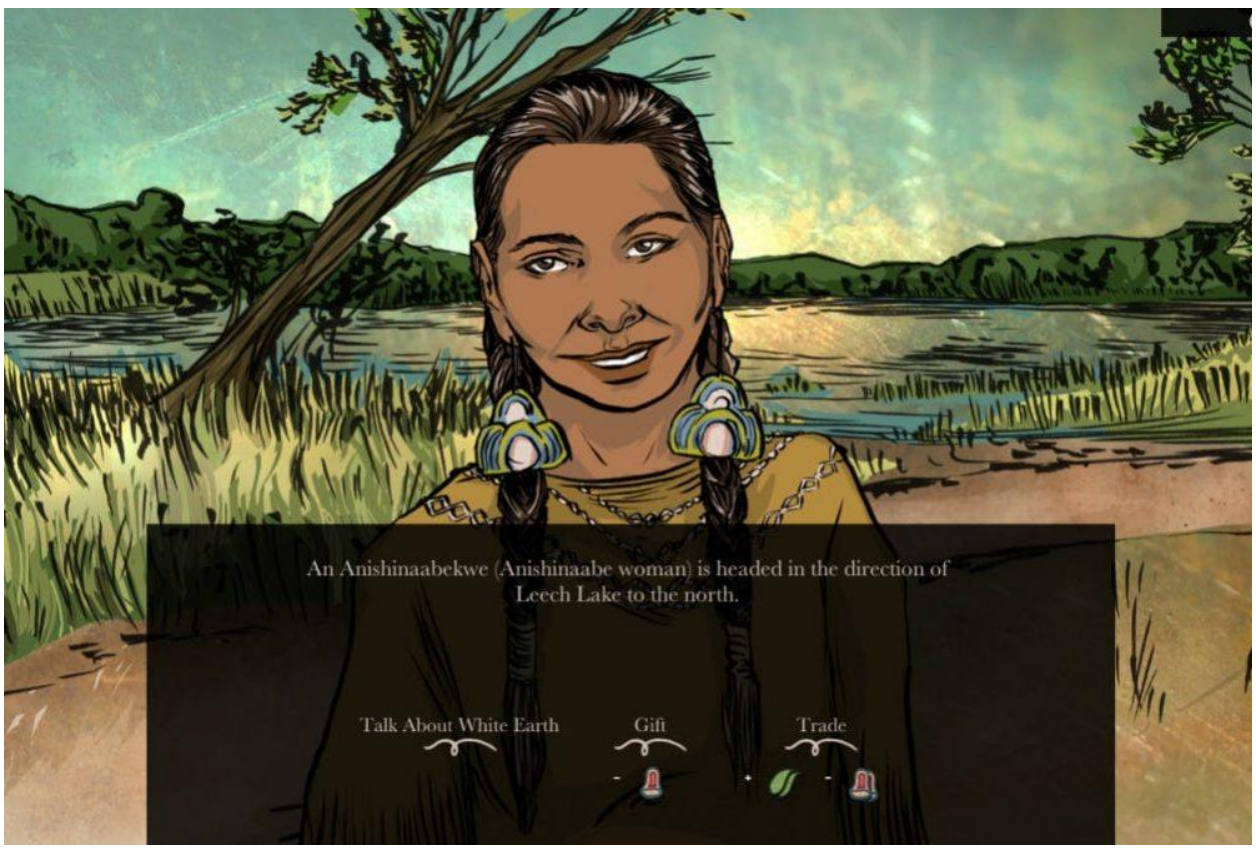

Figure 1. *When Rivers Were Trails* – (Source: Five Oaks Museum, 2021).

In response to *The Oregon Trail*, Elizabeth LaPensée's 2019 game *When Rivers Were Trails* presents a revisionist historical narrative that places Indigenous characters, communities, and shared knowledges and cultural practices in proper relation to the Land (Miner, 2020). The game centres Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Ways of Being while modifying gameplay narratives to that of generosity, respect, relationality, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity versus traditional narratives of violence, exploitation, control, greed, and ownership of the Land or materials. In the game, characters survive using traditional Indigenous methods of gathering and hunting food and utilizing transport, all while avoiding Indian Agents (LaPensée, 2021). LaPensée's games are categorized as being serious games in that they prioritize both fine art and game design together with strong a call for action around social justice (Ząbecki, 2019). Furthermore, Miner (2020) notes that *When Rivers Were Trails* has a different approach than that of most traditional video games, as in this game "the interrelation between player and game state has shifted. The game makes room for generosity and a relational perspective on community" (p. 312). This is done by centering the game around an almost entirely Indigenous cast of characters that use traditional cultural practices and respectful ways of moving through natural environments using a gameplay mechanics strategy for accumulating or using resources.

A problem with Indigenous representation portrayed by video game characters in *Europa Universalis* and *Civilization* is that these types of games offer up the illusion that Indigenous Nations have broken away from being Othered, while at the same time still relying on the mechanics and assumptions of settler colonial gameplay. Spivak (as cited in Jensen, 2011) defines it as, "the other is always the other as in *inferior*, not as in *fascinating*" (p. 65). It means that those that are at the centre of power (such as gaming producers) have the ability through the social construction of a virtual world to designate Indigenous gaming characters as Others within a video game. This allows for Indigenous sovereignty only through a lens of Eurocentric notions of power, achievement, and participation of the conquering of "empty" worlds (Carpenter, 2021). The use of this terminology imposes the settler colonial view that any Land devoid of "modern development" is a flaw. Games produced with Indigenous creators can provide a far richer experience than a world that is seen solely from a settler colonial perspective. If we apply what Justice (2018) mentions in relation to Indigenous texts being responsive and not reactive to their usage in video game storylines, then Indigenous writers are concerned primarily with developing and articulating relationships to the Land, human community, wildlife, histories, and futures. All of these encompass meaningful connections and offer insights around the fundamental rights of Indigenous people.

Video games which feature Indigenous characters can offer problematic worldviews, especially if they are steeped in settler colonial assumptions and/or are not created with Indigenous consultation or collaboration. Although previous versions of *The Oregon Trail* video game series have included issues of historical inaccuracies and stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples, Anna King (2021) notes that there are concerted efforts to redesign this series while working with tribal ancestors. The more recently developed games examined below were created in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, either through discussion and sharing of Indigenous Knowledges or with Indigenous game studios and creators directly.

Miner (2020) details some notable differences between *When Rivers Were Trails* and other video games that feature Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous Lands. First, *When Rivers Were Trails* consists of almost entirely all Indigenous characters, uses traditional cultural practices and beliefs, and the Indigenous communities in the game were created in collaboration with over thirty Indigenous contributors. Second, the relationship between the player and the mechanics of the game have shifted: "the game makes room for generosity and a relational perspective on community (Miner, 2020, p. 312). Third, it disrupts the stereotypical creative narrative of a game like *The Oregon Trail* in that it uses artwork made by Indigenous artists that conveys the player character's Anishinaabe worldview (LaPensée, 2021). The design of the game is unique in that it reflects the lived Indigenous experience of the artists, which will aid in bringing about a greater awareness of and interest for Indigenous video games to the public. The game shares teachings of Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Being that are by written by Indigenous game creators to control the narrative of video gameplay through a lens focused on placemaking. In *When Rivers Were Trails*, when characters move about in the space instead of following linear directions along the map, they move along trails or follow rivers. This alternative form of placemaking critically emphasizes the difference between a settler colonial cartographic gaze and a defiant Indigenous one that goes against a Euro-western form of cartography that omits Indigenous Peoples, their communities, and their Land (Miner, 2020 p. 326).

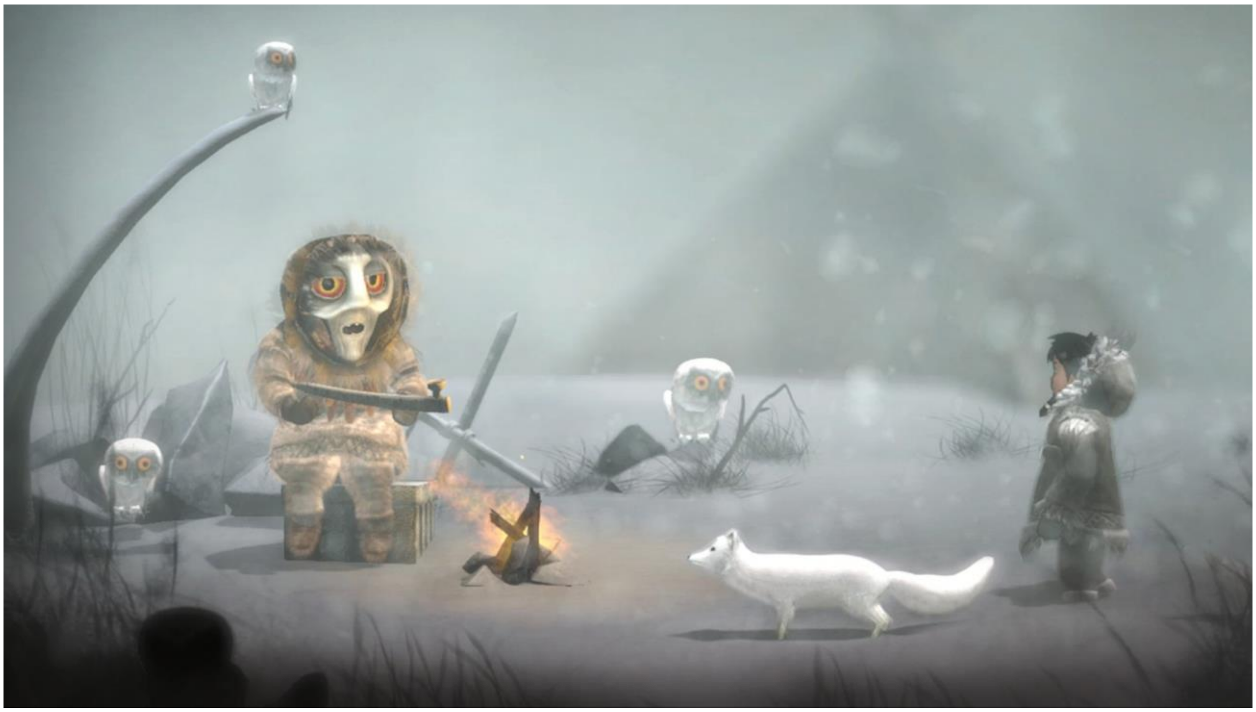

Figure 2. *Never Alone* – (Source: Steam, 2021).

Newer games, such as *Never Alone* and *When Rivers Were Trails*, are being used as tools of cultural expression and Indigenous sovereignty by their Indigenous creators and collaborators. *Never Alone* is a video game made by the first Indigenous-owned gaming company in the United States, was developed with Indigenous Storyteller Robert Nasruck Cleveland, and is based on *Kunuuksaayuka*, a traditional Iñupiat tale (Lohne, 2020). Lohne (2020) also mentions that the game was envisioned by the publisher and the community as being accessible to the community and playable in an intergenerational manner. In this way video stories that are being relayed by Elders in the game pass along Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Ways of Being to the community through youth culture using video games as a form of education.

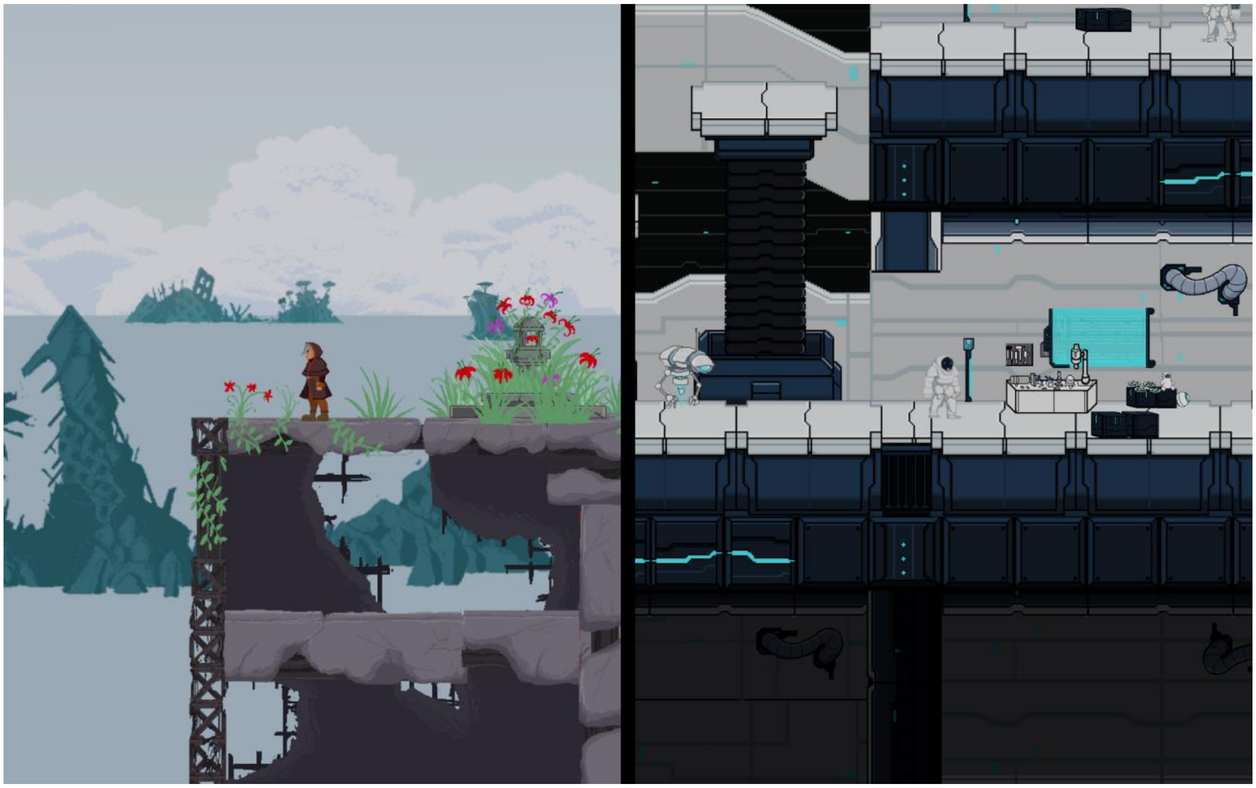

Figure 3. *Terra Nova* – (Source: Maize Longboat, 2019b).

Maize Longboat's *Terra Nova* is a two-player video game set on future Earth that portrays an imagined world where Indigenous Peoples and settler peoples make contact with each other thousands of years in the future. Each are living in their own independent communities but eventually end up involved in an experience of "first contact" that allows players to dictate what will happen through a historical reframing of the planet. Longboat's game was created as an Indigenous-led project with Mehrdad Dehdashti, Mi'kmaw artist Ray Caplin, and sound designer Beatrix Moersch with references to Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Being woven throughout (Muzyka, 2019). The two-player cooperative science fiction platform game has a unique narrative in that in the first contact between settler and Indigenous players, both are seen to have equal positionality, and as a result each is asked to consider what it means to be the Other. From there, they play together and make decisions around alliances, the possibility of war, and whether each will remain in their own worlds as they act as liaisons between their communities (Longboat, 2019a). In considering Indigenous representation in video games, if, as Younging (2018) states, Indigenous literatures frame the experiences of Indigenous histories, colonization, and the present, then Indigenous video games must be representative of the same.

Education with Video Games

One of the many strategic goals of libraries is to have initiatives around how the library and its resources and materials can be used for learning and education, particularly around bridging the digital divide and supporting that with the creative use of technology. Video games are important educational tools and are a significant component of mainstream popular culture, so there should be proper representation of Indigenous People in this form of media as it focuses on storytelling, history, and player agency. Video games differ from other types of consumable media in that they are also interactive, utilize strategy, and involve gameplay mechanics which are important tools for digital education. Carpenter (2021) notes that input and action are required to make choices, while strategic skills are a requirement for players to progress in the game. This highlights one of the most important aspects of Indigenous video games: due to the interaction required, video game players take on agency rather than passivity in this type of learning environment.

