Internship Final Report

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LIBR 294: Professional Experience Internships

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**Introduction**

I chose to embark in the professional experience internship program for a number of reasons. First, I have been employed as a Library Aide at the Berkeley Public Library for eight and a half years. Though I have had extensive work experience in a public library, the majority of my everyday work does not allow me to complete tasks reserved for librarians in higher classifications. With this internship I was hoping to step outside of my current job duties in order to perform tasks that actual librarians accomplish on a daily basis. Second, this is currently my sixth semester in the San José State University, Masters of Library and Information Science program. I have tailored my personal course load to reflect my professional goal to enter youth librarianship after my expected graduation in May 2015. Because of this, the majority of my experience, both inside and outside of the classroom, has necessarily focused on library work with children and young adults. With this internship, it was my hope to step outside of my comfort zone in order to gain professional experience in other realms of public librarianship as I am also interested in this field for my future professional career.

*Overall Learning Outcomes*

My learning outcomes were initially conceived long before I stepped foot onto my internship site. I crafted these learning outcomes to reflect my goals for the tasks I would perform and the experience I would gain at my internship. The purpose of creating these learning outcomes was to create goals that would allow me to build upon my experience in an area of the public library setting that I have been mostly unfamiliar, collection development. My learning outcomes reflect my desire to expand my professional knowledge of the importance of this particular field, while also gaining first-hand experience employing collection development techniques to effectively select, evaluate, assess, and maintain a library collection.

*Internship Site Selection*

There were a few key factors that I took into consideration in the internship site selection process. These included type of internship library, location, internship responsibilities, and compensation. Of these factors, compensation was of least importance to me because the professional experience gained and the course units obtained through LIBR 294 were more significant to me than being paid for my work. Factors more important to me were to locate internships that were situated in a public library setting, were easy for me to commute to through public transportation, and a position that would provide novel learning experiences. These factors helped guide my internship site selection search process on the internship database managed by the SJSU iSchool.

Using the above criteria, I located and applied to two potential internship sites. The first as a Children’s Services intern at the Castro Valley Library, a branch of the Alameda County Library system, and the second as a Collection Development intern at the Main Library of the Oakland Public Library (OPL) system. The first position is in an area that I have had a lot of experience in through my place of employment, as I often pick up extra hours subbing in higher classifications in the children’s department. The challenges of this internship include the fact that it is located quite far away from my home, though it is accessible by public transportation, and that the application process required more work. The second position is in an area that I have very little experience in, as I don’t have much professional familiarity working in an Adult department or with Adult materials and collections. The positive aspects of this internship include the fact that it is much closer to my home and is slightly easier for me to get to than the first internship, and that the application process is much simpler.

I applied for both of these internships by sending the requisite resumes and letters of interest through e-mail. I initially heard back from a children’s librarian at the Castro Valley Library, who informed me that another student from SJSU would also be starting an internship for the Fall semester at the library. The librarian was happy to also bring me on, but because the Fall is generally a slower time of year for children’s departments, she expressed concern that there wouldn’t be enough work for the other intern and me. Despite this, we set up a date and time for an in person meeting. Around the same time, I also heard back from the collection development librarian from the Oakland Public Library. I ended up arranging a meeting with this librarian before my meeting at the Castro Valley Library because it fit into my schedule. During my meeting with the collection development librarian at the Oakland Public Library, we discussed my prior experience, my SJSU course work, my professional interests, and my availability. The selection process of this internship was not extremely competitive, as I was the only applicant for this position this semester. Rather, what was more important was for me to decide if the duties that I would be performing at this internship site would be a good fit for my overall professional goals. I was offered the internship at the end the in person meeting with the collection development librarian, and I accepted it. What ultimately sealed the deal for me was the fact that this semester my course work included LIBR 266: Collection Management. I thought that working at this internship site in tandem with what I would be learning in LIBR 266 would be complementary, and would help to deepen my understanding about this area of public librarianship. Because my meeting was before my in person meeting at the Castro Valley Library children’s department, I ended up informing the children’s librarian there that I had accepted another opportunity.

**Internship Site Description**

My professional experience internship was conducted at the Main Library of the Oakland Public Library system, under the supervision of Collection Development Librarian, Tamar Kirschner.

