Internet Public Library
Assessment Paper

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Library and Community

Hillsboro, Oregon is located approximately 20 miles west of Portland, the state’s largest city. Some consider Hillsboro to be a suburb of Portland, but residents see it as a place that can stand on its own. Currently having a population of over 88,000, the City of Hillsboro is the fifth largest city in Oregon (City of Hillsboro, Oregon, 2008). Originally a farming community in the verdant Willamette Valley, Hillsboro in recent years has become home to such companies as Intel and Yahoo, earning the moniker “The Silicon Forest”. The technology industry has brought in many new jobs, as well as people from all around the world to fill those jobs. People from India, China, Ireland and Germany are some of the new residents that make up this community. There is also a large Spanish-speaking community that largely works in the construction and agricultural sector. 11% of Hillsboro residents speak Spanish as their primary language (Hillsboro Public Library, Library Policies, 2003-2008).

The Hillsboro Public Library has two locations, the Main Library and the Shute Park Branch. These libraries serve over 655,000 patrons a year (Hillsboro Public Library, Overview, 2003-2008). “The mission of the Hillsboro Public Library is to provide materials and services to help community residents of all ages and cultural backgrounds to meet their informational, professional, and recreational needs” (Hillsboro Public Library, Library Policies, 2003-2008). Patrons use the libraries to access the book collections, use the internet, attend story times in many languages, do research for business or school, borrow a DVD, and/or read magazines. Meeting rooms are available for community use.
**Information Needs**

In order to evaluate the information needs of Hillsboro Public Library, I looked at the library’s website and interviewed three prominent employees. These interviews were with Linda Lybecker, Assistant Director, Carol Sibley, Library Public Information Liaison, and Hillary Garrett, Reference Librarian. Each interviewee contributed useful insight and helpful ideas.

I started with Linda Lybecker, whose main point was how would the Internet Public Library (IPL) be more useful than Google when it came to the fast paced nature of the reference desk. She recommended narrowing the focus of the IPL, so it would be more efficient to use. This is an interesting thought which requires much consideration as to how that would be implemented. She mentioned that reference has changed considerably in the past few years as most adults look up information themselves on the internet. She chose the topic of information literacy as the area she thought the IPL could help with.

I interviewed Carol Sibley, because she is in charge of the library’s website. She mentioned that the current site is a bit of a mess and needs to be updated or completely changed. She mentioned a new site might have librarian written reader’s advisory blogs, an idea considered part of the Library 2.0 concept (Curran, Murray, & Christian, 2007). I mentioned that Lincoln County (Oregon) Library district has a blog that gets 20,000 hits a month (Kuzyk, 2006). Hillary Garrett also was in favor of “ditching” the current website. She is currently serving on the Washington County Cooperative Library Service’s 21st Century Reference taskforce which is looking into SOPAC, a social OPAC
integrated with Library 2.0 ideas, which is being developed by Darien Public Library in Connecticut (Hadro, 2008). Since Hillsboro Library’s website is in question, both Carol and Hillary were not interested in adding links to the IPL at the moment, but would keep it in mind for the future.

**Issues Identified**

Linda Lybecker thought that the IPL needed to narrow its focus. She said this impression may be dated from when she used it more, as she no longer works at the reference desk. But Hillary Garrett also mentioned narrowing the list of resources, and gave an example of how to do so. She searched the IPL for free e-books and online audio books and found the “Online Texts” section. She said “it would be nice to have a subcategory for audio books specifically”.

Hillary had other ideas about how to improve the IPL in general. She said “The more you can link people back to their public library, the better”. She noted that many of the pathfinders recommended books, and she wondered if a “find in a library feature” could be designed using WorldCat.org records. She also thought the IPL could mention that people’s local libraries often subscribe to databases that could be of further help. She suggested something that said “Look for these types of resources at your local library: Biography Resource Center, Science Online, etc.”. Another example she offered is that in the Genealogy pathfinder subtopic “Subscription Internet Services” that “there is a perfect opportunity to mention that many libraries subscribe to Ancestry Library Edition and/or HeritageQuest”. She thought the IPL had many strengths such as incredibly in-
depth research guides, and thought that such a “fabulous resource” should be marketed more so people know that it is out there.