A great example of how video games can be educational is with the use of Traditional language skills and the ways of moving throughout Indigenous landscapes that are learned in LaPensée's *When Rivers Were Trails.* This is exemplified as one progresses through the game and encounters different challenges and interactions with other characters. At one point, Ojibwe words such as "Aniin" (greetings) or "niiji" (friend) are shown with their English colloquial meanings. Not only is there the use of various Indigenous languages throughout the game, but there is also the use of Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Ways of Being dispersed throughout as well. Players monitor not only their physical health, but also their emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Much of this is done through choices of language or actions used with other characters, the use of traditional foods and medicines, or by playing mini-games that are embedded within some of the scenarios, such as fishing, hunting, and canoeing (LaPensée, 2021). The game's close relationship to Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2008) around the forcible removal of Indigenous Peoples from their Lands serves as another immediate teaching point.

Throughout the game, players encounter non-player characters that explain the impact that the *General Allotment Act* process has had on the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples.

Another way that Indigenous game creators are making space for learning is with the video game workshop that Skawennati Fragnito (Mohawk), the co-director of Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC), runs for Indigenous youth. In the workshops they begin by learning about the history and importance of Indigenous storytelling and how video games can be used as a tool for another form of storytelling. He teaches workshop participants that within the framework of making games there is room for Indigenous Peoples to share their language and Traditional Knowledges by controlling the narrative and advocating for self-representation (Roetman, 2016). Other educational institutions, such as libraries, also need to ensure that digital skills are given just as much space and priority in their programming. Batchelor et al. (2021) notes that "ninth graders, seniors, and college students found that playing video games enhanced their connections to print-based texts they were reading in their classes" (p. 94). Other technical, creative, and project management skills can be applied to the development of Indigenous video games using tools such as storytelling, digital development and design, decision making, coding skills, and programming. LaPensée (as cited in Roetman, 2016) explains that her approach as an Indigenous person to video game design differs than most linear gameplay in that her use of narrative uses "non-linear storytelling, including those traditional tales elders told for days or months at a time and often revisited for teaching purposes" (p. 47). Libraries should also be able to provide informational resources with opportunities for Indigenous Peoples that want to become involved in the video gaming industry.

Many educational facilities are calling for the use of interactive fiction in emerging literacies, such as the use of gaming technology in the classroom to help build multimedia skills for writing and comprehension or critical thinking skills involving decision making or complex puzzle solving (Batchelor et al., 2021). One example of an Indigenous patron using libraries to learn coding is John Romero (Yaqui/Cherokee), one of the creators of the popular video game *Doom (*Roetman, 2016). He was able to release an update to his game in 2016 because of library-provided resources and access to game-making tools. Many different types of software and gaming tools are open source and freely available to prospective game designers. Libraries are well-placed to provide access to video gaming resources and education to prospective Indigenous game designers and creators.

Indigenous Video Games in Libraries

Most public libraries have had video game collections for close to fifteen years, but Indigenous video games are often missing from these collections. Calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2015) around equity, education, language, and culture highlight the fact that libraries need to ensure that they remedy the lack of inclusion and accessibility of Indigenous video games in library collections.

One of the main challenges around accessibility to Indigenous video games is that many of the games that indie gaming studios produce are only available for digital download, rather than a physical format. There are other barriers around general awareness too, because Indigenous video games are often only reviewed in depth by other Indigenous Peoples. Marketing budget constraints also make it difficult to get published in mainstream gaming magazines or on websites. However, there are many Indigenous games that can be downloaded to personal digital devices such as phones, tablets, and laptops but an overall greater awareness that these games exist is lacking. To increase awareness and become more inclusive of Indigenous video games, there are several considerations for libraries:

1. Accessibility—Computer and/or console stations (with headphones) can be set up with Indigenous video games already downloaded on them. The public can then play in time slots that can be reserved, similar to computer stations. Some stations may make use of gaming platforms such as Steam which makes it easy for library staff to download games.

2. Community Funding and Partnerships—Other options include reaching out to larger software and gaming companies to have them become partners in funding accessible gaming spaces and to do outreach to Indigenous communities about

Indigenous representation and creation in video games. Gaming companies can also put on a career exploration class or recruitment session for interested Indigenous Peoples.

3. Cultural Teachings—An Indigenous Elder from the community can be brought in as a cultural teacher to do a teaching around the Traditional Knowledges shared in Indigenous video games. Concepts around Indigenous Knowledges, Indigenous Ways of Being, and Indigenous Relationality could be taught by sharing screen shots of a game in a presentation using any of LaPensée's video games, for example. These sessions can be done as intergenerational sessions with Indigenous Peoples only and/or as sessions for the general public.

4. Cooperative Gaming—One example that is mentioned in Batchelor et al. (2021) is that of a schoolteacher that connected her computer to a projector and used interactive live play sessions of a game along with the participation of her students. The students mentioned things they noticed about the storyline or had questions about and then they all played through the game in a group effort. Options could include purchasing one game for the library that is played as a group or several copies where students can work in small groups. With some types of Indigenous interactive fiction games, there is the ability to do a live walk through, where one can pause or rewind the story and have certain points for discussion where decisions around movements and actions are decided upon by the majority.

5. Programming—Library programming and events can also reflect the diversity of Indigenous video gaming by highlighting newer forms of media. Libraries can put together Indigenous gaming nights where Indigenous creators and industry professionals are invited to talk about Indigenous representation and creation in video games with Indigenous Youth.

6. Gaming Workshops—Specific gaming workshops can be hosted by libraries where educational and software tools can be made accessible for Indigenous Peoples to get started in the creation of video games. These workshops can also outline opportunities for education through the development of digital game creation, storyboarding, coding, art, and design skills around storytelling.

7. Space—Libraries can support Indigenous creators by giving them both physical and online space with access to tools to help promote their work. Two Cree video game streamers created content about playing video games and added rez humour and moose calls into the mix to create their own online space, an example of what can be accomplished around Indigenous-created content in libraries (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2020). This type of creative production could be implemented in many of the digital creator spaces that are available in public libraries.

8. Awareness—Library staff can share information at conferences or workshops about the existence of Indigenous video games and why they should be included in library collections. They can stress how this is an essential and often overlooked part of the collection and is an important part of decolonizing libraries. Staff can also make sure that learning and sharing information about Indigenous video games becomes part of their continual learning around Indigenous representation in library spaces.

As Easterling mentions in Yousefi (2017), part of the librarian hacker's repertoire in libraries is making small corrective measures to library collections or to assist in the creation of alternative spaces. Using the small actions highlighted in this paper around ensuring that there are Indigenous video games in libraries can lead to progressive and innovative changes in equity towards the efforts of decolonization. As part of ensuring that systemic changes occur in library systems, library professionals need to recognize that Indigenous video games should be made accessible in library collections and spaces.

The lack of Indigenous representation in video games and video game collections is harmful and perpetuates the notion that Indigenous culture is not worth preserving. Having video games with Indigenous characters developed by Indigenous creators can be an educational tool that leads to better relations between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. If Indigenous video games are missing from archive and library collections, it leads to a bigger problematic question around settler colonial institutions informed by Panuncial (2019): whose history gets archived and preserved and whose history is not being represented at all?

Conclusion

The discourse around Indigenous video games is relatively new. As Longboat (2019b) mentions, Indigenous Peoples are bringing attention to the ecosystem of international video game development and contributing in many ways around how Indigenous video games are now being played, viewed, critiqued, and researched. I conceptualize video games as being another world immersed inside the real world that can offer the potential for a safer space for learning. For Indigenous video games this would necessitate that gameplay around Indigenous representation is controlled by Indigenous creators who are shaping culture in new and imaginative ways. We can all acquire new knowledge about the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples from Indigenous video games that are developed and created through an Indigenous lens.

This paper outlines the importance of bringing about a greater awareness of Indigenous video games by suggesting resources and ways that libraries can bring more merit and recognition to the important work of Indigenous video game creators and developers. LaPensée (as cited in Carpenter, 2021) notes “true self-determination in games must happen from the code up” (p. 48). Libraries can help lead the way by being supportive educational spaces that ensure that there are more stories and examples of Indigenous video games in the digital world led by Indigenous creators.

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The Evolving Nature of Library Technical Services in Response to Outsourcing

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Abstract

The landscape of library technical services is evolving in response to the outsourcing of library work such as cataloguing, acquisitions, and processing. This literature review explores the body of research on the transitioning nature of library technical services and presents its findings with a thematic overview of the cost effectiveness of outsourcing, vendor quality control and evaluation, staffing levels, changing workloads, organizational restructuring, user experience, knowledge management as well as diversity, inclusion, and access. While the literature reveals little doubt that outsourcing has had a significant impact on library technical services, how can libraries guide their technical services teams forward through this transition? The themes explored here suggest that additional skillsets are necessary for increasingly complex workloads in response to changing library user needs. Library leadership will need to provide their staff with training and professional development to meet these changing needs all while having successful change management strategies in place that leverage existing skillsets and support the continued evolutionary landscape of library technical services.

Keywords: technical services, libraries, outsourcing, change management, quality control, library vendor, organizational restructuring, user experience

Outsourcing of library technical services (TS) has been around for over a century. The earliest instance dates to 1901 when the Library of Congress began mass production of catalog cards (Martin et al., 2000). There was a marked increase of industry-wide interest in outsourcing in the 1990’s. The number of articles related to outsourcing in the 1980's was 3 per year and this skyrocketed to more than 600 articles annually in the 1990's (Martin et al., 2000). Libraries followed this trend and subsequently, there was a surge in the 1990's of both the practice and research of outsourcing library TS functions, namely cataloguing and acquisitions (Martin et al., 2000).

This literature review explores the current body of research on the outsourcing of TS work in a variety of library types. The costs and benefits of outsourcing are explored and their subsequent impact on staffing levels and types of work done in TS departments. Furthermore, the question of whether TS is disappearing or evolving is explored through the names and descriptions of roles currently employed within TS and how these changes have affected the flow of traditional TS knowledge and expertise. The themes explored attempt to cover a wide range of perspectives including stakeholders, workers, leadership, and users across various types of libraries.

Costs and Benefits of Outsourcing Technical Services

The cost-effectiveness of outsourcing for libraries must be determined on a case-by-case basis. A 5-month trial outsourcing monograph processing at Southern Illinois University Morris Library determined a lack of cost savings (Ballestro, 2012). Outsourcing of monograph copy cataloguing and processing was found to be associated with a higher cost compared to doing these tasks in-house at Radford University Library. However, there were other non-monetary benefits such as higher turnaround time, faster access, and the ability to use staff time towards other needed service areas (Johnson & McCormick, 2019). Using an example from a public library, Columbus Metropolitan Library uses very little outsourcing as they have determined that it is faster and cheaper to do most TS work in-house (Columbus Metropolitan Library, 2010). However, outsourcing was found to be cost-effective at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library where shelf-ready materials cost 5.7% less and reduced lead processing time by 47% (Schroeder & Howland, 2011). Lam (2005) found that outsourcing was associated with favourable turnaround times and suggests that this is a significant factor in opting for outsourcing. Lubas (2011) notes that libraries may not necessarily save a lot of money by outsourcing, rather the benefit comes from freeing up staff time for more complex work. Medeiros (2010) argues that up to 80% of staff time would be consumed by tasks that would otherwise be outsourced.

Vendor Errors and Quality Control

At the heart of the matter is whether it is cost-effective for each individual library and whether the benefits outweigh common outsourcing challenges, such as vendor errors. The reason why Southern Illinois University Morris Library determined outsourcing as too costly was because of the high rate of vendor errors, which translated into a great deal of staff time monitoring and fixing errors (Ballestro, 2012). However, many libraries have been satisfied by low rates of vendor error as demonstrated by Lam's (2005) study which found error rates within acceptable limits of less than 2%. Another study done at Western University in Ontario found errors in 4.62% of inspected records which was also considered to be low and within acceptable limits (Doran & Martin, 2017). Interestingly, the Western University study included a level of granularity that was able to determine that the bulk of errors were found in a particular subject area (e.g., English literature), and that most of the error types were associated with subject headings and call numbers. Doran & Martin (2017) suggest that by assessing where errors are most likely to occur, staff time may be allocated to monitor only certain types of materials provided by vendors rather than spending more time to inspect all vendor provided materials. Lam's (2005) questionnaire asked libraries whether they performed quality control on outsourced materials and found that 20% of respondents had no quality control practices in place, while the remainder largely had partial practices in place.

Culture of Evaluation

Based on the variety of findings on the cost-effectiveness of outsourcing, ideally each library would assess its own parameters of cost-benefit analysis, as there is no one-size fits all model when it comes to outsourcing. Hillen (2019) emphasizes the positive effect of having quality control processes in place on both the library and vendor ends of outsourcing to ensure ongoing maximization of cost-benefits. It's apparent that libraries must not only look at the monetary costs of outsourcing but consider potential benefits such as saved staff time and faster access for users (Schroeder & Howland, 2011; Stalberg & Cronin, 2011). Cost-benefit analysis of outsourcing should be under continual evaluation along with monitoring for vendor errors. If libraries can maintain quality control assessments, then they can ensure that benefits are maximized while errors are minimized throughout the library-vendor partnership.

Changing Staffing Models in Technical Services

The literature shows a consensus that staffing levels in library TS are decreasing. A study of staffing levels in the Oberlin Group (a college consortium of libraries) demonstrates an 82.5% decrease of TS functions including acquisitions, cataloguing, and serials (Gremmels, 2013). There are many opportunities for libraries to decrease staffing levels in TS such as through attrition, or not replacing workers that resign or retire. Other avenues for lowering staff levels could be through reorganization and/or lay-offs. Zhu's (2012) survey found that most respondents perceived an overall decrease in TS staffing levels. Quotations from this study attributed this overall decrease to departures, layoffs, and retirements. Further, these positions were either moved to other departments or simply left permanently vacant. Workloads following vacancies tend to be distributed among the workers who remain in TS (Zhu, 2012). James et al.'s (2015) study also highlighted comments where a decrease in staffing was correlated to increased workloads resulting from a loss of staff with no replacement.

Increasingly Complex Workload

Not only is the workload increasing for workers left behind in shrinking TS departments, so is the complexity of the work. Turner's (2020) study compared advertisements for cataloguing jobs over a period of two years to determine whether metadata jobs were now outpacing traditional cataloguing jobs. This study found that metadata jobs were not replacing cataloguing jobs but that a skillset in metadata was required in addition to traditional cataloguing skillsets, demonstrating the increasingly complex and demanding nature of library cataloguing roles. This aligns with Gremmels' (2013) assertion that cataloguing positions are being extended, with the word 'metadata' being more commonly found in the job title. Zhu (2012) argues that it is the routine tasks that are outsourced and taught to vendors, leaving behind more complicated and analytical tasks for library TS departments. Collins and Wilson's (2018) preconference workshop reinforces the notion that staffing in TS is shrinking and that this work is transitioning from production-based to analysis-based.

Staff Reorganization

If a given library decides to outsource, reorganize, or otherwise decrease their levels of TS staffing, it raises questions regarding which duties will be performed by those TS staff who stay on. If those workers who remain do not have the required skillset to take on more complex work, libraries may be left with few alternatives such as transfer or lay-offs—assuming they are not already constrained by limits imposed by tenure or unions (Gremmels, 2013). Many libraries are positioning paraprofessionals from TS departments as front-line service providers (Gremmels, 2013; James et al., 2015). Libraries facing budget constraints are being asked to do more with less. Brooklyn Public Library combined the outsourcing of processing with a reorganization to increase its service hours (Brooklyn Public Library, 2012) and centralize TS between Brooklyn Public Library and New York Public Library (Schwartz et al., 2013). Staff reorganizations are another way in which libraries may transfer workers into newly created positions (Davis, 2016; Zhu, 2012). A reorganization at the University of Maryland included the creation of a new Discovery Librarian position (Bradley & Guay, 2019).

