



FOSTERING KNOWLEDGE AND DISCOVERY

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Open up an entirely new world to someone!

The research has shown that many patrons feel that one of the major contributions the local library makes in their lives is allowing them to discover new things. We love to learn the preferences of individual patrons, but we also find ways of pushing people along in learning new ideas, skills and ways of thinking.

Libraries do two important things to build discovery: we bring in new ideas from the outside, and we tap into the expertise that already exists in our local residents. For isolated communities, it can be important to facilitate discussion on hot topics and to familiarize young people with ideas they will encounter when they move away for college or work. Successful libraries increase access to the discovery of new ideas, knowledge, and skills without advocating from a specific political viewpoint.

What is in this tool?

The following is designed to help you assess first your community and then your library work towards fostering lifelong discovery and knowledge. Our hope is that after using this tool, you as the library director will realize how amazing you are doing at fostering growth within the community, and what areas you need a bit of help and direction on.

Further Resources

Want to learn more about creating entry points for building knowledge and connection? Read "Creating Community-Building Events" and "Pathways to Belonging: Delight".

IN THEIR WORDS

"Even, you know, people that aren't necessarily avid readers; the people in this area are very interesting, they are innovative and dream up crazy things they decide they want to do."

-- Betty,
interview #1-1-02

HIDDEN TALENT: FIND UNIQUENESS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Let's start by looking at the potential for discovery that already lives within your community. Inviting someone's participation can work as an entry point for further curiosity to discover new knowledge in their life. When the library gains a reputation for highlighting the value of individuals, you may find that hidden talents start to be uncovered without really even trying. Think about the hidden talents in your community members, and how you go about finding them.

1. Think of one person with a "hidden talent" in your town. What is it?
2. List another here (and then another)

Name	Talents

How do you uncover hidden talent in your own community?

In what ways does the library serve as a platform for people to share their unique abilities?

If you haven't already, how could you ask local individuals if they would be interested in some demonstrations?

If you haven't already, how could you contact businesses/jobs/trades in the state and ask for demonstrations and information?

If you haven't already, how could you ask and discuss with your board some new ideas for knowledge and discovery?

BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE WIDER WORLD

- Are you always looking for new “learning” activities for the kids?
- Are you engaging and looking for activities for teens that they would want to attend?
- Do you think your community would be receptive to new ideas or learning new skills?
- Do you present new ideas and skills that are maybe a little beyond their current comfort levels but help them see new potential in themselves or provide a new perspective?
- Does the library facilitate discussion groups?

Thinking on your answers to the questions above, what are three goals you can make this year to help strengthen the pathway to knowledge and discovery through the library this year?

COLLECTIONS SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING NEW KNOWLEDGE

- Do you make creative displays of your different nonfiction books around topics of current national or world interest?
- Do you order a variety of nonfiction books, geared towards expanding current interests in the community?
- Do you order nonfiction books on topics of current national or world interest?
- Do residents have an easy way of sharing what they want with you?
- Do you know how to use an interlibrary loan program to secure hard to find or expensive nonfiction books?

How do you identify areas of knowledge and discovery from the wider world to bring into your community through the library?

Inviting your Community to be a collection for local knowledge sharing

Are there actions that you would consider taking in the library to build knowledge and discovery?



WANT SOME IDEAS?

Creating networks for community residents to share their knowledge with others is tough work! Helping people discover new skills and ideas they had never considered before isn't easy! Here are a few tips from the field to get you started:

- Ask your neighbors and library patrons to share their passions with you. Feeling shy? Make a drop box and quick slip of paper survey! Consider doing an online version through your current social media pages. You might ask just “What are you passionate about?”, or you might try to find out more detailed information like which skills do you have, what do you wish you could learn?
- Ask a local firefighter, clinician, electrician, landscaper, police officer, natural resources officer, park ranger, mechanic, or plumber to come talk about their job. Offer snacks, allow questions.
- Ask board members to reach out to anyone they know with a skill they might be interested in sharing in a class or demonstration setting.
- Work with your local nursery, wildlife organization or horticultural association (eg., Arbor Day, Master Gardeners) to plant a community garden and help residents learn about plants, insects, and self-sufficiency.