The Oakland Public Library was established in 1878, and currently maintains 16 branches, a Main Library, an Adult Literacy Program, a Tool Lending Library, and the African-American Museum and Library. The Library was the second public library in California to be founded under the Rogers Free Library Act of 1878 (Oakland Public Library, n.d.). This legislation allowed cities to levy taxes to fund and support public libraries (Oakland Public Library, n.d.).

The Main Library is comprised of three floors; the children’s, acquisitions, IT, and processing departments are housed on the basement level; the adult department, circulation desk, computer lab, and reference desk are housed on the first floor; and the teen department, administration offices, and the Oakland History Room are located on the third floor. The Oakland Public Library (n.d.) “informs, inspires, and delights our diverse community as a resource for information, knowledge, and artistic and literary expression, providing the best in traditional services, new technologies, and innovate programs” (“Our Mission”) as its mission. The Library Director of the Oakland Public Library is Gerry Garzón. In the 2013-2014 year there were a total of 290,630 total registered borrowers, a total circulation of 2,722,974, and a total of 371 staff employed across the Oakland Public Library system (Oakland Public Library, 2014).

The site of my internship was at the Main Library, which was first opened in 1951 and is located at 125 14th Street. The Main Library is located within walking distance of the Downtown Oakland area, and is situated close to the Superior Court of Alameda County, the Oakland Museum of California, Lake Merritt, and Laney Community College. Public transportation to the Main Library includes number a of Alameda County (AC) Transit bus lines, and is a few blocks walking distance from the Lake Merritt Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station.

*Oakland Public Library Collection Development Department*

At the Main Library of the Oakland Public Library, the aging building makes space a limited and valuable resource. As such, a number of departments have to share work spaces because of limited room for offices and work areas. Collection Development, Acquisitions, Interlibrary Loan (ILL), Link+, and the interlibrary delivery system all share a large office space on the basement level of the Main Library. My site supervisor’s work area was located in the basement level of the Main Library, and this is where I reported for every internship work day. There are a number of office spaces located in this area, mostly divided up into individual work stations by cubicles. Most characteristic of this space is an overwhelming sense of chaos when first introduced to it as there are so many different types of activities being performed in a relatively small space. I spent the majority of my time in this area of the OPL, where I was assigned to a free workstation which contained two desks and a computer. The other major portions of my time were spent in the adult and teen departments when I had to work directly with the collections of these departments.

**Learning Outcome I**

*Proposed Learning Outcome*

Develop knowledge and insight of the importance of collection management and collection development in a public library setting.

*Activities and Tasks Performed*

During my internship I spent a significant time working together with various staff members to perform a variety of collection development and management related duties. My experience working in a public library for a number of years has been a mix of working both with library users and staff. In my position as Collection Development intern, I learned that while decisions are based to best cater to the needs and interests of library users, most of the work that is done is completed either independently, or together with other staff. This helped me to gain a much better insight into how work is done in this department of a public library.

One activity that I performed on a regular basis during my internship was to fulfill a variety of different material redistribution requests from OPL branch library locations. The three formats that I worked with the most for these material redistributions were large type books, DVDs, and audiobooks. For this activity I was given a list of desired items created by a branch library, and then was in charge of fulfilling these requests with materials housed in the various collections of the Main Library. The purpose of this task was to help these branch libraries provide a better selection of materials to meet the unique needs and interests of their library users, and to fill in gaps of their collections. This task helped me to develop knowledge about the importance of collection management in public libraries, because their goal is to meet the various informational, recreational, and educational needs of the community served. By redistributing specific materials for different branch libraries, I gained first-hand experience of the importance of collection management in meeting the needs of users at the individual branch libraries I was sending materials to.

