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Chapter 3: The Mission of Libraries

The Mission Statement is an important part of any organization and is often the go-to document when goals and objectives become cloudy and realigning is needed. Throughout chapter three of Expect More a number of library mission statements were discussed and it became clear what all of the exceptional mission statements had in common – they all allowed for flexibility – flexibility of services, information and expectations. A good library mission statement always has, at its core, the pillars of the profession: Freedom, knowledge and community. A good mission statement will then take those ideas and allow for them to be interpreted in whatever manner the community sees fit. In addition to those discussed in Expect More, I submit the Palatine Public Library of Palatine, Illinois as being another example of a library with a good mission statement. In the following pages the creation of the current mission statement will be looked at as well as how that document led to the creation of the library's Digital Media Center and how that has allowed the library to expand its services to the community.

The Palatine Public Library rests in the northwest suburbs just outside Chicago, Illinois and serves over 90,000 people in the surrounding area. The library first opened its doors in 1920 and now calls 700 N. North Court home where any day of the week the community can stop in and find classes, shows, resources and staff that can enrich their lives. Since 2012 the mission statement of the library has been reviewed and approved every two years to ensure that it continues to align with the values of the community and reflect any changes that the library has undergone. The current library mission statement reads as follows:

The Palatine Public Library District:

Your Destination for Knowledge, Entertainment and Community

The Library:

- **Welcomes everyone**
- **Supports your right to read, to view, to access information**
- **Enriches your life through events, classes, services, resources, and technology**
- **Offers opportunities for learning, creative fun, and connecting with others**
- **Provides qualified, friendly staff**
- **Operates with integrity and fiscal responsibility**

The page can be found here:

<http://www.palatinelibrary.org/about-us/mission-statement>

When reading through Chapter 3 of Expect More and reaching the portion of the text that discusses library mission statements it became clear that Palatine Library had a statement that could sit along side those of the New York Public Library and MIT. It is succinct yet encompasses a great deal of information and allows for a flexibility of interpretation that makes possible the technology we will later discuss. While today Palatine's mission statement can be said to be exceptional, it wasn't always that way.

"Prior to 2012, the mission statement really hadn't changed since the 1990's," said Library Director, Anthony Austin. This presented a unique opportunity for Palatine to redefine how they wanted to be perceived by the community. "When the board and administration, in 2012, undertook the process of evaluating the mission statement they created a committee at the board level that involved two trustees, the Assistant Director, as well as multiple managers," said Austin. This committee created an environment for a variety of different opinions and ideas. "The process involved a self-study. We did a SWOT analysis where we talked about the ways in which we succeed most and we wanted to find a way to capture all of that in a succinct message." In order to ensure that the libraries message reflected the current style and trends a variety of sources were looked at, including mission statements from the corporate world in addition to other libraries. "The next step of the process was to go through all those statements that we had collected and

phrases from our SWOT analysis and select key words.," Austin said. "We really took an elemental approach to this [...] we then broke it out by themes, the things that we really wanted to underscore the most." One of the themes that has always meant a great deal to the Palatine community is the idea of free speech. "This organization, historically, has been very oriented towards the First Amendment. We wanted to make sure that language was preserved. A guiding principle of our board was to make sure that, at least in our community, this institution is your defender of the first amendment," said Austin. While a main focus of Palatine Library and the library as an institution, has always been free speech, as time went on the mission statement also wanted to reflect another topic of equal importance: How the library had changed.

"This last time around, between 2012 and 2015, one of the things that we wanted to discuss was the ways in which libraries have changed. There was really a focus on the notion of 'materials' and we wanted to make sure that we expanded that definition to include the other elements, the other ways that we serve," said Austin. The library decided to refer to their 'materials' as 'resources' and this has since allowed for a world of possibilities, including the creation of a full-scale Technology Department and the Digital Media Center. "When I started here nine years ago we didn't have a Technology Department," said Austin. "So that shows how far we've come in under a decade."

The road to the Digital Media Center began when the Palatine Library board began to realize the utility of offering their community access to high quality technology. This was when, according to Austin, the board moved from viewing technology as a luxury to a necessity. “We [realized] we needed a technology plan that helps us put together our budget, to think strategically about what type of resources we should be providing our community [and] what spaces we need to carve out to provision this service,” said Austin.

“The technology plan gave us the opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which we serve via technology. Once we established the legitimacy of why we should be investing our resources in it then we were able to build actual pieces of our budget and our strategic plan to support technology,” Austin said. Once this plan was in place, in 2013, the creation of the Technology Department commenced and, later that same year, the doors of the Digital Media Center opened for the first time.

