

EVALUATION SUMMARY – LEWISTON CITY LIBRARY
CIVIC TECHNOLOGIES/LIBRARY DECISION

PEER EVALUATOR: LE KARLINSEY, LIBRARY DIRECTOR
ROBERTS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Grants: T08359-00 Lewiston City Library

Evaluation Summary:

Lewiston Library contracted with CivicTechnologies for an assessment of the patrons in their service area. This assessment consisted of a database of patron library-use overlaid with GIS mapping, population estimates, forecasts and population demographics. The end result of this data is a measure and analysis of library-use patterns visually presented in maps that represent a clear picture of the type of patrons who use the library as well as nonusers. It also shows where they live, their age group and lifestyle.

This analysis proved to be a valuable tool in the decision making process of the Lewiston Library. Library decision makers can now allocate funding and design programs that will have the greatest impact on the population. This data will be useful for the next five years, a good investment for this community.

In addition, cooperation between the library and city planners has blossomed into an unanticipated partnership through this project. As a result, the library's role in the community has been recognized as a dynamic force for change and improvement in Lewiston.

In summary, Civic Technologies provided a valuable tool for the Lewiston Library to enhance its service to the community and focus its resources to the best possible use for the most patrons.

Project Objective:

The project initially had two objectives: to target library marketing in areas of low patron usage and to direct library services to specific needs and desires of the community. This was a unique project in that it was difficult to set objectives until the data had been collected and analyzed. As will be shown in this narrative, the results of the data modified the direction of the planned objectives.

Project Method:

CivicTechnologies collected checkout and patron data from ExLibris (the integrated library system to which Lewiston belongs). From this data and geographic, demographic and market segmentation data, CivicTechnologies prepared a series of maps that included Demographic maps, Checkout maps, Advanced patron maps, and Lifestyle Segmentation maps. This information was then submitted to the library and a representative from the company guided the Lewiston Library Staff and the Lewiston Community Development Staff to interpret the significance of the data.

Librarian, Dawn Wittman and the Lewiston city planner, Steve Watson took the direct responsibility of studying and learning to understanding the information. The study was due in January of 2009 but was delayed by various unexpected circumstances so the initial evaluation and planning was not completed until later in the year. However, the

library was able to use the data to plan programs in the grant year and are still finding more applications and learning more from the study in August of 2010 when this review was conducted.

Project results:

Dawn Wittman reported that although the initial idea had been to improve library collections and market these to non-library users, the data convinced the board to provide additional programs of interest to the community.

One very successful program offered throughout the city by the library was in financial planning. The need for this program was directly from the data. It proved to be overwhelmingly attended and brought the library to the attention of many people in the community.

Finding that many users were also “empty nesters” brought in the addition of popular “do-it-yourself” books.

An unexpected result of the increased programs and publicity was that use of the library database doubled.

Project Impact:

Dawn reported that one of the greatest benefits of the survey is in library planning. With the data, priorities are clarified. Issues of staff time and the use of library resources efficiently are now seen in the light of the facts brought out by the study. Because a larger library facility is needed in Lewiston, planning for a new library location can be based on the convenience to the greatest number of library users and kiosks or branches can be placed in strategic locations to reach other users.

Collaboration between the library and the city planner working together on this study brought other unanticipated benefits. Dialog between the city council and the library was greatly improved. Library issues are now a part of the monthly council agenda. The increased use of the library convinced the city transit system to provide free bus service to parents and children attending summer reading programs.

The Project in Retrospect-Project Director and Staff perspective:

The project went very well as planned with the exception of the time actually involved in gathering the information. Dawn suggested that others interested in this project for their libraries consider more time allowed for information gathering and for staff to learn the vocabulary used to interpret the graphs. She emphasized the wide range of information provided by the survey and the continuing process of looking at the information and using it.

No additional resources were needed. The library had great participation with the Lewiston Community Development Department, the library board and even from the Lewiston Library Foundation in gathering information and listening to the presentation on the results of the study. No publicity was needed.

The Idaho Library Commission was wonderful to work with and did provide adequate assistance.