



# PATHWAYS OF BELONGING: DELIGHT

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Rural communities often use delight as a way to build strengthen social connection, shared identity, and economic opportunity. A delightful event, such as a unique annual festival can be used as a device to maintain connection with people who moved away for college, work, or other reasons. Conversely, newcomers to rural communities often cite attending a community-wide event as their introduction and first love with their new home. A single delightful event will lead to them coming back again and again.

Rural librarians intuitively use delight to to pull people into the library and connect them with both other resources of the library and other community members. Understanding and appreciating this deeper connecting role of delight, helps free us to creatively develop spaces and programs that are just plain fun!

What is in this tool?

The following is designed to help you assess first (a) your community and then (b) your library work toward resident belonging through delight.

Further Resources:

Want to learn more about creating a library space that pulls people in? See “Dare to Dream” and “Library as the Community’s Welcome Center”.

Want to learn more about connecting people with quality of life opportunities? See “Nature: Going Beyond the Walls of the Library” and “Pathways to Knowledge and Delight”.

## IN THEIR WORDS

“It is an interesting experience I have--my awareness, because of recent politics and stuff of being a Latin American person, is. ... it's the first time that I've felt uncomfortable in this country. And I attend this library because it's a delight to come here. This is a great place to hang out.”

-- Margie,  
interview #4-2-03

## DELIGHT

Inviting someone’s participation by creating a delightful experience works as an entry point for further exploration or engagement.

### Events

*Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5*

1 2 3 4 5

Community-wide events tie to community story or identity in a meaningful and inclusive way that is specific to the place where the event is held?	1	2	3	4	5
Library events are designed to give participants new experiences they might not have access to without the library’s designed intervention.	1	2	3	4	5

### Place-making & the Environment

*Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5*

1 2 3 4 5

This community includes public art, landscapes, and unique structures that represent and celebrates its full diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
The library is designed to invite a sense of wonder and surprise through passive/DIY program stations, furniture arrangements, and displays.	1	2	3	4	5

### Enrichment

*Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5*

1 2 3 4 5

Throughout the community, there are opportunities for personal growth (eg. coordinated bird walks, performances, museum exhibits, etc.) which a wide variety of residents engage with.	1	2	3	4	5
The library connects residents to the outside world as well as showcasing the wisdom from locals in town to provide residents with experiences which inspire them to say things like “I would never have thought ...” and “I had no idea my neighbor had...”	1	2	3	4	5



## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Events:

**Community:** The power of Helvetia's (WV) community-wide events to lure visitors from across the globe lies in the completeness of participation. Babies and grandmas, teenagers, college kids, and dad's just off work - everyone creates and participates in events. This complete, multi-generational, and across demographic boundaries engagement gives events a feel of authentic community vitality. It's a feeling that sinks into the bones of visitors and fills the souls of people returning to their childhood homes.

**Library:** When the nearest movie theater is over an hour away, the most delightful thing the thirty kids in your town might experience during chilly October is the Haunted Library. The Elk River Free Library District (ID), with help from older teens in town, create a moderately scary and seriously fun haunted house that runs one full weekend before Halloween. There is candy, there are prizes, there are movies shown, costumes, and older adults going all out to make memories with kiddos. Kids have come to associate the turn in the weather with anticipatory excitement and delight.

Place-making & the Environment:

**Community:** In Wanakena (NY) the hemlock trees grow so thick, they create a near compete sense of hamlet enclosure. No highway travels through, and many people accessed the community from a footbridge in years passed. Cottages that populate the community rarely have fences because the hemlocks do the job of resident to resident privacy. It is completely to itself and of itself and visitors know where they are intuitively upon arrival.

**Library:** Meservey Public Library director Chelsea discussed pathways of delight at length with the research team, describing it as a mix of surprise and joy. She would know! When redesigning the children's space in her library, she brought in a clawfoot bathtub. Filled with pillows, kiddos sink in with books (but no shoes) and read for hours - delighted and then contented.

Enrichment:

**Community:** The sandy soiled lake lands of northern Wisconsin make for miles of trails with few inclines. It's why Sayner (WI) has become home to hundreds of miles of community-funded bike trails. Along routes there are some sign-posts for independent exploration. The groups that organized the construction of the trails also coordinate community rides, tours, and races open to all residents.

**Library:** Story times are a delight in most libraries. In the El Pueblo de Abiquiu Cultural Center and Library (NM), there is an annual marathon event called the Read and Draw. Residents take turns reading from a book of local interest or content, while others drop by and draw for as long as they want. The drawing pages are pre-cut and supplies fill the tables. Artists, readers, and listeners are of all skill levels. At the end of the event a board member gathers all the drawings and sews them into a book with photos taken throughout the day. The results are magnificent.