One of the main issues with the Hillsboro Public Library website is that there seems to be more than one way to get to the same information, and it can be hard to find one’s way back. I found a similar issue with the IPL. If one uses the “Search the IPL” function with the search terms “information literacy” one gets a list of hits that are helpful. But the same terms in a Google search bring one to a “mini” pathfinder. By looking at the URL, [http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/soc80.47.00.10/](http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/soc80.47.00.10/), I was able to determine that this “mini” pathfinder could be found by subject browsing. By clicking on “social science” in the index on the left side of the screen, then “Education”, then “Literacy”, then “Information Literacy”, one came to the information. If the IPL search engine could list this as it’s first hit, that would be an improvement. Perhaps the website needs to be manually adjusted to be able to refer to itself, or maybe the search engine needs improvement in general. For example, when I enter the search term “references” the third hit is about “rainbows”. Even with these issues, the IPL can compete with Google’s speed with the quality of information that comes from being evaluated and chosen by professional librarians.

**Targeted IPL Support**

The IPL can definitely help the staff of the Hillsboro Public Library on the subject of information literacy with the information it provides today. In addition to the list of information found through the subject guides, the IPL offers a page of “Web Searching
Tips”. There are many links to different search engines help sections, and information on how to search web directories. There are links to help learn how to evaluate information as well as to selected web guides.

I believe that the IPL could increase the information they offer on this important subject, which is after all related to the mission statement of the IPL. The mission statement states it intends to provide “information instruction for the public” (Internet Public Library, Mission Statement, 2008). I have provided a pathfinder with this paper, which could get the process started. Perhaps an information literacy pathfinder could include online video or podcasts to help those who learn better in those formats. Librarian blogs about how information is chosen for the IPL might also interest people while indirectly spreading information about the process of evaluation. Feedback to the blogs would invite participation that would increase the transfer of knowledge and increase information literacy of the IPL’s patrons. Perhaps as the Librarian’s Index to the Internet is merged with the IPL, the combined resources could benefit the coverage of the subject of information literacy (Internet Public Library, Home, 2008).

**Conclusion**

The reference staff of the Hillsboro Public Library needs resources that have quality information, but are also quickly accessible. They are in need of updating their website to be interesting in the world of Web 2.0 possibilities and incorporate the valuable ideas of Library 2.0. They specifically would like help with providing information literacy information to their patrons. The Internet Public Library is in a unique position to
provide assistance on all of these issues, especially as they continuously upgrade their capabilities.

While researching her answers to the interview questions, librarian Hillary Garrett asked the other librarians at the reference desk if they use the Internet Public Library, and they all said they did not. She thought they would if they knew more about it. Perhaps some marketing needs to be done to those librarians who are not recent graduates from library school. At the end of her written response to the interview questions, Hillary stated “I make a pledge from here on out to remember to use the IPL more!”. I believe similar responses would be common with more widespread knowledge of the Internet Public Library.
References


**Information Literacy Pathfinder**

The purpose of this pathfinder is to provide information on the subject of “Information Literacy”. The library at the University of South Dakota defines information literacy as “The skills necessary to locate, access, and use information in today’s society” (University of South Dakota, 2001). This information is intended to supplement the information available on the Internet Public Library at: http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/soc80.47.00.10/

Here is some information to get you started.

**Call Number Range**

The call number range in the Dewey Decimal system for information literacy is 025 to 028.7. Some Library of Congress call numbers to browse through are Z675, Z711.2, ZA3075, ED1.302, and LB1044.

**Library of Congress Subject Headings**

Information literacy
Information literacy—Handbooks, manuals, etc.
Information literacy—Problems, exercises, etc.
Information literacy—Research
Information literacy—Sourcebooks
Information literacy—Standards
Information literacy—Study and teaching
Information literacy toolkit
Information literacy—Web-based instruction case studies.

These subject headings were found at: http://authorities.loc.gov/

**Books**


Interesting approach to the subject that may be useful in public libraries.


Comprehensive, graduate level textbook covering all aspects of information literacy.


This book has ideas for information literacy programs that for both public and school libraries. Covers many Web 2.0 skills like social networking.
Finally a book on the role of Google in libraries. Covers Google Scholar’s potential role in information literacy. Examines how Google and libraries can co-exist.

Seminal work for those interested in school library media programs. Covers information literacy. Delia Neuman is a professor at Drexel University.

**Websites**

Classic tutorial on information literacy

This site lists the best search engines or websites for the subject or type of information one is interested in. I was impressed to see a local library’s website listed as the best site to search on the topic of social issues.

This site has free computer tutorials on programs and topics such as MS Excel, MS Word, Beginning computing, Visual Basic, and Web Design.

This blog updates the book “Information Literacy meets Library 2.0” by Peter Godwin and Jo Parker. This website covers Web 2.0 applications that are relevant to Library 2.0 concepts.

**Resources for Children**

This DVD introduces children to one of the basic concepts of information literacy, evaluating sources. This skill not only is valuable for school reports, but in determining the quality of information one is faced with in everyday life.