Another task that I performed during my internship was the evaluation of a digital resource to determine if its purchase would be beneficial for the needs and interests of the Oakland community. For this activity, I was in charge of evaluating the online streaming video service, IndieFlix. The main purpose of this activity was to determine if the content available through this service was also available elsewhere on the Internet for free. Because there was so much content available through IndieFlix, it was impossible for me to evaluate every single movie available, so I had to construct a methodology to shorten the process. Focusing my sights on film festival content, which my site supervisor said that library users would especially be interested in, I evaluated these movies to determine if they could be accessed for free elsewhere. When I was done with my evaluation, I presented my findings to the digital resources committee, which is comprised of staff from various departments of the OPL. The information I presented helped these staff who hadn’t personally evaluated the resource themselves to decide if it should be purchased by the OPL. This task helped me to better understand the importance of collection development as not just concerned with building physical collections, but that digital resources must also be carefully evaluated to determine if they are a good fit for library users. This also helped me to understand that collection development is an area of librarianship that makes careful decisions based not on luck or chance, but rather a clear understanding of the community and its needs and interests.

Lastly, I had the opportunity to participate on an ad hoc reconsideration of library materials committee, regarding a patron complaint about a particular nonfiction book. For this activity, all members of the group were in charge of reviewing the patron complaint, reading the material being reconsidered for inclusion in the collection, and ultimately determining what should be done with the material. In order to best make a decision about this material, I had to read significant portions of the book, consult reviews written about the book, learn more about the author and his contribution to his field, and consider the needs of users where the library material is located. Findings through my individual research in regards to these issues were then discussed in a group setting, in which we decided to keep the material in the collection. Additionally, we were also charged with drafting a letter to the patron with the complaint to inform him of our decision and the rationale behind it. This task helped me better understand that collection development must take into consideration a variety factors to decide if a material or resource should be added to a particular collection. I learned that this is crucial because when a material or resource is challenged by the member of the community, the library must highlight these factors to justify its inclusion in the collection. This activity also helped me understand that collection development isn’t just about selecting, maintaining, and evaluating materials, but that there is also an aspect of public relations involved.

My successful fulfillment of this learning outcome was accomplished by performing a number of collection management related tasks, and seeing how they had a very real impact on library users. Sending materials to different branch libraries based on an understanding of their user’s needs and interests, helped me understand that one of the main purposes of collection management in a public library is defined by meeting these needs. Evaluating a digital resource based on the needs and interests of the community helped me understand that collection management goes beyond simply collecting physical materials, but is applicable in every aspect of what a library offers. Being a part of a reconsideration committee for a book challenge helped me better understand the importance of collection development based on a variety of factors, and that it isn’t just about buying new materials but also defending their inclusion in the collection. These activities and tasks provided me with a greater understanding about the importance of collection development and management in a public library setting.

*Problems Encountered*

The main problem I encountered in fulfilling this learning outcome was due in part to the overlapping nature of the collection development department and the other departments that shared a work area. I was often assigned tasks and activities that were outside of the realm of collection development. For example, I performed tasks with the ILL and Link+ departments, such as pulling materials off of shelves to fulfill requests or mailing courtesy returns to other libraries. Though these tasks were interesting in themselves and they helped me to build a rapport with staff members located in other departments, generally they did not further my knowledge about the importance of the collection development department. To resolve this problem, I worked together with my site supervisor to develop tasks and activities related to areas in collection management and development that I was interested in learning more about, such as evaluating materials. By making it clear to my site supervisor the tasks I was interested in, it was easier to be assigned relevant activities in this department.

*Supporting Material*

The response letter (with identifying information removed) that was drafted by the reconsideration committee that I participated in is attached as Appendix A.

**Learning Outcome II**

*Proposed Learning Outcome*

Expand professional knowledge of the types of materials available in various collections, and how to develop, maintain, and evaluate these in the context of user needs.

*Activities and Tasks Performed*

This was one of the learning outcomes that I was most interested in developing during the course of my internship because of my general unfamiliarity with a variety of Adult materials and collections.

As noted in the activities and tasks performed section for Learning Outcome I, one of my main duties was to redistribute a variety of materials based on the needs and interests of users at OPL’s branch libraries. The materials that I worked with the most in this activity included large type fiction and nonfiction books, feature film and television DVDs, and fiction and nonfiction audiobooks. Working hands on with these different materials provided me with the best way to learn about these materials- looking at them, reading jacket covers, seeing when they were published or released, and understanding what genre they are from. Having to fulfill specific requests for a particular type of item from a branch for example, urban fiction, thrillers, or biographies, helped me learn what these materials look like in the collection. The knowledge I gained also helped to ensure that I selected the most appropriate items to send to these libraries. This evaluative skill helped me to expand my knowledge of adult materials available in the library collection.