Clearly, library TS workers need additional training and professional development as their roles become increasingly complex and "demand technology skills that were not required in technical services in the past" (Davis, 2016, p. 59). Unfortunately, the same budget constraints that are responsible for decreasing staff levels are also likely to cause a lack of access to training opportunities. Zhu (2012) found that one of the greatest areas of concern amongst library paraprofessionals was a lack of access to training opportunities. Since TS work may be misunderstood and overlooked by library administrators (Weber, 2015), it is likely that libraries will focus on cross-training TS staff for public service work, which has the added benefit of improved collaboration and workplace culture across departments (Weng & Ackerman, 2017). Even if libraries have resources available for training TS workers, it would be an easy solution for libraries to prioritize training TS workers for public service work, citing the benefits of addressing staffing shortages on service desks combined with improved collaboration and workplace culture. The caveat to this is noted by Weber (2015) who asserts that TS work needs advocacy to avoid disappearing altogether, otherwise libraries and communities may not even realize what has been lost, nor will vendors be able to provide all that is missing. While public service work is one way in which libraries may pursue the redirection of TS staff efforts, opportunities for forging new pathways in the areas of metadata, vendor quality control, discovery, and user experience must not be overlooked. Corrado & Jaffe (2021) suggest that library assessment efforts are largely focused on public services, which could account for Weber's (2015) assertion that TS work is misunderstood and overlooked, and why TS workers' time is redirected to public services coverage and/or expanding service hours as was the case with Brooklyn Public Library and New York Public Library (Schwartz et al., 2013). Corrado & Jaffe (2021) conclude that TS assessment needs to be aligned with libraries' strategic goals and that more meaningful TS assessment could benefit from the inclusion of qualitative indicators in addition to the empirical data libraries typically collect.

Technical Services – Disappearing or Evolving?

The increasingly complex workload experienced in TS has been reflected in the trend of renaming both the departments and job titles using terminology that best conveys the nature of work currently being done. TS departments are evolving in response to what Medeiros (2010) refers to as the “new digital realm” (p. 6). Davis’ (2016) study found that the name ‘technical services’ no longer adequately represents the changing workflow in these departments and observed that alternative terms are being applied to departments, such as collections, data services, and database and bibliographic control. Davis (2016) also notes the newly emerging functions of TS in the areas of digital repositories and Linked Data. The new names found within TS departments have been outlined in the literature and include data management, digital content creation, and collection management & access (Biswas, 2021) as well as acquisitions & data services, continuing resources & database management, discovery & metadata services, and database & special collections cataloguing (Bradley & Guay, 2019). These names express the new focus of TS work on data, databases, digital, metadata, and user experience (e.g., discovery). Similarly, TS job titles are changing as well. In addition to the term ‘metadata’ appearing more frequently in cataloguing job titles, new positions have been created that now include terms such as digital technology, e-resources, systems, and discovery (Biswas, 2021; Bradley & Guay, 2019).

It could be said that TS departments are both disappearing *and* evolving at the same time. TS jobs are decreasing through attrition while TS departments are being renamed and/or reorganized (Bradley & Guay, 2019) whereby traditional areas of TS are merging with other library departments (Collins & Wilson, 2018).

User Experience

User experience and discovery is an area in which libraries may leverage the cataloguing and metadata expertise of their TS staff. Stalberg & Cronin (2011) identify several ways that TS staff expertise would shine: assessing which MARC inputs are of value to users, whether fully descriptive MARC records circulate more frequently, and the rate at which users go from brief results to full records, to name a few.

One of the greatest transformations of library users is their preference for interacting with internet search engines as opposed to library catalogues when seeking information (Lubas, 2011). The presence of MARC records in library catalogues means users must become proficient in understanding controlled vocabularies to fully utilize the information held in library catalogues. This preference for online search engines is confirmed by recent literature. Cross & Gullikson's (2020) study found that users rarely used library catalogues unless it was as a last resort. This doesn't mean that MARC records aren't useful to users, rather that these MARC records need to be to be made accessible to users. Cross & Gullikson (2020) stress the importance of MARC data appearing in discovery layers and web-based search, e.g., the "Get it" button in Google Scholar. The skillsets of TS workers may be leveraged for the reuse of MARC records by mapping MARC fields to new metadata standards. Madden's (2020) study similarly discusses the repurposing of cataloguing expertise to improve user experience.

Technical Versus Public Services

The two traditional functional areas of libraries arose from a divide between those who interacted directly with users, *Public Services*, and those who didn't, namely *Technical Services* (Bismas, 2021). This division of functional areas has led to barriers including miscommunication, stereotypes, and differences in workplace culture as discussed by Weng & Ackerman (2017) whose study found that respondents from both public services and TS agreed that 'user centered philosophy' ranked highest in terms of what the focus of TS staff should be. Bridging the divide between public services and

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TS is happening with respect to user experience and discovery. Increased collaboration was observed with University of Maryland's new discovery librarian following their reorganization and this was leveraged to "distill the benefits of the outsourcing experience" (Bradley & Guay, 2019, p. 17). Breaking down the barriers between library functional areas through collaboration and improved workplace culture could be one of the greatest benefits of the evolving TS landscape for staff and users alike. Although outsourcing leads to reduced TS staff, reorganizations that merge departments and leverage staff expertise ultimately benefits the user experience.

Knowledge Management in Technical Services

With any organizational change comes the need for strong leadership and change management practices. The success of reorganization and new initiatives is often dependent on organizational culture. Medeiros (2010) discusses a TS collaboration initiative that couldn't move forward due to the organizational culture. Library leadership needs to strategize in creating agile TS departments where transitions focus on staff involvement from the ground-up to acquire buy-in (Collins & Wilson, 2018).

Knowledge Assets

Understanding knowledge assets is an important consideration with respect to outsourcing TS work. If outsourcing leads to decreased staffing in TS, does it follow that there has been an exodus of TS knowledge away from libraries? Hillen (2019) describes outsourcing in way that means libraries are directing the work of a group of individuals that extends beyond the library's employment. This kind of relationship is not strictly client-vendor, rather a partnership in which knowledge flows from libraries to vendors, and subsequently vendors may disseminate their acquired knowledge to other libraries (Heinrich & LaFollette, 2009). This flow of knowledge requires that individuals on both ends of the partnership have the expertise to interpret and use that knowledge to further the goals of the organization. Patrick & McGurr (2019) underscore the importance of libraries understanding their own TS knowledge before outsourcing it. The authors describe outsourcing at a health library in which there were no staff fluent in TS knowledge. This undertaking led to a two-fold misunderstanding where the library couldn't communicate its needs, and the vendor didn't understand how to provide for the library's lack of knowledge.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Access

A library's use of vendors doesn't happen in a vacuum and although TS staffing may be decreasing it needn't disappear altogether. Due to outsourcing, libraries will need staff that understand the needs of the library and are able to communicate those needs to vendors. This has necessitated positions such as vendor-librarians demonstrated by the author Hillen (2019) who writes from the perspective of a vendor-librarian. The expertise of TS staff is well positioned for the advocacy of diversity, inclusion, and access in library collections. Hodges (2018) describes an example of a cataloguer who noticed an error in authorship that gave a white transcriber authorship of Sojourner Truth's works. Barriers and errors in bibliographic data can have an impact on diversity, inclusion, and access that may be identified and resolved by staff with cataloguing expertise and/or communicated to vendors via specialized positions such as vendor-librarians.

An example of TS knowledge and expertise flowing from libraries to vendors and subsequently disseminated back to libraries involves Indigenous subject headings. After accessing an open-source term list from Greater Victoria Public Library, the vendor Library Services Centre began offering bibliographic records updated with Indigenous subject headings and retrospective catalogue changes (Library Services Center, 2020). Expertise with cataloguing and metadata is not only useful for providing access and discovery by reusing legacy records and mapping them to new metadata standards, but also in information organization practices that ensure diversity and inclusion.

Conclusion

The work of library TS has evolved into increasingly complex and analysis-based work. Although this has resulted in reduced staffing and reorganizations, libraries still rely on the expertise and knowledge of TS workers, albeit under new pseudonyms, to facilitate partnerships with outsourcing vendors. TS knowledge and expertise may no longer be restricted to siloed library departments. It is now disseminated cross-departmentally, into more specialized positions. Furthermore, TS knowledge is shared via outsourcing vendors and the library community at large. As workloads become increasingly complex and demand additional skillsets, library leadership needs to take stock of existing expertise that may be leveraged towards the expanding role of libraries into metadata, electronic resources, discovery, and with emphasis on user experience as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and access. TS library workers must be supported through the provision of training and professional development opportunities so they can meet the demands of this increasingly complex workload. Moreover, strong leadership strategies that involve workers are necessary for successful change management initiatives during times of organizational restructuring. A culture of evaluation is necessary for individual libraries to determine what their own TS evolution should look like, as there is no one-size fits all model when it comes to outsourcing.

Continued assessments of the costs and benefits of outsourcing, vendor error rates, and user experience will guide libraries on the best path forward for TS work. Though many of the examples mentioned here originate from academic libraries, they are general examples that may be widely applied to a variety of library types. Future research efforts could explore knowledge audits or meaningful TS assessments that combine quantitative and qualitative indicators that directly map the existing skillsets, knowledge, and expertise of TS workers onto the expanding services offered by libraries, and the changing needs of library users. Knowledge audits or meaningful TS assessments could also identify areas for skills improvement through relevant training and professional development.

Conflict of Interest Statement

None declared.

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Examining the "Culture of Assessment" in Public Libraries

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Abstract

The introduction of the New Public Management (NPM) approach to public libraries globally brought with it a quality management paradigm typical of that used in for-profit corporations, characterized by an audit-intensive environment. This led to a desire for a "culture of assessment" to be the preferred standard within public libraries, largely in response to the threat of budget reductions and library closures. This review examines literature from the last two decades on the impact of this strategy, including themes such as the apparent consensus around library value (both in terms of qualitative facets and quantitative economic measures such as return on investment) and traditional and more recent approaches to measuring that value in both research and professional practice publications. Issues identified in the literature with the quantitative emphasis and threat narrative of the culture of assessment are discussed, as well as studies which examine the direct impact of NPM's neoliberal ideology on public libraries.

Keywords: public library, public libraries, evaluation, outcome assessment

In 2004, Lakos & Phipps wrote the seminal work on a phenomenon rapidly gaining traction within libraries: the "culture of assessment". According to their definition, a culture of assessment is "an organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research, and analysis…services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes for customers and stakeholders...staff care to know what results they produce and how those results relate to customers' expectations" (p. 352).

This outlook is consistent with the New Public Management (NPM) approach, which emphasizes, among other things, an audit-intensive environment (Düren et al., 2017; Irwin & St-Pierre, 2014; Steane et al., 2015). Lakos & Phipps (2004) also state that “libraries must transform themselves into organizations that value quality and quality management” (p. 347). This context has led to an adoption of quality management approaches common in for-profit corporations, including a focus on such tools as key performance indicators (and associated targets), cost-benefit analyses, and quality scorecards (de la Mano & Creaser, 2016; Reid, 2020). Similarly, to their use in the private sector, these outputs are designed to provide primarily quantitative assessment of library “performance” to the group Halpin et al. (2015) refer to as the “power people”, decision makers who ultimately impact library funding as opposed to patrons or library staff (p. 36).

This literature review examines the current impact of the culture of assessment specifically within public libraries, via exploration of recent published works (both academic and professional practice-oriented). It takes a broader scope than other literature reviews focused on library value (Aabø, 2009; Imholz & Arns, 2007; Matthews, 2011; Sørensen, 2020; Stenstrom et al., 2019; Vårheim et al., 2019) in that it seeks to examine not only the practices used for assessment in public libraries, but the implications of those practices. Themes that arose in the literature will be examined in depth, including the presence of a consensus on how the public library provides value, benefits, and shortcomings of common evaluation methods (particularly in the fields of economic valuation and outcome assessment), and the results of the corporate quality approach as implemented within the public library context.

Methods

Significant effort within both academic and professional organizations has been made in the field of library evaluation, for all varieties of libraries. The present review is focused on public libraries, as assessment in academic libraries is often driven by university-wide assessment strategies and has a consequently narrower focus on student and faculty requirements (Oakleaf, 2010). While certain assessment techniques and methodologies will certainly overlap, the purpose of this review is primarily to examine how the use of these methodologies are currently affecting public libraries in the context of the culture of assessment. As such, included references were subject to the following criteria:

- Resources (articles/books) describing methods and studies must have the public library context as the primary focus.
- Resources must be peer-reviewed, or published by a recognized professional organization (e.g., American Library Association) from 2001 to 2021, with emphasis given to studies published between 2016 and 2021.
- Resources must be in English (no geographic limitations).
- Review articles and meta-analyses were included if other criteria were met (reference lists were checked for substantial overlap before conclusions of these articles were presented as independent results).

To initially identify eligible resources, the above criteria were applied to subject search for (“public library” OR “public libraries”) AND (“assessment” OR “evaluation”) within the EBSCO Library and Information Science Source database (69 results) and the ProQuest Library & Information Science Abstracts (LISA) database (229 results). Review of titles and abstracts to isolate studies addressing the chosen topics, plus additional studies added based on references within resulted in a final sample of 47 studies.

Analysis and Commentary

Value of Public Libraries: Central Ideas and Common Facets

An interesting theme that emerged from reviewing the selected studies is the general consensus around the areas in which libraries impart value to the public (Halpin et al., 2015; Matthews, 2011; McMenemy, 2007; Sørensen, 2020; Stenstrom et al., 2019; Vårheim et al., 2019), even amongst municipal decision makers who may or may not be public library users themselves (Gazo, 2011). Stenstrom et al. (2019), in a review of over 130 resources from 1998-2018, identified three “umbrella” areas of support provided by libraries: support for personal advancement (e.g., knowledge, emotional wellness), support for vulnerable populations (e.g., those experiencing homelessness, immigrants and literacy learners), and support for community development (e.g., social infrastructure and community resilience). A systemic review by Vårheim et al. (2019), on current literature of the library as a public sphere institution, also calls out community development and explicitly identifies the service areas the public library offers to create these supports: community focused services such as meeting places and specific programs for marginalized populations, knowledge organization, provision of new tools and services, institutional structures and practices, and sources of funding.

While there is agreement within the literature on the ways in which libraries provide value, there is less concurrence on the methods by which that value is measured. Are the crucial measures of library value strictly in economic value, as in studies which address the “return on investment” provided by public libraries (Aabø, 2009; Imholz & Arns, 2007)? Where these cumulative measures do not provide sufficient detail, how should libraries assess outcomes and impacts on a program or service level (Lyons, 2012)? In the following sections, a review of recent literature on both traditional and current approaches is presented.

Traditional Methods of Library Assessment

Library Valuation and the Rise of Corporate Metrics

Beginning in the early 2000s, in response to the same concerns expressed in Lakos & Phipps (2004), substantial effort was made in the literature (Aabø, 2009; Imholz & Arns, 2007; Matthews, 2011) to explore the field of library valuation; that is, to obtain an estimate of the monetary worth of libraries, framed as a “return on investment” (ROI) for taxpayers. Aabø’s (2009) preliminary synthesis of valuation studies returned the following conclusion “for each dollar of taxpayers’ money invested in public libraries, the libraries – on average – return a value to the citizens of four to five times more” (p. 322), which is consistent with the result of $4 to $6 of ROI presented in Matthews (2011). While both Aabø (2009) and Imholz & Arns (2007) caution that the field of public library valuation was “young” at the time of their reviews, publications in peer reviewed journals since these reviews were published are limited. Additionally, a number of these more recent articles are focussed on mitigating identified shortcomings of a strict cost-benefit analysis. McIntosh (2013) attempts to address the wide variation in estimation of cost savings to the patron used in the cost-benefit calculation by using a contingent valuation approach. De Leon (2021) evaluates a Social Return on Investment (SROI) metric in a public library setting, with the aim of quantitatively accounting for “social values created by activities and investments” (p. 177). However, Matthews (2011) indicates that the utility of such valuation studies is limited when applied to justification of library budgets; the ROI figure may not be sufficiently “compelling” (p. 10) on its own. As a cumulative representation of library services, it also does not provide sufficient information for libraries themselves to make decisions about their operations; none of the review articles (Aabø, 2009; Imholz & Arns, 2007; Matthews, 2011) provided a synthesized breakdown of the valuation for individual programs and services. In the corporate context from which it was drawn, ROI is appealing as a simplistic cost-benefit metric to compare the potential or realized profitability of different projects while abstracting away from the details of those projects (Phillips & Phillips, 2006). The significant work done in the field of library valuation and library ROI as described here indicates a similar desire for a simple measure of “value”. However, even in the corporate context proper use and interpretation of ROI can be nuanced (Friedlob & Plewa, 1996) and it is not self-evident that a metric designed to compare profitability between revenue-generating enterprises is appropriate for use here.