Austin, as well as the library board, are now well aware of the importance of their Technology team and Digital Media Center and the services they allow the library to offer. “When we have a line in our mission statement that says ‘enriches your life through events, classes, services, resources and technology,’ technology is not just that last element there but also a resource, a service. We teach classes about and with the technology we have; we have events that circulate around the notion of technology. It is all encompassing. We use technology as a vehicle to welcome people to the library.”

This view of technology as a necessity could not have come at a better time for the Palatine Library. The same year that Palatine Library was opening their Digital Media Center the Pew Research Center put out a study, *Library Services in the Digital Age* that looked at how communities were using their libraries. The study found that 77% of Americans 16 and older say “free access to computers and the Internet is a ‘very important’ service for libraries to offer.” The study goes on to say that many Americans would embrace “even wider uses of technology at libraries” giving an example of 33% saying they would like access to apps that offer library materials.

For further reading and analysis, the Pew Study can be found here:

http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacy-pdf/PIP_Library%20services_Report.pdf

An area where the Digital Media Center was especially hoping to capitalize on usage was with teens. A separate Pew study, *Teens and Libraries* looked at how young people use technology in general and how that translates to the kinds of services libraries need to offer in order to appeal to them. The study found that 72% of teens aged 16 and 17 used the library in the last year. They also found that of those library users, 43% sought the help of a librarian. Teens do use libraries, however, they use it differently than past generations. The study found that 86% of teens who use the library would like to have “customized online services that give book recommendations based on your past library activity.” 81% would like to use “library kiosks or ‘redboxes’ throughout the community to check out books, movies,

music” and that 74% of teen users would use “e-book readers loaded with books you want to read.” While some of these suggestions have not yet happened, Palatine has taken the initiative in offering Kindle Paperwhite devices pre-loaded with books – there is even one that is specific to Young Adult titles.

The *Teens and Libraries* study can be found here:

http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/2013/02/2013-1-23-13-YALSA-teens-and-libraries_PDF.pdf

More information about the Palatine Public Library Kindle Paperwhite program can be found here:

<http://www.palatinelibrary.org/digital-media/ereader>

The Digital Media Center at the Palatine Public Library offers many of the services people now demand of their library. The center offers a Mac Lab with two green-screen equipped studios that allow for both video and sound recording, two digital Conversion Rooms that offer the ability to convert VHS tapes to DVD as well as digitizing old photos. In addition to the equipment in-house, the community can also check-out both still and video cameras and camera equipment, external hard drives, and Roku streaming devices. The library also allows for people to take the content with them wherever they go through apps like Hoopla, Zinio and Overdrive.

A full breakdown of everything the Digital Media Center offers can be found here:

<http://www.palatinelibrary.org/digital-media/digital-media-center>

Information about additional library digital services can be found here:

<http://www.palatinelibrary.org/digital-media>

The nature of technology is to always be changing and moving forward and the Technology Department, led by manager Susan Connor, is aware of this and they are constantly looking for new ways to innovate and offer the community something they wouldn't expect at the library.

"We write a technology plan every year that details our goals and tasks related to what we want to do in Technology and then all that is related back to and inspired by our Strategic Plan," said Technology manager Susan Connor. This outline, which includes budgets and timelines allows for the Technology department to try out new ideas and initiatives. "We are looking into lending out Chromebooks as laptops that can leave the library," Connor said. The department is also looking a great deal at offering Virtual Reality at the library. "We want to do VR Video Game Programming, and possibly lending out a VR headset down the road as well," she said. In addition to bringing more equipment into the library, Connor is also looking at ways to turn the Digital Media Center into not only a content creation space but also a content delivery one as well. "For the last few years it's been libraries and maker spaces and media labs as creators. We give everybody the space to create the tools to create. Where do we go with all these people making these things who want to share them?"

Is there a way for libraries not just to help people create and make things but to then offer and share them?" Connor said.