As mentioned in the problems encountered section of Learning Outcome I, I often performed activities and tasks for other departments besides collection development. Though these duties did not help me expand my understanding about the importance of collection development departments in public libraries, they did help me to expand my knowledge about materials in the library’s various collections. I helped with Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Link+ tasks, which involved me pulling materials from the collections of all of the different departments of the library to fulfill item requests. Because a lot of my time was spent away from the various collections of the library, this task helped me to familiarize myself with not just where items were located in the library itself, but the different types of materials available in the OPL collection. Overall, my hands-on work with a variety of materials located in all of the collections of the OPL helped me to greatly expand my knowledge of these materials.

*Problems Encountered*

A problem that I initially encountered was due in part to my general unfamiliarity with Adult materials. As mentioned previously in this paper, the bulk of my knowledge is about children’s and young adult materials, as this has been the focus of my work both in the classroom and at my place of employment. As such, when I was initially given the task of fulfilling redistribution requests for large type fiction and nonfiction books, I felt a bit confused and overwhelmed. One common request that I received in these large type book redistribution requests were for American-American and Urban interest books. I struggled with finding these books because of my unfamiliarity with books of these type. What was first required to overcome this problem was to carefully examine the large type collection to familiarize myself with what was available. Second, I had to do some preliminary research on the Internet and the OPL online catalog to determine specific authors and titles in these genres. Over time, my confusion with fulfilling these requests dissipated the more experience I gained while working with this collection. My growing familiarity with these materials was evidenced when it no longer took me days to fulfill one redistribution request, and instead I was able to accomplish filling them within an hour or two.

**Learning Outcome III**

*Proposed Learning Outcome*

Employ professional collection management techniques to select, evaluate, assess, and maintain a variety of library materials and collections.

*Activities and Tasks Performed*

With this learning outcome I hoped to better familiarize myself with a variety of professional collection development and management techniques that are used to select, evaluate, and maintain library collections.

An activity that I performed to meet this learning outcome was the evaluation of the digital resource IndieFlix. For this evaluation, in addition to writing a short report about IndieFlix which included basic info about the purpose of the site, the layout, and what was required of users, I also took on the task of spot-checking films to see if they were available at other locations on the web for free. My site supervisor outlined what she wanted me to do pretty generally- the OPL was considering adding this service for patrons, but they had heard rumors that a lot of the content available on the site could be found elsewhere. She left it up to me how to approach this task, and I developed a methodology which I initially used to perform the task. I would pick at random between 5-10 films in each of the different genres listed on the site. Then I would perform searches on sites like YouTube and Vimeo to see if the films were available for free on these sites. In order to keep track of exactly what I found, I developed a detailed chart that listed the information about each film, in addition to links to the outside content, if available. As I continued to work on this evaluation of IndieFlix, I ended up modifying the methodology I previously created, and instead of evaluating random films I instead began evaluating the most viewed items on the site. Additionally, my methodology was altered because my site supervisor specifically expressed interest in films available on the site that had been in film festivals, as library users would be most interested in these films. Using this information, I did some research on popular and famous film festivals, and began checking films from them on other free websites. This activity allowed me develop the professional collection development technique of evaluation, which in turn was presented at the digital resource committee meeting to aid in the decision of purchasing it.

Selection of materials for redistribution also allowed me to experience professional collection development technique of selecting and evaluation. In order to best determine what materials to select from the large print book, DVD, or audiobook collections, I first had to evaluate them based on the needs of users. These needs were either previously articulated through staff surveys, in which each branch could indicate the unique interests of their users, or were determined by the branch library department head and sent to my site supervisor. For example, requests for DVDs to be sent to the Rockridge Branch of the OPL indicated a preference for foreign language and television show DVDs, whereas requests for DVDs for the 81st Ave Branch indicated a preference for horror and comedy DVDs. Other factors that I had to take into consideration for fulfilling these requests included: date of publication or release, genre, format, subject matter, and language. Using these user interests and needs helped me to evaluate various materials to determine what materials should be selected to send to the requesting branch libraries.