A Broader View: Outcome Assessment

Indeed, as this limited applicability of strictly economic measures was recognized early in the literature (Usherwood, 2002), significant attention in the past two decades has also been given to providing libraries with methodologies to support assessments of library services and program outcomes. Outcome assessment has multiple different definitions within the literature (Lyons, 2012), but they are consistent in their focus on benefits to the library patron (e.g., parents who bring their children to story time see increases in early literacy) versus benefits to the library (e.g., the library sees an increase in circulation of children’s books). In particular, the Public Library Association (PLA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has created a series of resources to assist public libraries with defining and executing outcome assessment programs (American Library Association, 2021; Nelson, 2008; Rubin, 2006). These resources, among others (Lyons, 2012) advocate for a basic cyclical assessment process which begins a planning phase that identifies overarching values and principles, as well as goals and objectives. The intention is that these planning steps are to be performed with input from the community (Nelson, 2008, pp. 35-42; Rubin, 2006, p.5). From there, a gradual shift in responsibility to library staff occurs to define the possible service responses and/or programs, the metrics to collect and the subsequent data analysis. Identified metrics for collection and analysis can take a number of forms, including:

- Direct measures of the program or service being evaluated, such as number of attendees, program cost or participant questionnaires (Rubin, 2006).
- Proxy measures, including library-oriented statistics such as regular expenditures, number of staff, collection and circulation counts, patron visits, reference transactions and numbers of programs offered. In the U.S., these statistics are also collected nationwide by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and reported in the PLA's benchmarking report (Public Library Association, 2021).

While it is recognized that the "benchmarking" statistics listed above are insufficient for adequately evaluating program or service-level outcomes, direct measures that are quantitative in nature are often prioritized over qualitative approaches in professional practice publications. Rubin (2006) defines program indicators as "a statistic that summarizes the user's achievement of an outcome" (p. 33). Indicators in this framework are necessarily paired with a target, defined as "the proportion or quantity of participants that must meet an indicator for the program as a whole to be considered successful" (Rubin, 2006, p. 38). This strategy is consistent with the corporate quality management framework discussed in the Introduction.

However, it was difficult to find purely quantitative studies in the recent literature using this or similar approaches. Current published quantitative efforts (Chow & Tian, 2019; Crawford & Syme, 2018; Mathiasson & Jochumsen, 2020) seem focussed on reviews of existing library records as described in Rubin (2006, pp. 45-46), with an emphasis on novel data analytics techniques drawn from the "big data" field. For example, Chow & Tian (2019) investigate predictive relationships between circulation statistics and community "quality of life" indicators such as educational level, median household income, and number of jobs.

Concerns with Strictly Quantitative Approaches

Numerous articles have highlighted difficulties with a strict preference for primarily quantitative studies (Closter, 2015; Irwin & Silk, 2019; Irwin & St-Pierre, 2014; Lyons, 2012), which may explain the recent shift away from such approaches in the research. The leading concerns center around (a) an awareness that the quantitative approach can only measure what is measurable, and may be missing crucial context (Closter, 2015); and (b) the quantitative results may lead to inappropriate generalization of the conclusions (Lyons, 2012). Specifically, evaluations designed to use quantitative outcomes to represent overall library value without considering social impacts can result in libraries “exist[ing] in a correlation trap of their own making” (Irwin & Silk, 2019, p. 325) when stakeholders directly correlate metrics associated with number of card-holders, circulation statistics and program attendance (simply because they are measurable) with the quality of public library service outside of the context in which those metrics are produced, changes in those metrics may lead to incorrect conclusions about the value of the library to the public. Rubin (2006) explicitly points out that the method proposed in her book is not intended to use the “systematic methodology or standardized framework of social science” (e.g., there is no formal sampling procedure, or control group) and therefore it is not possible to discern if change in the specified indicator is as a result of the program or service, limiting the use of any quantitative predictions from the results in future planning. As such, many recent studies on outcome assessment in public libraries make use of either mixed-methods or primarily qualitative approaches, a summary of which is given in the next section.

Current approaches to library assessment

Given the potential gaps introduced by the focus on primarily quantitative studies, a frequent remedy is to adopt a mixed-methods approach, where both quantitative and qualitative tools are used for evaluation (Armas, 2019; Becker et al., 2009; Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Greene & McMenemy, 2012; Nwofor & Chinyere, 2015; Oliphant, 2014; Pabērza, 2010). The most commonly used tool is a questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended responses to allow for both the calculation of statistics and deeper dives into the context. For example, Pabērza (2010) used this approach (augmented by focus groups) to assess public library usage and value perception in Latvian public libraries.

Oliphant (2014) performed a comparative study on impressions of public library value in Alberta from both users and non-users via phone surveys that asked both quantitative questions such as how much the participant would pay for an annual membership fee (p. 353) and qualitative interview-style questions such as the participant's perception of library staff (p. 357). Armas (2019) also used a combined questionnaire and in-depth interview strategy to demonstrate the impact of the public library on the lives of older adults in Cuba.

Literature on mixed-methods approaches of the type described above tends to focus on larger populations, due to the need for sufficient data collection for statistical analysis. There is a recognition that scenarios involving smaller groups of participants (such as local programming) may be better served through primarily qualitative study designs such as case studies (Gahagan & Calvert, 2019; Streatfield et al., 2019; Teasdale, 2020), focus groups (Bishop et al., 2003; Elbeshausen, 2007), expert panels (Halpin et al., 2015) and in-depth one-on-one interviews (Aptekar, 2019; Griffis & Johnson, 2014; Johnson, 2012; Liew et al., 2021; Valdivia & Subramaniam, 2014; Vårheim, 2014). As an example, Liew et al. (2021) use interviews with a small population (where "small" in this instance refers to a sample size of 8) to conduct a phenomenological study on digitized Indigenous knowledge collections that spotlight key cultural values that "have not been embodied in previous value-impact frameworks" (p. 1588). Public library makerspaces are identified as an area where the heterogeneity of maker usage patterns makes a quantitative assessment of outcomes difficult, leading researchers to pursue study designs that include participant-defined success criteria (Teasdale, 2020) and "storytelling" by librarians observing the makerspace users (Gahagan & Calvert, 2019). Evaluation of the social capital created by libraries is a clear topic of interest in the literature, with both patron and library staff interviews forming the core of the study methodology (Aptekar, 2019; Griffis & Johnson, 2014; Johnson, 2012; Vårheim, 2014). Action research (MacDonald, 2012; Streatfield et al., 2019) also provides a potential avenue for exploration; an example of this approach is given in Bishop et al. (2003) where a participatory action research (PAR) framework was used to build a collection of digital tools and resources for women's health in collaboration with

African American women and other community partners. Through methods such as the use of discussion groups to build scenarios and a community action plan, and situated user evaluations, local knowledge was placed at the center of the design process and assessment was presented as a collaborative concept useful throughout the project lifecycle that built capacity within the diverse community as they worked toward social change. Streatfield et al. (2019) similarly used PAR as a key methodology in the Global Libraries Initiative.

It should be noted that these qualitative approaches are identified as possible tools within practice-oriented handbooks like Rubin’s (2006), despite the upfront focus on quantitative indicators and targets. ISO 16439, the standard for impact assessment in libraries (Creaser, 2018; International Standards Organisation, 2014), indicates that the recommended methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative) are “most effective in demonstrating impact when used in combination” (Creaser, 2018, p. 90). As mentioned previously, the difficulty is that, regardless of context, quantitative measures are often presented as superior to qualitative ones, despite the noted shortcomings and the potential loss of opportunity to collect a richer data set (Gahagan & Calvert, 2019). Studies making use of primarily qualitative approaches often contain justifications for why a quantitative study was not performed, indicating a belief that quantitative approaches are the default, and deviations must be accounted for.

In summary, it is clear from the literature that a need exists for public libraries to have some kind of evaluation system in place. Even if it was possible in the present political climate to successfully argue that libraries represent a public good and are therefore entitled to a portion of public funds independent of any evaluation processes, decisions would still need to be made about how to allocate those funds: staffing, collections, programming, infrastructure (and its maintenance) among other potential sources of expenditure. An appropriate, effective evaluation system can help library staff and administration make decisions that are congruent with the needs of the community and the library’s stated goals (Magnus et al., 2018; Nelson, 2008). This library and community-centric use of the tools of assessment can be clouded, in practice, by the neoliberal narrative wherein the public library is a “quasi-market”, and the patrons are “customers” (McMenemy, 2009, p. 400). As has been previously discussed, quantitative methodologies which can provide “performance indicators” can be elevated within this narrative above qualitative approaches that may indeed yield the information necessary to make appropriate community focussed decisions.

Therefore, the underlying premise upon which the “culture of assessment” has been promoted has introduced two paradigms that must be addressed: (a) despite widespread use (and endorsement in professional practice publications) of a variety of assessment tools, the available options are placed into a “validity” hierarchy with quantitative tools at the top level, as discussed in this section; and (b) the need for outcome assessment is typically presented as a threat-response to the very existence of public libraries (Farkas, 2013; Greene & McMenemy, 2012; Lakos & Phipps, 2004). This second point will be discussed in detail in the next section.

The Future of Outcome Assessment in Public Libraries

Lakos & Phipps (2004) state that “to successfully respond to threats to their survival and demands for better, faster delivery of information, libraries have to incorporate assessment into their everyday activities” (p. 351). This kind of framing is in stark contrast to the activities suggested by the literature as necessary for successful implementations of a “culture of assessment”. Common guidance includes establishing a formal assessment program where the requirements and goals are clear to all involved, involving external experts, providing training in research methodology and assessment techniques, implementing a decision support system, and defining a pathway whereby assessment outcomes are available for use in strategic planning and programming (Farkas, 2013; Hiller et al., 2008; Irwin & St-Pierre, 2014; Lakos & Phipps, 2004; Lyons, 2012; Rubin, 2006). The common thread in all these recommendations is that they all speak to lengthy processes that will require both time and funding; it is not surprising that presenting them within the anxiety-producing context of impending threat to survival has not produced the desired engagement. Farkas (2013) calls this to attention specifically in the discussion of needing to create “a sense of urgency” when promoting organizational change, “Urgency is not driven by fear or anxiety, but by opportunities and a sense of possibility. Therefore, a change message designed to create a sense of urgency should not be fear-producing” (p. 19). Interestingly, the solution to the lack of engagement with assessment programs is presented as a need for cultural shift within the population under threat, complete with statements from management about how the staff are unwilling to engage in additional work (Irwin & St-Pierre, 2014, p. 7). It is not clear from the literature if this *a priori* assumption that culture change of the type described is required when building assessment programs was ever challenged, or alternative means proposed.

Although many provide commentary, some studies (Düren et al., 2017, Greene & McMenemy, 2012) have engaged directly with the question “What is the impact of the neoliberal ideology on public libraries?” Greene & McMenemy (2012) demonstrate via a mixed-methods discourse analysis that the introduction of neoliberal language reinforces “negative stereotypes of a service in distress”, which can only be addressed via ensuring “value for money” (p. 34). Düren et al. (2017), despite a positive concluding evaluation of NPM, were not able to demonstrate that the adoption of NPM ideologies (and corresponding assessment approaches) were successful in preventing the closure of libraries. While the number of these studies directly addressing the outcomes of the introduction of NPM into public library management are limited, they do indicate a need to explore the applicability of the underlying premise upon which NPM is based to the public library context. It is not apparent from the present review of the literature, even key foundational papers advocating for the “culture of assessment” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004), if the question “Is a corporate quality approach to assessment appropriate for a non-revenue-focused public organization?” had been asked, or the conclusion simply taken as axiomatic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is ample evidence in the literature that stakeholders and decision makers agree on how the public library provides value, and that librarians and LIS researchers can use a wide variety of study methodologies to establish that value at multiple population scales from individual groups at local branches to multinational efforts. What is less apparent is if these efforts are having the effect promised by the culture of assessment narrative. Are public libraries in general seeing relief from the impending threats of closure as a result of determining their ROI, measuring their benchmarking statistics and creating balanced scorecards? Are public libraries better off for having started to think of their patron community as “customers” and evaluating programs and services in that context? These are open research questions, as is the following: is it time to reclaim the assessment narrative from the capitalist context in which it has been placed, and put it back in service to public librarians themselves, so that they may in turn serve their communities?

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Public Libraries and the Social Inclusion of Homeless People: A Literature Review

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Abstract
Public libraries have an ethical and professional responsibility to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for their entire patron community, including those individuals experiencing homelessness, in part by providing equal and equitable access to information and library services. This literature review examines the small but growing body of LIS literature—both internationally and in the Canadian context—on the self-reported informational and social needs of people experiencing homelessness, and their use of public libraries. Key findings reveal that while some homeless people use public library spaces to meet basic physiological needs, most visit public libraries for many of the same reasons as their housed counterparts. Importantly, homeless library users indicated that spending time at the library contributed to their sense of belonging and social inclusion. The literature also demonstrated a clear trend toward partnerships between public libraries and professional support agencies to better address patrons' needs. Services relevant to homeless people should be developed in consultation or collaboration with this target group to ensure that resulting recommendations are appropriate to their needs, reduce or remove barriers to equal access, and contribute positively to social inclusion.

Keywords: Homelessness, information needs, social inclusion, Canada, public libraries, library services, public spaces, social participation.

Homeless people have the right to participate fully in a democratic society through equal and equitable access to information and library services (ALA, 2006; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Kosmicki, 2020), but often face a range of barriers that deny or abridge these rights and thus perpetuate social exclusion (IFLA, 2017). Most relevant research in this area has focused on the opinions and perspectives of library staff members (Anderson et al., 2012; Giesler, 2017; Torrey et al., 2009), while the voices of people experiencing homelessness have rarely been included in the library discourse on their needs. Provence (2018) observes that library services for people experiencing homelessness, “when they exist, for the most part have been designed *for* them rather than *with* them” (p. 1060). Considered to be one of the last free public spaces, libraries are uniquely positioned to help meet the needs of patrons experiencing homelessness and, in doing so, facilitate equal access and promote social inclusion.

While Canadian libraries are developing partnerships to provide services to this population, individuals experiencing homelessness are not being systematically consulted about their needs. A database search of the peer-reviewed literature of the past twenty years revealed eleven published studies that specifically included the input of people experiencing homelessness about their use of public libraries. Of these, five were from the United States (Hersberger, 2001, 2005; Kelleher, 2013; Mi et al., 2014; Provence et al., 2021), three from New Zealand (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Zhang & Chawner, 2018), one from the United Kingdom (Muggleton & Ruthven, 2010), and one from France (Gaudet, 2013). Research on how public libraries support the self-reported needs of patrons experiencing homelessness in Canada remains an under-studied area, with only one scholarly study in the Canadian context (Richter et al., 2019). Next, the references of each article found were searched in order to locate additional sources, revealing a conference paper (Skinner, 2016), a book chapter reporting on the results of a case study of a public library in a large urban area (Winkelstein, 2019), and an article in a professional publication (Giudice, 2017), all from the United States. In total, the search process uncovered 14 resources published from 2001 to 2021.

This literature review begins with current demographic information about homelessness in Canada, explores the role of public libraries in meeting the information and services needs of homeless library patrons, discusses barriers to equal access and considerations when targeting public library services for people experiencing homelessness, and concludes with an overview of field research on homeless people’s use of public libraries from their own point of view.

Homelessness in Canada

Homelessness is a broad term that encompasses a range of specific housing situations and temporal dimensions (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020). For many people, homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter or housing circumstances may shift frequently. Homelessness may also be understood within a continuum of physical living situations—from *absolute homelessness*, that is, sleeping on the street or in places not intended for human habitation, or in emergency shelters, to *hidden homelessness*, for example, 'couchsurfing' with friends or family, and finally, to *relative homelessness*, which is living in substandard shelter and/or being at risk of losing one's home (Gaetz et al., 2017).

