iPad Lending Program

Image retrieved from Compare iPad models (2015)

Objective

To further lifelong learning and allow patrons the opportunity to explore new technology. By lending out devices such as iPads, we can provide a unique service for our patrons, and promote digital literacy in an accessible and innovative way.

Executive Summary

This proposal discusses creating an iPad lending program in a public library setting. It explores the many facets of lending out this technology, and aims to uncover the ways this type of program supports the library's mission. Not only will iPad lending be a great introduction to an emerging technology, but it will also help libraries lessen the digital divide within communities and open the door to new opportunities for digital literacy. It also provides patrons the opportunity to explore, play, and create, which is an essential goal of public libraries everywhere.

Introduction

Technology is instrumental to success in the world that we live in today. Every day new technologies are hitting the market, and it is easy get overwhelmed when trying to keep up. As an institution that promotes the freedom of information and lifelong learning, the public library is the perfect setting to provide patrons the opportunity to learn new technologies and become comfortable with the evolving market. Michael Stephens (2014) argues that the library has the chance to be a creative classroom, employing building blocks that include self-regulated learning, innovating services, social inclusion and equity, "learning by play/exploration/ creation… and networking with the real world." (To see a full list of the 28 building blocks and learn more about this concept, read his column, Library as Classroom). Lending iPads will give us a chance to move toward embodying this type of environment.

Giving patrons a piece of technology they are unfamiliar with and allowing them the opportunity to borrow it, play with it, create with it, and explore it affords them the chance to learn on their own terms, in their own way. "Creative learning—using digital media and other technology—is the key" (Springen, 2011). It is our job to advocate for our patrons' continued learning outside a

traditional classroom. With this program we can help encourage our communities to not be afraid to interact with new technology and allow for equity of access to expensive tools that patrons may not be able to try out in their personal lives. By providing this technology, we can begin to cross the digital divide and get devices into the hands of patrons who need and want a chance to test out new technology.

What is the technology? Define any terms or related vocabulary.

This proposal is centered around circulating iPads. Here are some key terms that will be used throughout this proposal:

Term	Definition
iPad	Apple's version of an electronic tablet. Comes with built-in wireless internet capability and access to thousands of apps.
Apps	Applications that can be downloaded to a mobile device. Some are free, while some cost money. There are thousands available, and categories range from games and entertainment to social media to education, and many more.
Digital Divide	In short, the digital divide refers to the gap between people who have access to technology and those who do not.
Digital Literacy	Digital literacy is the understanding of and ability to use technology and devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and more.

What should the recipient understand about the technology? Affordances? Negative issues?

The main concern that could arise when considering this proposal is the cost; as with most technology, iPads are not cheap (Apple has a comparison chart of models and sizes; the least expensive starts at $269). Another issue that could come up is deciding which apps to install on the iPads. There is such a wide variety to choose from; it would be important to come up with a system for selecting apps that hold appeal in the community. The last consideration that may be

cause for concern is privacy. Many apps ask for personal data or require individual accounts to access, such as social media, so this may be a factor when deciding what to purchase.

There are also many positive aspects to lending iPads. Most importantly, it gives us the opportunity to grant patrons access to emerging technologies they are unfamiliar with. iPads open the door to creativity in a multitude of ways; lending them out would allow our users to explore without fear of failure and create to their heart's desire. We would be able to further digital literacy through the use of these devices, and we could begin to bridge the gap created by the digital divide by loaning iPads to patrons who may not be able to afford such technology.

How do user populations use it?
iPads are utilized for many different purposes depending on who the user is and what apps are available. iPads can be used for gaming, surfing the internet, connecting with friends through social media, reading ebooks, listening to music or audiobooks, watching movies or television, and many other forms of entertainment. They can also be used for education and studying, reading the news, writing reports, and taking pictures. There are numerous apps that support creating original content such as videos and music. iPads allow for a wide variety of content to be experienced, explored, and created, which holds appeal for many different user groups.