One last activity I performed during this internship was the evaluation of various donated materials, to decide whether or not they should be included in the library’s collections. An example of this task is when I evaluated a large number of donated audiobooks from an Oakland community member. It is a common misconception that donated items are truly “free”, because staff time and energy is required to evaluate, process, or discard of materials. Additionally, donated items should only be added to the collection if they are appropriate for the collection, in order to fulfill the mission of the library. Because of the large number of donations, I helped my site supervisor to perform the first leg of evaluation of these items. These tasks included checking to see current holdings (if any) of these materials at the library, examining the condition of items, and determining if they were appropriate for addition to the collection. Checking current holdings is important because it allows the library to determine if a donated item may fit into the collection or if it can fill any gaps that may exist. Checking for condition is important because only materials in like-new condition are accepted for addition to the collection. For books this entails healthy bindings, being free of rips or tears, and cleanliness. For media materials like audiobooks and DVDs this entails checking for scratches on disks, and other signs of wear and tear. Evaluating items to determine if they are appropriate for addition to the collection is important because generally only a small percentage of donated items will be added. Factors that are considered include: checking publication year to determine if the donations are too out of date, accuracy and currency of information, duplication of information in other works, if the item is part of a series and if the library owns other works in it, and if the content will be of interest to library users. Also important is consultation with a variety of review sources to determine the quality and reception of the material by critics.

One of the most important projects that I completed during my internship was my evaluation of IndieFlix and the presentation of my findings. The creation of my evaluation document helped me to meet this learning outcome, as I specifically tailored my evaluation to a particular aspects of IndieFlix’s offerings that would be of most relevance to the Oakland community. Determining what percentage of IndieFlix’s films are available elsewhere for free provided an understanding of the potential value that the material available through this digital resource can be to the needs and interests of library users. Using effective evaluation based on the specific needs and interests of library users from the many branch libraries of the OPL helped to develop my experience and expertise. Evaluating donated materials in the context of user needs and a variety of other factors helped me to determine if these items would be appropriate for addition to the library’s collections. Using these professional collection management techniques helped me to select the best materials for library users, which in turn helps the OPL fulfill its mission to its community.

*Problems Encountered*

Perhaps the biggest problem that I encountered for this learning outcome is that I envisioned more responsibility when drafting it than I was actually given during this internship. It was my hope that I would have had a more hands on approach with determining library user’s needs and interests, but instead I was never given an opportunity to do so. Additionally, some of the tasks that I performed during this internship gave me a taste for aspects of professional collection management techniques such as weeding, but overall I didn’t complete such tasks in all of their entirety. For example, I helped my site supervisor to pull items to be weeded from bookshelves using a printed list of items, but I was not involved in creating or generating this list myself. As such, for some of the tasks and activities I performed I only received a partial understanding of the professional collection development techniques that I hoped to develop through this learning outcome. This certainly wasn’t the case for every activity that I performed as I have demonstrated in the previous section a number of tasks in which I was able to fully be involved in a variety of collection development techniques.

*Supporting Material*

The IndieFlix evaluation document that I created is attached as Appendix B.

**Learning Outcome IV**

*Proposed Learning Outcome*

Strengthen interpersonal communication skills in a professional library setting, and participate as an active and contributing member of a collection management department.

*Activities and Tasks Performed*

Though I have been employed at a public library for many years, I quickly learned while working at my internship site that each institution has its own unique culture. Being included as a part of a busy professional library setting required me to strengthen m interpersonal communication skills in order to effectively articulate my ideas, to demonstrate my work, and to develop a rapport with a variety of staff members that I encountered on a regular basis.

Working together with my site supervisor required active communication during every internship work day. Each day of my internship, I checked in with my site supervisor to receive new tasks and activities, and to update her on my progress about ongoing projects. Much of my time was spent working independently on assigned tasks, but in order to do so effectively I had to make sure I was on the right track with my work. If an assigned task was unclear, I would have to make sure I communicated this with my site supervisor in order to receive clarifying information. In order to demonstrate what I had accomplished through working on projects independently, I had to make sure to provide both verbal and written updates about my progress. For example, I e-mailed each iteration of my IndieFlix evaluation document to my site supervisor for review and to keep her in the loop of my work and progress on this project. I also had to make sure that I incorporated any new information or input that I received from my site supervisor in order to demonstrate my commitment to our working relationship. Keeping interpersonal communication open during my internship was crucial in developing professional rapport with my site supervisor, in addition to allowing me to effectively demonstrate the work I completed.