While long-term goals are looking towards content delivery, at the moment Connor and Technology are focused on the idea of mobility. The department recently purchased a portable green screen which allows them to attend outreach events and offer those in attendance more than just a flyer and a library-branded pencil or bookmark – they can have a unique photo taken at the event that is then delivered right to their email – or printed out at the library. "Having the ability and flexibility to go where the technology is needed is a priority," said Connor. Another area where mobility is becoming a priority is in the Mac Lab space. The computers in the Mac Lab are approaching a need for an update and Connor is thinking of changing the set up to allow for more of the desired flexibility. "I'd like to begin purchasing Mac Books," she said. "So that in a year or two we have a mini-Mac Lab we can wheel out when we need it." And need it they will, the Technology department has gone from offering technology to teaching the community through classes that not only show off what the library offers but helps people walk away with the ability to effectively use it – and it is the ability for people to use what the library offers that is Connor's top priority. "Being used and being broken is better than not being used and being safe," she said.

Susan Connor has worked in the technology Department since its inception and has watched it grow into a vital part of the library. Since the doors first opened in 2013

not only has usage always been high, but services have expanded as well. When the Digital Media Center opened in October of 2013 it was an instant success. The community was excited that the library was offering them the ability to create their own movies and music as well as the means to digitize what they already had. Studio usage has remained steady at around 150 people a month in the large A and B studios since 2013 as well as around 80 people a month for the smaller C and D conversion studios. The Mac Lab has also seen steady usage of around 450 people a month. What the usage data also shows is the expansion of the services Technology offers. In July of 2014 the Technology Department took over the care and keeping of the library Study Rooms and later that month three additional Rooms were opened on the first floor near the Digital Media Center. In addition to taking over the Study Rooms, the technology Department also expanded their presence to the second floor computer lab where a Technology Desk was put in place so that people could find a single source for their questions. Second floor computer lab and laptop usage has remained steady at around 4,000 people a month. A final area that is beginning to see some growth is Community Contacts (outreach). Thanks to the portable green screen, the Technology Department is expanding their ability to offer services outside the library. Although the April statistics were not available at the time I received the file, there were three events Technology had brought their green screen to, including a job fair at Harper College in Palatine.

For a more complete look at the stats, please see the attached Addendum.

While full Digital Media Centers are not something every library can afford it is quite possible to offer many of the services of one on a smaller scale. As Susan Connor pointed out, mobility is often the ability more desired than a central space in the library. For a library on a budget, offering mobile set-ups of Digital Media Center equipment is often a possibility. For instance, instead of creating a Mac Lab one could create a Chromebook Lab. Basic Chromebooks start at \$179, are lightweight and easy to use. So instead of dropping a few thousand dollars on each computer, a sizeable computer lab can be created for the price of three Macs.

A basic Chromebook can be found here:

<https://www.google.com/chromebook/find/lenovo-n23-chromebook/>

The Palatine Technology Department recently purchased a portable green screen which would allow any library to have not only green screen capabilities at the library but at outreach events as well. A Westcott 9x10' green screen with stand can be found for around \$70 and a couple professional lights can be purchased for \$60 at Cowboy Studio. Instant green screen!

Green screen with stand:

https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/616215-REG/Westcott_130_130_Digital_Background_9x10.html

Professional lighting kit:

https://www.cowboystudio.com/product_p/triplekitcase.htm

Virtual Reality is the current trend libraries are making possible for their patrons and with smartphone apps and the proliferation of the market it is now easier than ever to find a VR headset that can fit any libraries budget. The Magiove 3D VR glasses are available for no more than \$50 a set – and there is always Google Cardboard to get you started, if need be.

Magiove VR Headset:

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01M8KXFA0/?tag=bom_tomsguide-20&ascsubtag=\[site|tguus\[cat|\[art|\[pid|25481\[tid|1493945115371\[bbc|LESPRIX](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01M8KXFA0/?tag=bom_tomsguide-20&ascsubtag=[site|tguus[cat|[art|[pid|25481[tid|1493945115371[bbc|LESPRIX)

Google Cardboard:

<https://vr.google.com/cardboard/get-cardboard/>

The point is that any library can begin to offer their community some unique technologies that will change the way they view what it is they can do when they come to the library. By thinking in terms of mobility instead of a large space, any library can, as Susan Connor said, have the ability to go where the technology is needed.

The Digital Media Center of the Palatine Public Library has truly shown itself to be an integral part of the services the library provides. It has not only expanded the services offered inside the library, it is beginning to change what is possible to do outside the library as well. This ability to innovate, change and offer resources beyond what is typical is possible because the board of the Palatine Library understand that change is a fact of life and that in order to serve their community they must base their decisions on a document that is flexible while still remaining faithful to the core beliefs of the institution. The mission statement of the Palatine Public Library offers this flexibility and is designed to embrace change and allow for everyone in the community to expect more out of their library.

Additional Works Cited

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