What research or studies can inform the decision to plan and implement?
There are a variety of articles, blog posts, and recipes out there about how to launch a lending program and suggestions on how to run it once started. Sara Q. Thompson (2011) published an article called Setting up a Library iPad Program: Guidelines for Success that outlines everything from iPad lending procedures to app selection, and many other building blocks essential to getting started. Thompson (2010) also wrote a blog post discussing apps and the beginning of her lending program that could be beneficial.

A blogger, Krafty Librarian (2012), put together a great list of resources including links to current loaning programs, samples of policies, and a list of general apps included on iPads. There are also lists of medical apps because medical librarianship is the focus of the blog, but the links and summaries of the findings are still useful for any type of library. Ian Clark (2012) discusses the iPad lending scheme at Radcliffe Science Library, including a "loan agreement" that borrowers are required to sign before checking out an iPad, and the process used to protect users' personal data.

Andromeda Yelton (2012) discusses ways to use mobile services in libraries to bridge the digital divide. In a chapter entitled "Expanding Access to Devices, Collections, and Services," she examines the iPad lending program at L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, which was the first public library to do this. She uses several examples of ways patrons use the devices (a parent wanting to explore educational apps and a speech therapist wishing to test the iPad out before purchasing her own) to highlight how iPads can be used. Yelton also quotes The library's mission for this program, which states:

> "The goal of the iPad Air lending program is to provide library customers with opportunities to gain familiarity and comfort with new technology that allows them to make use of alternative methods of enjoying the written and spoken word and to more fully explore the Internet and its vast resources" (2015).

This goal aligns closely with the missions of many public libraries, and is a great example of the value of this program.

How can libraries successfully implement it?

In order to create a successful lending program, there are some issues that will need to be taken under consideration. First, setting out clear lending policies will be key (Clark, 2012; Yelton, 2012). It is imperative that library users understand their responsibilities and any rules governing the use of the iPads before taking them out of the library. Also, including a wide variety of apps on the iPads will provide a broader appeal to all patrons. Surveying users to see what types of apps they would be interested in would be a great way to create buy-in from the community (Thompson, 2011). Having shorter lending periods, such as a week per checkout, would permit for more frequent circulation of the iPads and would grant more patrons the chance to check one out.

Conclusion

"Libraries are all about access to information in its many forms, and librarians have a long and admirable tradition of striving to increase that access whenever they can" (Miller, 2015). By creating an iPad lending program, the library will be able to better serve this purpose. We will also be able to help patrons from all walks of life explore technology. In this day and age, "closing the digital divide is central to the library mission" (Miller, 2015). Not only will we be adding a service to help combat the digital divide, but we will also be promoting digital literacy among users of all ages. Patrons will have a chance to familiarize themselves with a new technology in a non-threatening environment; the comfort of their own home! On top of that, we will be offering a resource that allows users to explore, play, and create, which are all essential to our mission. We will be turning the library into a new type of classroom, and providing infinite learning opportunities for our community.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) published a public library manifesto in 1994 identifying 12 "key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture [that] should be at the core of public library services." This program would allow us to fulfill several of these missions, including:

- supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
- providing opportunities for personal creative development;
- stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
- facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills

Not only will we be supporting IFLA's missions, but we will also uphold our own. Our library mission states that:

> "Timberland Regional Library invites discovery and interaction
> with our vibrant collection, services and programs
> for learning, enrichment, and enjoyment
> for people of all ages in our diverse communities" (Mission, Vision, & Values)

This lending program supports every aspect of that, as well as many of the library values outlined on our Mission, Vision & Values page.

It is important, as a public institution, to offer our patrons opportunities and services they are unable to find elsewhere. It is our responsibility to ensure that we serve our communities to the best of our abilities, and find ways to stay current and significant to our patrons. An iPad lending program is an innovative way to keep the library relevant to our patrons and to firmly entrench us into the 21st century.

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