In addition to developing interpersonal communication skills with my site supervisor, I also had to do so with staff from throughout the library. During my internship I worked and interacted with staff members from a variety of different departments. Examples of this include: working with staff members of the Adult department during the reconsideration committee, working together with Link+ and ILL staff to perform holds fulfillments tasks, attending and presenting work completed at meetings with members from reference, teen, children, adult, and IT departments, and completing tasks for staff in other departments such. All of these experiences required me to articulate myself both verbally and in the form of reports and projects. For example, I completed three projects for the children’s department collection development librarian. Because she is located in a different than the one I was working in, I had to make sure to continually keep in contact with her with my progress on these tasks. The continuous use of these interpersonal communication skills with a variety of staff members throughout my internship helped me to greatly strengthen them.

*Problems Encountered*

The problems that I faced the most in fulfilling this learning outcome was my initial unfamiliarity with the library and with staff, and my personal shyness. When I first began work at my internship site, I was completely unfamiliar with the library, as I had never personally visited it before. Coupled with this unfamiliarity was meeting so many new people in a short span of time. It took me three to four weeks to remember the names of the people who worked in the shared office space from the Acquisitions, ILL and Link+ departments. Being accustomed to working in a smaller branch library, it took a bit of learning and growth in terms of interpersonal communication in order to begin to feel at home at OPL’s large Main Library. Additionally, I have always been a shy person, and it always takes a bit of coaxing for me to come of out my shell. In a professional environment I learned there isn’t a lot of room for shyness, because open communication is crucial to getting things done. Getting the opportunity to present my work to groups of unfamiliar staff members, and working together closely with them in committees definitely put me outside of my comfort zone, yet without these opportunities I wouldn’t have been able to learn to put aside my personal fears in order to work in a more professional manner. Fulfilling this learning outcome has definitely prepared me for what life in the real professional public world is going to be like in the future.

**Learning Outcome V**

*Proposed Learning Outcome*

Perform a variety of collection management duties and tasks to gain hands-on experience of the day-to-day activities of an active collection management department.

*Activities and Tasks Performed*

For this learning outcome I performed a variety of tasks, projects, and activities that gave me in-depth insight of the everyday duties that a librarian in an active collection development department must perform. This learning outcome was especially important for me to develop because I came into this internship with little to no working knowledge about the types of duties that librarians in this part of public librarianship performed. Getting the opportunity to complete a variety of tasks, from the mundane to the more exciting, allowed me to develop real experience that I can draw on in my future professional career.

I performed numerous activities related to the selection, maintenance, and evaluation of a variety of library materials and collections. These activities include: evaluating and selecting materials to fulfill redistribution requests; evaluating a variety of donated materials to determine if they are appropriate for inclusion in the library’s collections; evaluating a digital resource (IndieFlix) to help determine if the library should purchase it for use by library patrons; creating a printable children’s book list to aid librarians with readers’ advisory duties, and to promote use of the collection; pulling items off of shelves for purposes of weeding; relabeling audiobooks to reflect the transition to a floating media collection; unloading deliveries of materials from other branch libraries; contacting outside organizations to arrange donations of materials deselected from the library’s collections; serving on a reconsideration committee; and researching topics related to collection management and writing detailed reports. Getting the opportunity to perform these tasks, projects, and activities have given me a real look into the everyday work that collection development librarians do. I learned from doing this work during my internship that it’s not always fun, and it’s not always glamorous, but all of it is an integral part of a public libraries operations, which in turn help it fulfill its overall mission.