Echenberg and Munn-Rivard (2020) note the challenges of enumerating a population "that lacks a permanent address or fixed location, that includes many 'hidden homeless,' and that is always in flux, as individuals move in and out of homelessness" (p. 6). Point in Time (PiT) counts offer an unduplicated measure on a single night of the people in a given community who are experiencing absolute homelessness (Government of Canada, 2021). A nationally coordinated Canadian PiT count, which took place in 2018, reported that "on a given night, more than 25,000 people were experiencing absolute homelessness in shelters or unsheltered locations in 61 communities across Canada" (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020, p. 9). However, actual numbers of Canadians experiencing homelessness may potentially be much higher, as PiT snapshots estimate only absolute homelessness, due to difficulties associated with measuring hidden or relative homelessness (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020; Gaetz et al., 2017).

Visible homelessness is highly stigmatized because mainstream Canadian society views it as a form of social deviance or personal moral failing (IFLA, 2017; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). Overcoming these prejudices is necessary to increase understanding of homelessness and to "allow libraries to offer more efficient and sustainable services for all users, regardless of their social and living status, in keeping with the mission of a public library to provide equitable services to all members of its community" (Zhang & Chawner, 2018, p. 281).

Role of Public Libraries

Public libraries are "perhaps the last remaining indoor public spaces where an individual can remain from opening until closing without needing any reason to be there and without having to spend any money” (Barclay, 2017, pp. 270-271). For people experiencing homelessness, libraries are a welcoming and free public space offering shelter from inclement weather, washroom facilities, and safety (Anderson et al., 2012; Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Kelleher, 2013; Winkelstein, 2019; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). However, presenting public libraries as a refuge in a purely physical sense seriously underestimates the role that they can play in the lives of people experiencing homelessness (Muggleton, 2013). Homeless people also access and use a range of library resources and, as such, public libraries are increasingly partnering with local service providers to meet the diverse needs of this heterogeneous user group.

Moxley and Abbas (2016) describe public libraries functioning as “community anchors for at-risk and vulnerable populations” through their potential for collaboration with social agencies to deliver services to people experiencing homelessness (p. 311). While public library staff recognize the importance of collaboration with social service agencies that serve the unhoused population (Giesler, 2017), approaches to meeting the needs of library users experiencing homelessness tend to be largely organic in nature and not formalized in policy or procedure (Anderson et al., 2012; Giesler, 2017).

Library staff have reported challenges in balancing the needs of varied library user groups when some, such as those experiencing homelessness, present with distinct and often complex needs that place considerable demands on libraries (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Torrey et al., 2009), and that library staff report as being beyond the scope of their knowledge, skills, and training (Aykanian et al., 2019). To address this issue, Anderson et al. (2012) recommend the development of training programs to enable library staff to liaise effectively with professional support organizations and link homeless patrons with service providers. Likewise, Richter et al. (2019) suggest that library staff may “play a pivotal role for socially vulnerable users as conduits to community services” (p. 437).

A growing LIS literature recognizes the value of partnering with social agencies to better address patrons’ needs (Aykanian et al., 2020; Moxley & Abbas, 2016; Provence, 2018; Wahler et al., 2020). For example, in 2009, the San Francisco Public Library became the first North American library to hire a social worker as a long-term solution addressing the well-being of its most vulnerable library patrons (Giesler, 2019).

Wahler et al. (2020) note the overlapping goals between social work and the work of public libraries, and make several recommendations for partnerships that will more effectively serve library patrons with unmet psychosocial needs. Collins et al. (2009) describe how a San Jose, California library collaborated with several social service agencies to provide *pro bono* legal services, employment workshops, and health services information for homeless people, as well as to provide training designed to help library staff more confidently and compassionately address the needs of homeless patrons. Similarly, Emoke (2015) describes how the Toronto Public Library has partnered with Toronto Public Health to provide in-branch public health nurses who assist library patrons in connecting with mental health and addiction resources. Some libraries have hired formerly homeless peer support specialists to supplement the efforts of social workers in providing support to homeless library patrons; people in these roles have first-hand experience in dealing with these services themselves, giving them insight into which resources and programs may be most useful (Kelleher, 2013; Skinner, 2016).

Social Inclusion and Barriers to Access

Public libraries are, in the ideal sense, inclusive public spaces that try to meet the unique needs of the communities they serve (Lankes, 2016). The American Library Association's *Library Services to the Poor* (2006) policy and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) *Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness* (2017) promote equal access to information and libraries' role in enabling all patrons' full participation in a democratic society. This places a professional and moral responsibility on library staff to advocate for the information rights of people experiencing poverty and homelessness, and to create an inclusive and welcoming public library environment (ALA, 2006; Aykanian et al., 2020; Hodgetts et al., 2008).

For many people experiencing homelessness, the public library is a neutral, safe space that can offer a sense of inclusion in the community, a place where they can be ordinary citizens participating in ordinary everyday activities, such as reading the newspaper or using the computer (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012;

Skinner, 2016). In interviews with homeless adults, Richter et al. (2019) found that when people experiencing homelessness use the public space of the library, “they go from being invisible to being visible, active participants of society” and, in doing so, assert public acceptability. These findings echo those of Hodgetts et al. (2008), who found that occupying public spaces, such as public libraries, allows people experiencing homelessness to resist exclusionary practices and perceptions of ‘otherness.’

Reducing barriers to access can result in a “feeling of legitimacy for a homeless person who is not welcome in many other public arenas” (Kelleher, 2013, p. 23). The requirement of having a permanent address to obtain a library card presents a significant barrier to access for homeless individuals (Dowdell & Liew, 2019). Similarly, overdue fines and fees for public computer use are an equity issue, disproportionately affecting low-income patrons and those experiencing homelessness (Collins et al., 2009; Kelleher, 2013). Library policies such as those related to offensive odours, carrying large bags or bedrolls, sleeping in the library, or other conduct policies can also be seen as implicitly discriminatory towards homeless people (Provence, 2018; Richter et al., 2019; Winkelstein, 2019). Patron behaviour policies that impact access to information should be clearly outlined and equally enforced (Hersberger, 2005). However, the attitudes and biases of staff and other library patrons often present the most significant barriers for equal access to public library services (Giesler, 2017; IFLA, 2019; Kelleher, 2013). Hersberger (2005) criticizes the tendency of some librarians to label homeless users as ‘problem patrons,’ noting that such discriminatory stereotyping can lead to action, or inaction, that excludes homeless people, and may cause them to believe that they are not welcome in public libraries.

Developing Inclusive Public Library Services

People experiencing homelessness are not a monolithic or homogeneous group and encompass a spectrum of ages, genders, ethnicities, and reasons for becoming homeless (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020; Kosmicki, 2020; Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012). Accordingly, each person who comes to the library is a unique individual with their own concerns and needs. For instance, “homeless veterans… might have very different information needs and service needs than homeless families” (Hersberger, 2005, p. 199). It is important not to make assumptions about the needs of homeless people based on this one facet of their circumstance. Providing services to people experiencing homelessness may challenge library staff understandings of what homelessness looks like; for example, early in the efforts of the Dallas Public Library to engage homeless individuals, a GED class was assumed to be a programming priority—a misconception confronted when a survey of their homeless patrons revealed that many had college degrees (Giudice, 2017).

When developing public library initiatives for homeless people, libraries must consider whether framing these programs and services in terms of homelessness is actually helpful or necessary. Muggleton (2013) cautions against Othering homeless people through targeted services, noting that "there is a significant risk that, by developing initiatives specifically targeting homeless people, a dichotomy develops whereby homeless library users are perceived as distinct from non-homeless library users" (p. 12). Given the stigmatization associated with homelessness, accessing initiatives explicitly targeting the homeless may 'out' those who would prefer to dissociate themselves from that label or otherwise create unnecessary obstacles (Muggleton, 2013). Instead, libraries seeking to achieve greater social equity aim to incorporate a diversity of identities and experiences reflective of the diversity of the community itself into generalized and inclusive programming (Kosmicki, 2020; Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012).

Public library services for people experiencing homelessness include both off-site outreach programs as well as in-library service design and delivery (Giesler, 2017). For example, Toronto Public Library's Bookmobile Shelter Outreach program, which visits family shelters, engaged with close to 500 shelter residents over a three-year period (Emoke, 2015; Hepburn, 2018). Likewise, Wong (2009) describes how the San Francisco Public Library offered story times and movie screenings at shelters for homeless children. Forming these types of alliances allows library programs to be held in locations more convenient for attendees (Zhang & Chawner, 2018), a partial solution to the transportation issues identified by Hersberger (2001).

Generalized in-library services and programming inclusive of people experiencing homelessness may include information and digital literacy classes

(Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Skinner, 2016); legal services (Collins et al., 2009; Kosmicki, 2020); job and life skill programs, movie screenings (Collins et al., 2009; Skinner, 2016); children's storytimes, reader's advisory, parenting concerns, teen events, book clubs or discussion groups, and author visits (Kosmicki, 2020). Many of the programs already provided by public libraries can be helpful to the homeless population, with just a few minor adjustments. For example, Collins et al. (2009) noted that the library's computer skills classes typically include information on computer basics, software, and Internet use; to customize the content to the needs of people experiencing homelessness, the workshop might focus on practical skills, such as how to find employment opportunities or how to locate resources on local government agency websites. Providing generalized library services and programming, rather than targeted services, supports social inclusion by increasing homeless individuals' opportunities for interaction and participation in everyday activities as equal citizens (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Gaudet, 2013; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Provence, 2018).

Other researchers stress the importance of consultation and collaboration with target groups to ensure their needs are included when planning library services (Giesler, 2017; Muggleton, 2013; Provence, 2018). The IFLA *Guidelines* (2017) suggest that libraries planning to provide services for people experiencing homelessness conduct an assessment of needed resources and programs. This needs assessment should include direct interaction with people experiencing homelessness to ensure that resulting recommendations will benefit and be relevant to these patrons (IFLA, 2017; Provence, 2018). Unfortunately, the literature indicates that this approach is still relatively uncommon. An IFLA (2017) survey of fifty public libraries worldwide revealed only four libraries that specifically mentioned a needs assessment that included direct interaction with people experiencing homelessness. All four discussed establishing relationships with patrons experiencing homelessness as their primary method of determining how the library can best meet the needs of the communities it serves, including homeless persons in general. Vancouver Public Library, for example, encourages its library staff to regularly spend time where homeless people gather, such as shelters and food banks, while staff of the Multnomah County Library frequently visit social service agencies to chat with people using the services and deliver resource materials (IFLA, 2017). Other research acknowledges the challenges of recruitment, pointing out that the stigma associated with homelessness requires sensitivity in approaching patrons (Provence, 2018; Skinner, 2016). To overcome this difficulty, the Forsyth Public Library administered its survey to all patrons, with a question about residence with a response option of ‘no permanent address,’ thereby allowing them to identify the needs of homeless patrons without the risk of offending patrons (Skinner, 2016).

Field Research in the LIS Literature

Studies from Western countries on the use of public libraries by homeless people from their own point of view are sparse but help to show the varied reasons why people experiencing homelessness use public libraries. In the U.S., Hersberger (2001) interviewed homeless parents (*n* = 28) living in family shelters and identified their top general and information needs as related to finances (96%), childcare (82%), employment (76%), and long-term housing (75%). Hersberger’s (2005) research also revealed the importance of sequence when addressing the information needs of the homeless. For example, some homeless parents may be seeking information on employment, but a list of jobs might be useless information without a public transit schedule or information on affordable childcare (Hersberger, 2005). Mi et al. (2014) found that the 22 homeless adults interviewed in their research expressed a wide range of health information needs and reported accessing health or medical information via the Internet, often using the computers available at the public library. Another study on the topic surveyed housed and unhoused patrons of a large midwestern U.S. public library system and found that, among homeless patrons (*n* = 213), the most commonly reported information needs were how to find permanent housing (38.5%) and employment (38%), closely followed by financial needs (34.3%) and transportation (32.9%) (Provence et al., 2021).

A qualitative study of five urban LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness identified safety as their primary reason for using the library (Winkelstein, 2019). Interviews with homeless adults have also found that some people experiencing homelessness come to the library because of proximity to shelters and bus routes

(Giesler, 2017) or to meet basic physiological needs, such as using the washroom, resting or sleeping, and avoiding the elements (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Kelleher, 2013; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). However, most homeless people reported visiting public libraries for many of the same reasons as their housed counterparts: to access computers for informational and recreational purposes; to read for pleasure or to catch up on news; to socialize; and to attend library programming such as job and life skills programs, book clubs, or movie screenings (Giesler, 2017; Giudice, 2017; Kelleher, 2013; Skinner, 2016; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). Moreover, some library patrons experiencing homelessness indicated that spending time at the library contributed to meeting higher-level needs, such as the sense of belonging and social inclusion (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). Similarly, annual surveys of Dallas Public Library patrons experiencing homelessness reveal that some of their most successful programs for this target group address intellectual needs and personal enrichment, such as creative writing and music lessons, rather than topics such as housing or employment (Giudice, 2017). Giudice (2017) suggests that this may be because “so many homelessness relief partners are overwhelmed with meeting basic needs that the intellectual and community needs of individuals go unmet” (p. 14).

The scholarly, peer-reviewed literature revealed only one Canadian study (Richter et al., 2019) that specifically included the voices of homeless people on how they use the spaces and resources of the public library, but results of this study mirror the above findings of studies in other Western countries. In their research, Richter et al. (2019) used surveys of nearly four thousand library users, both housed and unhoused, of the Edmonton Public Library (EPL), as well as focus groups with homeless adults, to discover how homeless people utilized EPL’s space and resources, and to evaluate how well the library was meeting the needs of these homeless adults. Data indicate that both housed and unhoused patrons use the library in much the same way—"for library-specific programs (attending events, reading, studying, working, researching, using computers) and non-library-specific activities (asking questions, hanging out with friends, using restrooms, and taking a break from the weather)” (Richter et al., 2019, p. 436). Their research also found that EPL’s social outreach program—which refers patrons to local services related to housing, substance-use support, social services, and legal information—is highly valued by those who use the service (Richter et al., 2019); this finding in the Canadian context aligns with research in other Western countries reporting the importance of partnering with outside organizations to deliver services that support and enhance the success of libraries' entire patron community (Aykanian et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2009; Moxley & Abbas, 2016; Provence, 2018; Wahler et al., 2020).

Future Directions

This literature review has identified a number of gaps in the scholarly literature on homelessness, public libraries, and social inclusion. For instance, most research on the use of public libraries by homeless people has focused on the opinions and perspectives of library staff members; relatively few studies have included the voices of people experiencing homelessness themselves—and even less inquiry has been undertaken into the lived experiences of homeless library users in the Canadian context. Future investigation with homeless adults concentrating on their use of general library services and services targeted specifically toward individuals experiencing homelessness, and how their engagement with these services impacts their perceptions of social inclusion, may offer insights into if and how public libraries' policies, practices, and services support the informational and social needs of their homeless demographic. In turn, these insights may inform the development of public library policies and practices that more effectively meet the needs of library users experiencing homelessness and that help ensure equal and equitable access and promote social inclusion. Further research with homeless individuals who do not use libraries is also necessary to better understanding and removing or reducing barriers to library use.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a prevalent and ongoing social issue in Canada (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020). For people experiencing homelessness, public libraries are often a neutral, safe public space that can offer a sense of social inclusion (Hodgetts et al., 2008); however, homeless patrons may face barriers, such as library policies or prejudices of staff and other patrons, when accessing library resources (Kelleher, 2013). An important part of the mandate of public libraries is to respond to the changing needs of library users (ALA, 2006; IFLA, 2017); however, libraries have reported challenges in assisting patrons who present with needs not traditionally addressed in that space (Dowdell & Liew, 2019; Torrey et al., 2009). As such, libraries are increasingly hiring or partnering with social service providers to meet the complex needs of this user group (Aykanian et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2009; Wahler et al., 2020).