*Problems Encountered*

The only minor problem that I encountered during my internship in relationship to this learning outcome was that the tasks that I performed were sometimes very small in nature, especially in relationship to some of the tasks that I have learned about in my LIBR 266 course this semester. For example, performing physically repetitive tasks such as unloading boxes and boxes of DVDs sent from a closed branch, or checking holdings through the online catalog were quite mundane and not very fun to complete. It was important for me to learn how to mix-up the various types of tasks that I was assigned, so that I could intersperse some of the more exciting tasks I was working on with some of the more mundane ones. What I learned from doing these types of tasks are that not every part of the job is going to be fun, but that doesn’t diminish their value or importance. Fulfilling this learning outcome successfully has better prepared me to work in a collection development capacity in a public library, though giving me a taste of the type of work that is done in it.

*Supporting Material*

A detailed report about iPad and tablet security options that I created for the children’s department is attached as Appendix C.

A printable African-American booklist that I created and designed for the children’s department is attached as Appendix D.

**Summary and Conclusion**

*1. Discoveries about the Culture and Ethics of Librarianship*

What I discovered during my internship was just how closely the professional world of public librarianship was to what I have learned during my time as an iSchool student at San José State University. Because I was concurrently taking LIBR266: Collection Management and working at my internship site, I was able to easily make comparisons between the things I was reading about and learning in the classroom to the real-world duties that I performed. This was especially evidenced during my LIBR 266 discussion forums, in which I often drew upon experiences that I encountered during my internship with my classmates. Additionally, it was very exciting for me to sit in on meetings during my internship, in which many of the things that I learned in class were being discussed with very real results and consequences. For example, I witnessed a very active discussion about whether or not the library would continue its standing order of print encyclopedias, when the same information was duplicated through its digital resources. Many of the pros and cons considered and discussed by the librarians at the meeting, very much mirrored the same topics that were brought up in a similar discussion amongst my classmates and I. Seeing the theoretical from the classroom come to life in my internship site was perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of this experience for me.

Additionally, I found everyone at my internship site to be incredibly welcoming and encouraging to me as a MLIS student. For some of my LIBR-266 assignments I had specific questions related to collection development and library activities. Everyone that I worked with made it clear that I could come to them with any questions or concerns I had. There were several times that I approached librarians with queries, and they always went above and beyond to provide me with the information that I needed. Arranging my internship work schedule was a bit bumpy at first, because I was having trouble managing my work schedule, but my site supervisor was always accommodating and worked around what was best for me. Additionally, because work space is a precious resource at the library, my site supervisor made sure to secure a workstation for me to perform my duties. When my workstation was beginning to be encroached on by work from other library departments, she made sure to reiterate when it would be needed by me to these department. Overall, I was very pleasantly surprised to see how closely what I have learned about librarianship thus far in the MLIS program was a reality at my internship site.

*2. Technology*

I would say that there was a mix of technologies available at my internship site. They certainly provided all of the digital offerings that library users today have come to expect from a large public library such as the OPL. On the other hand, I was surprised to see that other more common public library automation technologies just being implemented. For example, self-checkout stations were just installed recently in the Main Library of the OPL, whereas the library where I work has been using these for many years. I did see some very interesting uses of technology during my time at the OPL. For example, I was surprised to discover that in the Teen Zone of the Main Library, during afterschool hours teens can game on a big screen located in this space, and it also offers circulating video games. This is something that is not even offered at my own library, but it has been in place for a while at the OPL. All of the technology that I had available to me during my internship were more than adequate for me to perform my activities and tasks.

*3. Application of Management Concepts and Issues*

There were several management concepts and issues that I learned about in LIBR-204 that I saw applied at my internship site. First, one theme that was stressed throughout LIBR 204 was that there is growing accountability and responsibility of nonprofit service organizations to determine and demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency (Evans & Ward, 2007). As such, there has been greater importance placed on the library to allot and spend their budgets wisely, and to keep an eye on satisfying the needs of the community served (Evans & Ward, 2007). Throughout my internship the bottom line for all of the work that we did ultimately was viewed in terms of serving the needs and interests of the Oakland community, and constantly evaluating services, programs, and collections was done to ensure that they were the most effective in doing so. The work of collection management is very much related to properly identifying the needs and interests of the community, and selecting, evaluating, and maintaining collections to meet them. Accountability of spending resources wisely on new digital resources such as IndieFlix require careful consideration and evaluation in order to ensure that the library is able to fulfill its mission to the community.

Another concept that I saw applied at my internship site was the use of effective communication. As I learned in LIBR 204, clear communication is vital throughout all library operations such as decision making, planning, and managing change (Evans & Ward, 2007). Improved understanding through effective communication can not only lead to better working conditions, but can also increase staff commitment and morale (Evans & Ward, 2007). I saw this level of effective communication throughout my internship site, in a variety of ways. For example, this communication was necessary in the space where my internship workspace was located, as several different departments must share one space. Interdepartmental communication was also needed for collaborative decision making such as during reconsideration committees, in which members from different library departments must work together. I was very impressed with the effective communication I saw between individual staff members and between departments during my internship.

*4. Staff Issues and Concerns*

There were a few staff issues and concerns that I witnessed during my internship. Some of these were related to the department of my internship, but some were more general in nature and related to the entire library. One concern that staff had was making sure that the collections and resources being offered by the OPL were meeting the interests and needs of library users. For example, at one of the library meetings I attended, there was much discussion about the use of certain digital offerings such as online databases and eBook vendors. While of course money was an issue, the librarians at the meeting wanted to make sure that they were spending their budgets wisely. What seemed to be of greatest concern was ensuring that these resources were actually fulfilling the need of library patrons. Another issue related to collection development was deciding on the right balance between physical and digital offerings. This seemed to be another topic of discussion that library staff are in the middle of trying to get a better grasp on. For example, a discussion that I witnessed at a meeting involved trying to decide whether or not a standing order for a print encyclopedia should be reduced to only the Main Library, while branches would copies for two years, since the same information is available through OPL’s digital resources. What is of concern in this discussion, is not just selecting the best resources for users, but also making sure that limited funds are not being wasted.

Another issue that staff had was being unable to keep up with numerous work duties because of there not being enough staff. Though I didn’t work directly with the Acquisitions department, I did share a work space with their staff and also attended their department meetings. What always seemed to be an issue was the great number orders they were receiving, and constantly being behind in unloading and processing them. As I have mentioned previously in this report, space is a limited and precious resource, so often the problems with receiving in Acquisitions was due to not having available workstations for staff to work at. This is definitely a problem that is not going to improve with time, as the library’s aging facility willing continue to cause problems for staff and library users.

*5. Difficult Aspects of the Work Experience*

The difficulties that I experienced during my internship were mostly due in part to working in a new and unfamiliar environment. For example, it was initially hard for me to communicate effectively with the staff that I worked with at the OPL, because I was still learning the best way to do so. As I got to know everyone better in a professional capacity, it was much easier to communicate openly. In fact, I felt much more comfortable with approaching any of the staff members I worked with for assistance or clarification about tasks. The other difficult aspect that I encountered initially during my internship work experience was the confusion that surrounded the work station I was assigned to. There were a few awkward situations that I initially had with other staff, who needed the work station for their tasks, leaving me with no place to complete my own. Fortunately, after discussion and cooperation between department heads and staff, we were able to successfully arrange for me to use the assigned workstation during my internship work hours. The last difficulty I encountered during my work experience was due to my unfamiliarity with Adult materials. During the first few weeks of my internship, I was assigned the task to select large type books to redistribute to other branch libraries in the OPL system. I initially didn’t know where to start, and it took me a while to fulfill books for my first couple of requests. Over time I got to understand this collection much better by working directly with it to fulfill many more requests, and I feel much more familiar with these materials than when I began my internship. Overall, all of difficulties I encountered were mostly due in part to working in a new area of public librarianship that I was unfamiliar with, and working in a new public library environment. All of these difficulties were eventually eliminated as I continued to work and become more familiar with operations at the OPL, and as I became more comfortable with other staff.

*6. Valuable SJSU iSchool Courses*

The following San José State University, School of Information courses that have proved most valuable to my success during my internship: LIBR-200: Information and Society; LIBR-204: Information Organizations and Management; LIBR-232: Issues in Public Libraries; LIBR-275: Library Services for Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities; and LIBR-266: Collection Management.

*7. Other Valuable iSchool Courses*

The following SJSU iSchool courses that might have helped me with my internship are LIBR-234: Intellectual Freedom Seminar; LIBR-283: Marketing of Information Product and Services; and LIBR-286: Interpersonal Communication Skills for Librarians.

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