Public library initiatives for homeless people that are generalized and inclusive of diverse identities and experiences—reflective of the diversity of the community served—may avoid contributing to further stigmatization of this already-marginalized group (Muggleton, 2013). IFLA's *Guidelines* (2017) suggest that libraries planning to provide services inclusive of people experiencing homelessness conduct a thorough needs analysis which includes the perspectives of this population themselves, to fully understand the range of their needs. Using these insights to inform library policy and practice will help to ensure that resulting recommendations are relevant to the needs of homeless people, facilitate equal access, and contribute positively to social inclusion.

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The Relationship Between a Historical Manuscript and its Digital Surrogate

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Abstract

Through the digitization of rare or special manuscripts, academics have researched the impact of digitization and its relationship with the physical manuscript itself. Past literature has focused on how the digital can complement the physical, the changing manuscript's identity when its digitized, and past research around the quality of a digital surrogate. The importance of carefully considering the impact of the quality of a digitized manuscript is essential. However, every edition (physical or digital) changes in some way and moves further from the original, be it an issue with the digitization or pages being removed or altered in the physical manuscript. Though some scholars find that content may be lost when digitized, there can also be more information added by cataloguers. Ultimately, digital surrogates allow for wider access, but their quality must be considered and properly addressed in research. A researcher who is aware of and within their work clearly states the relationship between the digital surrogate and the physical manuscript will find that it is a great support for any researcher.

Keywords: digitization of manuscripts; rare manuscripts; digital surrogates; digital research; digital scholarship

The digitization of rare or special manuscripts increases accessibility within academia. However, the high costs of digitization can deter institutions from implementing it, and proper consideration of why and how digitization is conducted is necessary (van Lit, 2019). Primarily, scholars have speculated that nuances are left behind when historical manuscripts are digitized. Throughout this review, the term ‘digital surrogate’ is used based on van Lit’s (2019) definition that these digitized manuscripts are substitutes for the physical manuscript and can replace the original item in a limited manner (p. 52). The use of the term digital surrogate draws attention to the fact that it is not an identical copy of a manuscript. A close analysis of the work done around how the digital surrogate could complement the physical manuscript, the changing manuscript’s identity when its digitized, and the impact on research around the quality of a digital surrogate could provide insight into the value of using a digital surrogate and the nuances that might be left behind. Investigating the digitization of these manuscripts opens an avenue to discover if something is lost when physical manuscripts are digitized and the existing relationship between a physical manuscript and its digital surrogate.

Does the Digital Complement the Physical?

In digitizing rare or special manuscripts, a complementary relationship should exist between the physical version of the manuscript and its digital surrogate. This complementary nature entails that a researcher can be more confident when using the digital surrogate. Chen (2012) studies how digital surrogates are utilized within interactive exhibits to help content appeal to a broader audience. For example, the Library of Congress’ interactive Declaration of Independence exhibit makes content more accessible as the digital surrogate engages more visitors, instead of simply being a physical item that a visitor quickly glances at (Chen, 2012, para. 26). Chen finds that handling or seeing a physical manuscript can elicit an emotional reaction, but digital surrogates allow more time to peruse the manuscript, making manuscripts less imposing, more understandable, and easier to navigate. Chen concludes that the digital version does not mean that a manuscript has been dehumanized and that a digital surrogate can properly demonstrate “human thought, effort, and intentionality” (para. 31). However, the aspect of humanizing a manuscript leads to concerns around how solely using a digital surrogate could compromise how a manuscript is interpreted.

Some scholars have found a potential uneven relationship between the digital surrogate and physical manuscript. Kropf (2017) emphasizes that the quality of the surrogate needs to be carefully considered before it is utilized, as that can create an uneven and incompatible relationship between the digital surrogate and the physical manuscript. This uneven relationship can result in the physical version being considered more reliable than the digital surrogate. Kropf highlights the importance of ensuring that academics are properly trained in understanding the relationship between the digital surrogate and the physical manuscript. In conducting a qualitative survey between English and Arabic speakers, Kropf's work finds appropriate training will ensure a better understanding around how to use the digital surrogate. This includes training around what aspects might be lost when using the digital surrogate; for example an embossed watermark that might only appear in the physical manuscript (Kropf, 2017, p. 16). Kropf settles on digital surrogates being beneficial, but that training must be done to ensure an understanding of aspects that might be neglected are included. Similarly, Yeo (2010) discusses how the physical and digital are two distinct entities in comparing subsequent versions that are close to its predecessors. Yeo advocates for a continuation of retaining originals to ensure there is no unintended loss (p. 110). In continuing to keep multiple versions, research could be done around what has changed and subsequently what has remained the same in these various versions. These are some potential areas that researchers need to be aware of when consulting a digital surrogate, but it can be a great and complementary item for a researcher.

The digital surrogate and the physical manuscript have a relationship where the digital surrogate complements the physical manuscript. A proper understanding and training of how to leverage this relationship can provide a more fulsome research experience. Shafir (2013) and Terras (2010) in their studies of digital surrogates emphasize that digital surrogates reduce travel time and costs, which allows for a more in-depth examination of the ancient manuscripts. With physical manuscripts there is a short period of time (e.g., when a library is open) that a researcher is allowed to examine them. In looking at the impact of digitization on early modern Islamic intellectual history, Shafir elaborates that in examining the digital surrogate a researcher is allowed more time and capacity to examine multiple manuscripts. This longer period is in direct contrast to only being allowed to examine one or two per visit. Examining digital surrogates could help refocus the study of a physical manuscript, with a potential for a growing interest in the physicality of a manuscript (Shafir, 2013, para. 14). Since there is a chance that a researcher will not get the full sense of a text, this initial study of the digital surrogate can be a great method to further understand what manuscripts need to be examined in person. Terras raises concerns around what trusting digital surrogates can mean, specifically for academics in Classics. Issues raised include the appearance of the digital surrogate and how faithful it is to the original manuscript, including quality, copying, representation, and substance (Terras, 2010, p. 45). However, identifying the purpose of digitizing a manuscript can lead to additional reassurance around how the digital surrogate will complement the physical manuscript (Terras, 2010). In Shafir's and Terras' works, the complementary relationship between the digital surrogate and the physical manuscript is best understood when the differences and potential shortfalls are also appropriately acknowledged by the researcher.

Treating the digital and physical versions as two separate entities may not always be necessary, depending on what research is being conducted. Yeo (2010) acknowledges that it depends on the researcher and their focus of research (e.g., studying only the textual content). When comparing the digital and physical manuscripts of the medieval poet and composer, Guillaume de Machaut, McGrady (2016) identifies how digitized manuscripts are supportive of the physical 'real' manuscript. The digital surrogate can provide larger access to the work that would not be available otherwise (McGrady, 2016, p. 22). Bonilla (2021) and McGrady focus on how each version can be used to support researchers, with Bonilla emphasizing that we should not lose contact with the original. The digital surrogate continues to have great value as new computer methods can generate new perspectives (Bonilla, 2021). Though, there is a chance of the digital surrogate diluting the wider social history behind a specific, physical manuscript. Subsequently, questions remain around if interacting with the physical manuscript is the only solution to ensure that nothing is lost when examining the digital surrogate. Possible solutions to this problem include cautioning researchers to look at the quality of the manuscript as digital surrogates can mediate the physical qualities of the manuscript (Kropf, 2017). Overall, a consideration must be made around what type of research will be conducted and if using the digital surrogate is sufficient or if a consultation of the physical manuscript is required. In critically looking at the relationship between the physical and digital surrogates, Correa (2017) examines the best teaching methods on how to critically examine and compare the two options. Correa looks at the relationship from the perspective of two different audiences: the librarian and the researcher via the Israel State Archives' digitization project. Correa identifies the key issues that researchers and special collections librarians might have around digitization, including preservation, access, and scholarly research methods (p. 177). The digital surrogate allows for a physical manuscript to have less degradation from constant human interaction; however, the high cost of digitization and the potentially damaging effect of the process itself need to be considered (Correa, 2017). Van Lit (2019) inspects how strongly the digital surrogate is linked to the physical manuscript, settling on their 'digital materiality' (p. 51). Due to the potential overlap, van Lit states that the relationship can easily be confused and that when a digital surrogate is used it should be identified and fully evaluated since the experience will be different than consulting the physical manuscript. For researchers, these relationships need to be fully considered when examining a digital surrogate, and more research around how librarians can properly teach researchers about how the digital complements the physical would be beneficial.

Has a Manuscript's Identity Changed?

In attempting to study the potentially complementary relationship between the digital and the physical, some scholars find the relationship more akin to the digital surrogate being an abstract of the fulsome, physical version. Yeo (2010) examines how two cans of soup are completely different entities as they are not occupying the same space. The example is then directly contrasted between how each text material is also different and that one manuscript is not identical to another. The author finds that print manuscripts can also be compromised through a corner being cut or a page being folded over (Yeo, 2010). Subsequently, this means that a perfect manner of storing physical manuscripts does not exist either. One version may have comments from a scribe, while another is comment-free. Therefore, it is not only the digital manuscript that is different, but any version of a manuscript. Yeo concludes that digitized surrogates differ from the physical versions because readers are missing the tangible feeling of the physical manuscript, such as the weight or smell of the physical manuscript. This is similar to Foys' (2015) concept that manuscripts have always been changing and are dynamic. Foys provides examples of how texts have been altered, especially when looking at the changes that have been made since the early medieval period to the handwritten codex titled *Cotton MS Tiberius B V/1* where content was constantly edited in the handwritten, print, and digital versions. Stokes' (2021) work also looks at the different versions that exist of a manuscript, be it digitized, printed, or copied by hand as being models of the originals. Throughout the work, the author examines the models, and their challenges and benefits that have consistently been used when examining digital approaches to Book History (Stokes, 2021, p. 8). Yeo, Foys, and Stokes find that all versions of an original manuscript are constantly changing, and that be it a digital, print or copy of a manuscript, they are all different from the original manuscript.

Not only does something change with the digital surrogate, but there's also the potential that something might also be lost. Hirtle's (2002) work looks at the impact of digitization on special collections through its advantages and disadvantages (p. 42). Hirtle acknowledges that digital surrogates are useful but concludes that the physical manifestation of a manuscript is a more unique object than the digital surrogate. McGrady (2016) focuses on how the digital surrogates are missing the whole picture that is present in the physical manuscripts, specifically when looking at manuscripts attributed to the French composer Guillaume de Machaut. In contrast, Correa (2017) acknowledges that metadata and other information can exist in digital editions, demonstrating that additional and unique information can present itself in digital surrogates. Proper training and sufficient time for a cataloguer to become knowledgeable enough help ensure that appropriate information, such as metadata, is added to the digital surrogate. Manuscripts when digitized may change, but these types of changes have been taking place before digitization and will continue to happen with or without digitization. An interesting research point in scholarship might be to compare the various versions to understand what has or has not changed over time.

The potential changed nature of a digital surrogate can stem from various factors, including the changed reading experience. Chen (2012) and Nolan (2013) focus on the altered sensory experience of reading a digital versus physical text. In their work around digital surrogates in interactive exhibits, Chen notes that seeing handwriting or the physical attributes of a text stirs emotions that seemingly do not exist within a digital version. Nolan's article compares the reading experience for medievalist scholars between the physical manuscript and the digital surrogate via various visual cues present in objects to conclude that firsthand touch with medieval books is essential. Nolan expresses that touching an object provides a different experience than simply seeing it on a screen, and that the reader loses something when using the digital surrogate. Even though the digital surrogate may reveal something that was previously hidden, the reading experience has changed (Nolan, 2013, p. 470). Nolan highlights how the reading experience between the physical manuscript and the digital surrogate are different, but when texts are digitized, new aspects can be revealed that are not present in the physical version. These new aspects may encourage researchers to approach digital texts in a different manner. Nolan frames this as a negative, that the sense of magic and close intimacy with a manuscript when touching the object vanishes with the digital surrogate (p. 471). However, different researchers may need various aspects that can prove useful based on the actual text of the manuscript, and not just the look and feel of it. Evidentially, many researchers will want to see a physical manuscript; however, work can still be achieved without doing so. Looking at the digital surrogate is a great way to go forward and extract key information that may be useful. If the manuscript has always been adjusted, there's a sense that this next step towards digitization is simply adding to its historical narrative.

There are academics who highlight that the fragmentation of a manuscript into a digital version helps to create something different. Through an examination of the German romance: *Parzival* and the copying processes in relation to molecular biology, Stolz (2017) examines ideas around mutation and relationships that may be rootless from the original physical manuscript (p. 259). Stolz scrutinizes how the physical manuscript has an aura that is not kept when digitized, and the digital surrogate becomes a mutation of the original as the digital surrogate moves the manuscript into the mechanical sphere. In contrast, a hand-copied edition is more dynamic and allows for a wider breadth of fluid changes, such as shortenings, replacements, and re-emphasis (Stolz, 2017, p. 257). There is an implication that this cannot be replicated with a digital surrogate. Yeo (2010) provides a more hopeful interpretation that the digital surrogate is not so mechanical as there is hidden information that might not be present in the physical manuscript, such as metadata that's been added by a librarian. When doing anything to a manuscript there will be some sort of fragmentation that takes place; however, this is not solely excluded to a physical manuscript to the digital. This type of fragmentation can also happen with a careless researcher ripping off a corner of a manuscript. Having access to the digital surrogate can help widen access to manuscripts that might be incredibly delicate to handle.

What Happens to the Quality of a Manuscript When Digitized?

The quality of digitization varies based on its creators and how it will appear depends on the skill of these creators (Grover, 2015). This lack of cohesion brings about an inconsistency and can make it difficult to compare the quality of a manuscript due to it being uploaded from different institutes. Kropf (2017) and van Lit (2019) find that the quality of the digitization helps to establish its potential scholarly uses. Van Lit further elaborates that there is a stacking effect with the bad quality of a manuscript creating a bad reading of the text and resulting in a bad analysis of the text itself (p. 70). Optimism is present in Stokes' (2021) examination of the potential challenges when looking at the different versions of a manuscript, be it copied by hand, printed, or digitized. The author expresses that manuscripts are moving towards being digitally captured in better quality and that could entail a future that allows for a more fulsome experience of the digital manuscript. One aspect that might provide some assistance in creating a fulsome experience is properly capturing the colour in a manuscript.

The sheer vibrancy of colour present in medieval manuscripts is one aspect that is not always properly reflected in a digitization. Kropf (2017), Terras (2010), and Yeo (2010) all look at what happens when digitization compromises the colour of the manuscript. In examining Islamic manuscripts captured by the HathiTrustDigital Library, Kropf finds that enhanced image colour and resolution help improve the reading experience (p. 57). Terras further examines how technical distortions can adjust the manuscript in unintentional ways, along with how a computer reads colour in comparison to the human eye (p. 43). Yeo briefly mentions potential user interface and visualization concerns. Yeo also highlights the problems around properly digitizing font, line breaks, and symbols to indicate illegible content in the physical manuscript itself (p. 96). This brings about the additional concern that the content might simply be easier to read in its physical artifact form. Kropf references that the physical manuscript will always be easier to read but fails to mention how each researchers' monitors may read colour differently. In contrast, Terras does examine this aspect along with lens shape and introducing dust in the lens when a photo is taken (p. 45). However, Terras concludes that even with the potential for some inconsistencies with the digitization, the digitized manuscript can still be used. Van Lit (2019) brings up the importance of cross-checking digital documents and the physical manuscript to ensure that nothing has been lost. This is especially important given that digitization endeavours are usually a project-based effort with an end goal in mind, and there is a chance that items will not be properly double checked or confirmed as accurate after the fact. Overall, a better-quality digital surrogate means a higher chance of use, if the colour, technical distortions, and user interface concerns are addressed. These will help future researchers feel comfortable using the digital surrogate.

Conclusion

In examining what has been written around digitizing manuscripts, there is an awareness that it can be more feasible to utilize digital surrogates rather than only rely on the original physical manuscript. The complementary relationship between the digital surrogate and the physical manuscript, the changing manuscript's identity when digitized, and the importance of a good quality digital surrogate provides guidance on when and how to utilize digital surrogates for wider access to a manuscript. A crucial point in providing wider access is understanding how to use a digital surrogate. Bonilla (2021), Chen (2012), Kropf (2017), and McGrady (2017) found the digital surrogate can be a great support for a scholar if there is an awareness that the physical manuscript and the quality of the surrogate is considered. However, the researcher must be aware that there may be some differences in the digital version of the text, creating an uneven relationship. Further, Correa (2017), Shafir (2013), and Terras (2010), agree that there is evidence these digital versions help to complement the physical manuscript if researchers are appropriately trained on the relationship between the physical manuscript and the digital surrogate. The type of research that will be conducted can provide further guidance on if the digital surrogate is sufficient or if the physical manuscript must also be consulted. Questions that should be asked around the type of research being conducted include if anything around the physicality of the manuscript is being studied which would entail consulting the physical manuscript, while studying the text itself could mean the digital surrogate is sufficient.

Changes to a manuscript's identity can occur in both physical and digital versions. Foys (2015) and Yeo (2010) found that manuscripts are always changing, for example, when a corner is missing, or the colour is faded because of exposure to the sun in a physical manuscript. So though digitization can compromise the colour of a manuscript and subsequently the readability, this can also occur in the physical version (Kropf, 2017, Terras 2010, and Yeo, 2010). To help address this, cross-checking the digital surrogate with the physical manuscript is critical in ensuring that crucial content has not been lost in the digitization method (van Lit, 2019). A better-quality digital surrogate would also mean that more researchers would feel comfortable using it. A good user interface and high-quality digitization will enable the researcher to review the digital surrogate with greater ease (Yeo, 2010). Digital manuscripts can be seen as an abstract of the physical version, but there will continue to be a relationship between the digital and the physical that exists as they complement each other. Correa (2017), Hirtle (2002), Stokes (2021), and Yeo find that the digital copy can contain more information if cataloguers were able to add items, like metadata. Full training and the necessary time needed for cataloguers to complete this task would entail digital surrogates that were more complete.

Questions raised in the literature are if there is a need to standardize how manuscripts are properly digitized. Though touched on by van Lit (2019), helpful training sessions include those run by librarians that highlight the importance of using digital surrogates and provide guidance on when to use physical manuscripts. Within their work and bibliographies, researchers should also begin to identify when the digital surrogate was used, as opposed to the physical manuscript. This allows for other researchers reviewing the work to be able to critically consider why a digital surrogate was used instead of the physical manuscript. If this is done well, there should be fewer problems reading the digital surrogate, and Kropf (2017)'s belief around a physical manuscript being easier to read will no longer apply. Though, there will always be purposeful or accidental nuances added to the digital surrogate that are not included in the physical manuscript, the wider access that digital surrogates provide for researchers far outweigh these potential problems.

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Public Library Play-based Early Literacy Programs: What is the Parental Experience?

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Abstract

Many public libraries offer early literacy storytime programs to child patrons and their parents. Based on current research and best-practice periodicals, more children's librarians are incorporating and modelling play-based activities in their storytime programs at the public library to emphasize the importance of parent-child interaction in guiding early literacy learning. Play as a method of learning is often underutilised and misunderstood by parents. This literature review aims to investigate the role of public libraries (and librarians) in informal early literacy education, the shift towards play-based practices in early literacy programs at the public library, the importance and significance of quality parent-child interaction in early literacy experiences, and the documentation of the experiences and perceptions of parents attending early literacy programs at the public library with their children. As previous studies correlate the benefits of parent-child interaction in play-based activities with early literacy learning, it is evident that further qualitative research into the actual experiences of parents attending play-based early literacy public library programs is needed in order to identify more areas for improvement of public library services and storytime programs for child patrons and their parents.

Keywords: parental experiences, early literacy, play-based activities, public library

Early literacy storytime programs at public libraries provide opportunities for child patrons and their parents to engage with age-appropriate literature in an informal learning environment using targeted activities to enhance and support the development of early literacy skills (Byrne et al., 2003; Campana et al., 2016; Clark, 2017; Graham &

Gagnon, 2013; McKend, 2010; Mills et al., 2018; Neuman et al., 2017; Stagg Peterson et al., 2012). As play practices gain traction in storytime programs, more focus is placed on the importance of parent-child interaction for guiding early literacy learning. In this literature review, the themes are (1) the role of public libraries (and librarians) in informal early literacy education, (2) the shift towards play in early literacy programs at the library, (3) the importance and significance of quality parent-child interaction in early literacy experiences, and (4) the experiences of parents in early literacy programs at the public library. Finally, considering previous studies have correlated the benefits of parent-child interaction in play activities with early literacy learning, further qualitative research into the actual experiences of parents attending play-based early literacy public library programs is needed.

Public Libraries Take Up the Early Literacy Mantle

Storytime programs at public libraries have been a staple component of providing children's services (Campana et al., 2016). Children's librarians hosting storytime traditionally saw these programs as an opportunity to inculcate a love of reading and an appreciation for the library in their child patrons (Neuman et al., 2017, p. 8). However, burgeoning research in the area of early literacy alerted many public librarians to the necessity of providing literacy opportunities not only for child patrons but also for *their parents* in an effort to support and to develop early literacy skills in pre-school-aged children (Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Hume et al., 2015; Neuman, 2000; Sonnenschein et al., 2000). In response, two American associations, the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), created a parent education initiative called Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) in 2004 which focused on critical early literacy skills and the parent's role in supporting their child's literacy development (Neuman et al., 2017, p. 2).

There is a general consensus amongst researchers that early literacy proficiency consists of the following six skills: (1) print motivation, (2) phonological awareness, (3) vocabulary development, (4) print awareness, (5) narrative awareness, and (6) letter knowledge (Campana et al., 2016; Clark, 2017; Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Stagg Peterson et al., 2012; McKend, 2010; Neuman et al., 2017; Roskos & Christie, 2011). After a few years of the implementation of ECRR, a second version (ECRR2) was released in 2010 with a shift in focus away from the jargon-laden critical early literacy skills to five simple practices (talking, singing, playing, reading, and writing) which parents could use with their children to support literacy development (Neuman et al., 2017, p. 2). Of significant note, McKend (2010) examined the state of early literacy storytime programs in Canadian public libraries using a survey methodology and structured interviews with children's librarians. McKend found a vast majority of library systems (including 346 out of 400 branches queried) in Canada had either formally or informally adopted the tenets of the American ECRR program.

While there is generally an implicit understanding that young children attending storytime programs at the public library develop skills and behaviours which help in later literacy development, Campana et al. (2016) sought to establish a baseline of correlation between attendance at early literacy programs at the public library and children's early literacy skills by making quantifiable measurements through systematic investigation. Using a quasi-experimental methodology and mixed methods to look at 40 early literacy storytime programs provided by public libraries, Campana et al. administered a questionnaire survey to children's librarians (regarding their education, work history, and training) and observed 120 storytime programs, excluding any crafting or playtime segments. The results were as expected: children in attendance demonstrated a multitude of early literacy skills and behaviours when early literacy providers included early literacy content in their storytime programs (Campana et al., 2016). Comparably, in a Canadian study on a smaller scale of 10 Ontario public libraries, Stagg Peterson et al. (2012) found that children exhibited an increase in school readiness behaviours; more engagement with and motivation towards books and stories; and heightened interest in print, words, letters, and phonics as a result of attending early literacy storytime programs at the public library.

Mills et al. (2018) build upon the study of Campana et al. (2016) and examine the impact of an early literacy training intervention for children's librarians and its effect on the provision of early literacy skills within library storytime programs. The same 40 libraries from Campana et al. (2016) were evenly divided into experimental and control groups, with only the experimental group receiving the training intervention (Mill et al.,

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2018). The intervention resulted in more early literacy content in storytime programs and consequently, more early literacy behaviours exhibited by children in attendance (Mills et al., 2018). Phonological awareness was the only early literacy skill that did not show change in either domain, even with intervention (Mills et al., 2018).

McKend (2010) recommended to the Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC), which commissioned her evaluative research, that Canadian library systems officially adopt the ECRR program which encompasses many training tools and resources for children's librarians providing early literacy programs at the library. If adopted, this initiative could enable libraries to start making these necessary connections to parents and caregivers and work in concert to support children's literacy development. Kipfer (2019), the Manager of Community Engagement and Children's Services at Waterloo Public Library (WPL), illustrates how successful their children's programming became after basing their own Explore, Play, Learn (EPL) early literacy strategy on ECRR2. WPL transformed their children's services spaces into multi-generational play-based centres with discovery materials at hand and created a new EPL collection within their catalogue with recommended books linked to each specific early literacy practice (Talk, Sing, Play, Read, and Write) (Kipfer, 2019). Furthermore, by separately shelving the EPL collection and enabling searching via 'practice' in the catalogue, WPL supports parents in selecting reading materials to target particular early literacy practices (Kipfer, 2019). One measure of the great impact of their EPL strategy can be seen in the circulation numbers. Kipfer reports more than double circulation statistics of the EPL collection compared to other books in the broader children's collection. Kipfer's article demonstrates that parents look to the library for direction in order to make educational early literacy selections for their children. Through embracing ECRR2's five practices (especially play), public libraries—as nimble, innovative spaces and organizations—are well-positioned to guide parents in their children's early literacy development.

Injection of Play into Early Literacy Library Programs

As one of the five practices for supporting early literacy, 'play' often gets overlooked by parents as a medium for developing early literacy skills (Byrne et al., 2003; Kane, 2016; Neuman et al., 2017). What can be defined as 'play' changes as children mature (Byrne et al., 2003). Ralli and Payne (2016) identify ‘exploratory play,’ encompassing sensory observation and object manipulation, as the starting point for children’s play-development, followed by symbolic play (i.e. abstracting objects) and dramatic play (i.e. pretend/role play). The social interaction side of ‘play’ also progresses through joint activities, parallel play, and cooperative play (Ralli & Payne, 2016).

Mills et al. (2018) assert a commonly held viewpoint that playtime and crafting are supplementary storytime elements which are not consistently offered at all libraries and thus, have not been regularly researched (or implemented in practice) as often as the other four practices (p. 173). While not focused on play-based literacy programming in a library context, both Campbell’s (2021) examination of parental beliefs about early literacy phonics instruction in early learning centres in Australia, and Kane’s (2016) US study of parental perceptions of play in formal preschool education environments, found positive parental support for play-based literacy activities, with the exception that overt phonics instruction accompanied play-based activities in its perceived value (Campbell, 2021) and that parents paradoxically continue to distinguish ‘play’ and ‘learning’ as distinct and separate entities (Kane, 2016). However, there has been considerable effort to illuminate the connections between play and early literacy learning (Campbell, 2021; Kane, 2016; Neuman, 2000; Ralli & Payne, 2016; Roskos & Christie, 2011) in order to strengthen the dialogue for further acceptance and inclusion of play in literacy development experiences.

Byrne et al. (2003) frame the importance of play as a tool for early literacy learning through the established work of psychologists Piaget and Vygotsky (p. 42). As children’s librarians and an assistant library director, Byrne et al. suggest that parents disregard play as a helpful tool since it is often juxtaposed with the concept of ‘work;’ however, their speculation of parents’ perceptions of play is not supported by actual parental testimony or research. Using a Venn diagram with three overlapping circles, Roskos and Christie (2011) coin the term ‘play-literacy nexus’ to illustrate the point at which play, language, and early literacy intersect (p. 208). Studies have repeatedly found that the intentionality of the play as well as the social interaction (both vocabulary

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learning and connection) with an adult (discussed later) are factors which elevate ‘play’ from a childhood pastime to an informal educational early literacy tool (Neuman, 2000; Ralli & Payne, 2016; Roskos & Christie, 2011).

Employing an intervention approach with young adolescent mothers and their children, Neuman’s (2000) study on guided participation in play found that more transcendence (i.e. connecting to background knowledge and future experience) and transference (i.e. taking on responsibility) occurred when children engaged in guided play activities with their parents. Thus, Neuman’s findings support the importance of intentional guided play in strengthening children’s confidence and competence, both of which are needed for early literacy learning.

While not all public libraries have injected play into their early literacy storytime programs, many have taken on the challenge. Ralli and Payne’s (2016) survey research reveals that many librarians are promoting play practices by modelling responsive, child-led play interactions with young patrons within view of parents and caregivers and by providing access to toys or play experiences which can be replicated at home. Furthermore, Neuman et al. (2017) spent three years (2013-2016) evaluating the impact of the second iteration of the ECRR initiative (which included play as one of the five practices) on early literacy programs at public libraries. The research team visited 60 libraries in 10 library systems across the USA and used multiple methods to collect data: ethnographic observation of spaces and storytime programs, interviews with over 100 librarians, a standardized questionnaire for caregivers, and photographic content analysis (Neuman et al., 2017, p. 11). Neuman et al. found that the public libraries who had adopted ECRR2 are creating new family friendly spaces for parents and children to interact, read, and play together. Additionally, they found that the roles of librarians are expanding to encompass those of childhood/parent educators and community workers, that early literacy programs include more non-traditional elements overall such as playtime, and that libraries are making age-appropriate technology available to parents and children (Neuman et al., 2017).

Similarly, Byrne et al. (2003) also identify space as a component for encouraging play at the library and fostering the acceptance of play as a learning tool by parents (p. 43). Play can be noisy! Byrne et al. imply that parents’ comfort level with ‘play’ heightens when library spaces are correspondingly play-friendly. Clearly, public libraries are in a position to highlight and validate the importance and relevance of play for parents and to encourage parents to accept and to celebrate their role as their children's 'first playmates' (Ralli & Payne, 2016, p. 61).

Quality Parent-Child Interaction Matters

Parental engagement (especially in the play processes of their children) is essential for providing the rich language interaction necessary for later literacy development (Byrne et al., 2003; Neuman, 2000; Ralli & Payne, 2016). Neuman (2000) studied this parent-child interaction phenomenon from a behavioural standpoint through observations of parent-child interaction in guided participation in a natural childcare setting. In contrast, from a neural perspective and completed in a laboratory setting, Wass et al. (2018) examined how social interaction between infant-parent pairs during play affects attention of the infant. Using an experimental methodology, Wass et al. correlated observed behavioural data with neuroimaging data and found that parents showed neural responsivity to changes in their infant's attention during joint play. While infants exhibited more neural control over attention during solo play overall, they did demonstrate increased attentiveness when engaged in joint play with a neural-responsive parent (Wass et al., 2018, p.10). Thus, from both scientific and social scientific perspectives, researchers are noting the importance and significance of quality parent-child interactions through play.

Moreover, the understandings gained from Neuman's (2000) study led her to frame the parent-child dynamic as paramount in the transfer of educational beliefs and behaviours to children and as more impactful even than the school readiness activities typically embedded within early literacy programs (p. 167). Sonnenschein et al. (2000) look specifically at the effect of parental beliefs about literacy on their children's literacy development and self-identification as readers (termed 'appropriation') (p. 108). Parents with an entertainment approach to literacy (as opposed to a skills-based approach) provided activities in line with this belief and as a result, their children's engagement and motivation towards participation in authentic, self-initiated literacy activities were higher (Sonnenschein et al., 2000). Thus, Sonnenschein et al. establish a positive correlation between parental beliefs about literacy and their children's literacy development.

Children's interest in literacy is also impacted by the parent-child interaction dynamic (Hume et al., 2015). Using survey methodology, Hume et al. (2015) examined children's literacy interest and its relation to parental literacy practices (i.e. both literacy exposure and literacy teaching). Hume et al. found a positive correlation between children's reading interest and parental literacy exposure but not parental literacy teaching, revealing the two to be very different constructs. Therefore, the research of Hume et al. offers more support towards the significance of playful parent-child interactions in early literacy learning situations.

Both the variety and frequency of parent-child joint activities impact the development of children's early literacy (Wood, 2002) and thus, are contributing factors to the overall quality of the parent-child interaction. Wood's (2002) initial investigation of parent-child pre-school activities at home arrived at this finding through a formal assessment of children's phonological awareness and a self-reported open-ended parental questionnaire. Public libraries have a unique opportunity to foster these special and varied parent-child interactions through modelling positive communication behaviours during early literacy storytime programs, creating opportunities for interactive play, and providing parent education (Neuman et al., 2017; Ralli & Payne, 2016).

Parental Experience in Early Literacy Library Programs

The parental education focus of the ECRR initiative spurred research into the impact of this informal adult education embedded within early literacy storytime programs on parental literacy behaviours and literacy practices with their children at home (Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Neuman et al., 2017; Stagg Peterson et al., 2012). Of the few studies which consulted parents about their experiences in or perceptions of early literacy library programs, many used a closed-question, standardized-response questionnaire research method (Clark, 2017; Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Neuman et al., 2017). Clark's (2017) study found that caregivers' perceptions of emergent literacy programs at the library are in agreement with the guidelines for learning and learning environments set by the National Research Council. To collect data on parental perceptions, Clark employed a self-administered questionnaire which included mostly Likert-type scale responses (i.e. strongly agree to strongly disagree) and two open-ended questions. While parents and caregivers were the participants completing the survey, Clark's questionnaire mainly focused on the children attending the literacy program as seen through their parents'/caregivers' perspective. So, whether Clark's study can truly be considered research regarding parental experience in early literacy library programs is debatable.

Graham and Gagnon (2013) applied a quasi-experimental methodology to examine the influence of an early literacy program at the Regina Public Library on the frequency of parents'/caregivers' engagement in literacy activities or skills with their children in everyday life. Graham and Gagnon collected data using pre- and post-program self-administered questionnaires as well as follow-up interviews (which consisted of closed, standardized questions) with a random selection of participants. The quantitative data analysis of the study did not reveal a significant change in parents' engagement levels in early literacy activities (which were already high in the pre-study questionnaire), but there was a noticeable increase in library attendance after participation in the library program (Graham & Gagnon, 2013). As identified in the follow-up interview four to six months after participation in the early literacy library program, overall, parents reported feeling confident with their skills to support their children's early literacy activities, especially at home (Graham & Gagnon, 2013).

While the three-year study by Neuman et al. (2017) involved multiple methods of data collection, they did conduct a caregiver survey (e.g. closed-question, standardized format, including some Likert-type scale responses). Although basic and simple to read and complete quickly, this quantitative data collection tool does not allow for parents/caregivers to expand upon or introduce unique experiences from their attendance in the early literacy programs at their public libraries. Thus, the research of Stagg Peterson et al. (2012) is unique in providing all open-ended questions in their (short but targeted) parent survey questionnaire which enabled parents and caregivers to respond in personal ways. Stagg Peterson et al. inductively coded common themes presented in the survey data and found that parents/caregivers attending early literacy storytime programs in Ontario public libraries demonstrated growth regarding their confidence and skills supporting their children's early literacy needs.

In a rather specific context, Prendergast (2016) conducted a qualitative case study regarding the experiences of both children's librarians and parents of children with disabilities with respect to delivery of and access to early literacy initiatives at the public library. Prendergast collected data by interviewing both librarians and parents using semi-structured interviews. As it turns out, neither parents nor librarians made consistent efforts to reach out to each other to connect or to collaborate regarding accommodations for children with disabilities in early literacy library programs (Prendergast, 2016). This move away from the self-administered questionnaire is a positive step in the right direction as much new and unexpected information can be collected when unbiased by the researcher's knowledgeable background framing the suggested answers.

A facilitator in Hill and Diamond's (2013) analysis of three family literacy programs in differing contexts (including a public library outreach program) observed parents talking amongst themselves during the Lap-Sit early literacy program and put forth the assumption that this action implied that parents saw the class as entertainment for their children rather than an opportunity for a quality parent-child educational interaction (p. 51). However, this revelation did not come from the parents themselves and thus, Hill and Diamond's article demonstrates the veritable need for actual parents to describe their own experiences, preferably in their own words.

Several studies (Campbell, 2021; Kane, 2016) in other non-library early literacy contexts set a precedent for soliciting parental perspectives using open-ended questionnaires, amongst other data collection methods, in order to examine the experience of parents in the development of their children's early literacy. Many researchers cite a need for more studies on parental experiences in early literacy library programs (Campbell, 2021; Clark, 2017; Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Hill & Diamond, 2013; McKend, 2010; Mills et al., 2018; Neuman et al., 2017) and especially, studies using qualitative research to examine the experience of parents attending early literacy library programs are still few and far between. Significantly, the experience of parents attending play-based early literacy programs at the public library is missing in the research.

Conclusion

Public libraries play an important role in supporting early literacy learning for child patrons and in providing informal education to parents about assisting their children's learning. More and more libraries are recognizing the advantages of play-based activities to strengthen early literacy skills and are offering these opportunities to parents in storytime programs in order to encourage quality interactions between parent and child. Although some studies examine the experience of parents in early literacy programs at the library, more research is needed in the aspect of parental experience in attending play-based library programs.

Several studies cautiously report their findings and indicate possible limitations of their research with regards to internal validity. Specifically, there is hesitancy in confirming causal relationships between attendance at public library early literacy programs and changes in literacy-related behaviours in parents and children since programs take place over an extended period of time and outside factors in the participants' lives are unknown (e.g. other early literacy activities or programs attended by participants outside of the library or influential people in the participants' everyday lives) (Campana et al., 2016; Graham & Gagnon, 2013; Mills et al., 2018; Stagg Peterson et al., 2012; Wood, 2002). Furthermore, Wood (2002) also identifies a possible validity issue with parental self-reporting and suggests that self-reported data should be coordinated and corroborated through additional or multiple data collection methods (e.g. observation, etc.) (p. 256). By conducting semi-structured interviews with parents regarding their experiences in attending play-based early literacy programs at the public library and using open-ended questions, a future qualitative study could offer some credibility to this frequently feared limitation by addressing the greater literacy environment surrounding parents and their children. Delving deeper into parental experiences in play-based early literacy library programs enables future research to guide children's librarians and public libraries to improve and to adapt their early literacy strategies and programs to meet the needs of young patrons and their parents.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

None declared.

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Reflecting on our time as Digital Literacies Librarians

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Abstract

What does it mean to have digital literacy in a job title? In this reflection paper, two early career academic librarians discuss their experiences as Digital Literacy/ies Librarians. They reflect on the ambiguity and magnitude of the term digital literacy, and how they interpreted the term in their work.

Keywords: digital literacies, digital literacy, academic librarianship, reflection, digital literacies librarian, early career librarian

What does it mean to have digital literacy in your job title? We (both authors) met through a teaching observation program in 2019 and quickly discovered via our email signatures that we had similar job titles: Digital Literacies Resident Librarian and Digital Literacy Librarian. Having the term "digital literacy/ies" in our job titles led to many conversations about how we interpret the job title in our roles. This paper includes individual reflections by both authors about our roles as Digital Literacy/ies Librarians, concluding with a discussion of our shared understandings and experiences.

Making Digital Literacies Fit with Alissa

I started my role as the Digital Literacies Resident Librarian with very little understanding of what digital literacies were. I knew that my role encompassed a variety of projects that were based in the digital world: open access publishing projects, training pre-service teachers to use our educational robotics collection, teaching information literacy, and working at the reference desk. As an early career librarian in my first post-MLIS contract position, I felt ready to tackle each of these projects individually, but was daunted by the word "digital literacies".

I dove into my individual projects, and began to forget about any concerns with my job title. It wasn't until I met Joanna a couple months into my role that I started thinking about "digital literacies" again. Joanna introduced me to the International Federation of Library Association's (IFLA) 2017 statement on Digital Literacy, and Jisc's model for digital literacies. Both IFLA and Jisc (2014)—a not-for-profit company out of the United Kingdom that provides information technology (IT) services for higher education institutions—conceptualize digital literacy/ies as an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of skills like media literacy, information literacy, technical proficiency, and creation in the digital world. Looking at these models, I was finally able to see how each of my projects "fit" under the larger umbrella of digital literacy/ies. For example, my work with educational robots focussed on learning skills and technology literacy for pre-service teachers, whereas my teaching focussed more on information literacy. While this understanding allowed me to better explain to others how my work related to digital literacies, I still felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of skills encompassed by digital literacies. How could I as an early career librarian define my role when the term is so big? I quickly realized that I couldn't. In conversations with Joanna, we both expressed the value of digital literacy skills, and the work that we were doing. However, we both expressed frustration about how nebulous a concept like "digital literacy" is.

Focus on the literacy with Joanna

My first position as a librarian was as a Digital Literacy Librarian. This role centered around educational resource creation such as video tutorials, LibGuides, and synchronous instruction sessions on a variety of topics including: orientations, assessing the reliability of sources, and using various search tools.

I initially looked at the job posting and thought that I didn't have enough IT experience for a position with "digital" in the title, but reading the description I realized how education-focused it was. Throughout my time as the Digital Literacy Librarian, I learned that I was not alone in that assumption. Upon noticing my title, colleagues also saw an emphasis on the “digital”, and contacted me with questions about technology and data issues. As Alissa mentioned, I started researching digital literacy, and learned that there are many types of literacies that can be considered digital. Due to the plurality of competencies under the digital literacy umbrella, it is a logical jump to use the plural “digital literacies”. While we used singular “digital literacy” at my institution, the plural “digital literacies” encompasses the sheer number of skills implied by the term (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Belshaw, 2016). In my job title, the singular “Digital Literacy” was meant to encompass all of these competencies and I feel that both the singular and the plural can be used somewhat interchangeably

As a fully remote university, all library instruction involves at least one digital literacy competency whether that is connecting through Microsoft Teams or LibChat, teaching an online instruction session, or walking someone through using the library webpage via telephone. However, involving digital literacy is different than encompassing all elements. I became stressed with the sheer magnitude of taking on all the competencies under the digital literacy umbrella. In conversations with Alissa, and referring to Walton’s (2016) article I realized that digital literacy is not just the responsibility of the library but needs to be an institution-wide consideration.

Conclusion

It’s been over a year since I, Alissa, completed my contract as a Digital Literacies Resident Librarian, and all of this came flooding back when I was looking at a recent call for proposals for a conference. Included in the various session tags were the following: information literacy, mobile technology, technology, and digital literacy. Sharing this with Joanna, we chatted about the overlapping nature of a lot of these terms and wondered what sessions might get tagged with which term. The conference proposal is just one example, but it highlights a couple themes from our reflections including: the ambiguity of the term digital literacy, and the impact of that ambiguity on how we interpreted our jobs as early career librarians. Both of us see the value of the work that we did in our time as Digital Literacy/ies Librarians, and the need for library workers to engage in this

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kind of work. That said, we firmly believe that the responsibility of digital literacy should not fall just to the librarians, but to the institution as a whole (Walton, 2016).

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Metadata, Digital Museum Spaces and Accessibility for Persons with Impairments

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Abstract
This study examines the intersection of metadata and accessibility in the digital museum space. While virtual museums can remove physical barriers to heritage institutions, virtual spaces still have barriers for certain impairments. Work done in the field of digital libraries has shown that accessibility metadata can help to remove some of those barriers. This exploratory research project aims to provide understanding of the ways that metadata in virtual museum spaces is being used and how that metadata can improve accessibility in these spaces. How can universal design be best applied to metadata in digital museum catalogs and objects? What kinds of metadata in digital museum collections can potentially increase accessibility? Are museums currently including metadata that increases accessibility for people with disabilities and impairments? These questions were explored using a content-analysis approach applied to textual information collected from forty objects in four digital collections found on the publicly accessible webpages of Canadian institutions of cultural heritage.

Keywords: Metadata, Universal Access, Digital Museums, Universal Design

Virtual museum access has the potential to reduce accessibility barriers of many kinds when it comes to accessing heritage collections. However, as is seen in the world of digital libraries, the digital space can be host to different types of barriers. This study explores some of the intersections between accessibility and metadata in heritage institutions. Heritage institutions are defined in the context of this study as Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums, which provide access to shared cultural history and knowledge. Impairments is used to describe a loss of typical physiological, psychological or anatomical function (World Health Organization, 1993). For the purposes of this study impairments is used instead of disability in order to provide a broader context, as some impaired persons may not consider themselves disabled. For the purposes of this work accessibility is defined narrowly within the context of providing equal access for persons who experience impairments.

Metadata for Accessibility in Digital Museum Spaces

Museums and other heritage institutions are an important part of the public sphere, places of learning and understanding of heritage open to the collective public. Like other places that make up the public sphere, museums present a variety of barriers for people with impairments (King-Wall, 2016; Poria et al, 2009). There is an ethical call to prevent exclusion from cultural tourism, with the current consensus being that museums should be accessible to all (Poria et al, 2009). Greater digital access to museum spaces may alleviate some physical accessibility concerns, allowing greater access for those whose impairments affect their interactions with physical structures and spaces. However digital spaces have their own barriers for people with impairments, especially visual, textual or intellectual impairments.

One way of improving accessibility in the digital space is by using metadata, an approach that has been studied in the field of digital librarianship (Beyene, 2017; Beyene & Godwin, 2018). In digital libraries metadata can increase accessibility by allowing impaired users to locate resources more easily. This role in digital libraries is the inspiration for inquiry into the ways metadata can improve accessibility in broader contexts, including digital heritage collections such as museum websites. Although there is interest in standardizing museum metadata, accessibility is not a current focus in standardizing museum metadata schemas (Fortier & Menard, 2017). This study aims to examine metadata in a digital museum context to understand the ways in which museum metadata can be used to increase accessibility for persons with impairments, with aims to include these considerations in future standardized metadata schemas.

Data Collection and Methodology

The methodology for this research was based in a social sciences approach to content analysis described in Spurgin & Wildemuth (2017). Information was transcribed from forty digital objects taken from four collections in Canadian institutions of cultural heritage. The four collections were the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library: Ronald

B. Madge Entomological Collection, the University of Calgary Nickle Galleries: Rugs and Textiles Collection, the Royal Ontario Museum: Global Africa Collection and the Canadian War Museum. As the Canadian War Museum was not easily categorized into discreet collections, the entire collection was examined. These institutions and objects were purposefully chosen to reflect a variety of objects and metadata considerations.

Coding for this study focused on identifying six variables: description metadata quality, description of colour, indications of outside contributions to description, alt-text coding for images, multiple angles and zoom for images and physical accessibility information. The data was printed to paper and coded by hand.

Results

Description metadata has the most potential for increasing accessibility in digital heritage collections. Twenty-one objects examined included enough description to understand the object, determined by having sufficient description to visualize the object without seeing the image. Seven objects described colour and three included a citation indicating contribution by an outside source.

Metadata indicating physical accessibility was not common among objects examined. All objects examined from the Royal Ontario Museum included information on the location of objects on display, which may improve visiting experiences for physically impaired visitors planning a visit, allowing advanced planning around the locations of ramps, elevators or accessible bathrooms.

In a digital museum or other heritage institution space the object is understood through the image itself. This places special importance on elements of metadata and web design that address accessibility concerns around images. Only the ten objects from the Canadian War Museum were marked up with alt-text coding of the images to allow them to be interpreted by a screen reader. All images examined could be zoomed for easier viewing and eleven objects provided multiple viewing angles.

Textual objects were dealt with inconsistently. Twenty objects examined had associated text. Bruce Peel Special Collections was composed entirely of textual objects which were downloadable in multiple formats and available in audio format.

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Other institutions handled text differently, even within the same collections. The Canadian War Museum provided transcription of text in the metadata for some objects but not for others, creating an inconsistent experience when examining objects such as posters.

Conclusions

Digital museum spaces have some room to implement changes to metadata that would increase accessibility for persons with impairments. While there were several interesting ways metadata was being used among the collections examined, no metadata element was specifically dedicated to accessibility considerations. Special attention should be paid to elements of the metadata schema and html markup that allow use of a screen reader. Images should always include alt-text description in the html markup to allow a screen reader to interpret the image. Description metadata is best used when it describes the object in a way that it could be understood purely by listening to the description. This includes description of imagery and colour which can give contextual or cultural meanings. Text associated with the object should also be included in the metadata so that it may be read by a screen reader. If labour constraints limit time that can be spent creating these metadata elements a possibility might be to include submissions from researchers outside of the heritage institution, as it appears was used in the Nickle Galleries collection. Systems where academic experts exchange detailed metadata descriptions in exchange for research access to the objects may prove beneficial in certain institutions or circumstances. Accessibility for the physically impaired may be improved by including metadata to assist in locating the physical object in relation to accessible resources, and by including zoom functions and multiple angles on images provided for those who are physically unable to access the resources in person. Greater attention to these considerations can potentially improve accessibility for visitors to digital museum collections and other heritage institutions.

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