Today and Tomorrow of Reader Advisory Services: a Fresh Technological Approach in Digital Environment in the Public Libraries with special reference to Book Suggestion App

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ABSTRACT

This Paper describes the expanded and updated version of past and present philosophy of readers' advisory service in public libraries. It offers many training ideas for Public librarians interested in learning how to perform the service and we gives guidelines on how to conduct the readers' advisory interview, which he describes as a conversation about books between a patron and the Public librarian. One goal of the readers' advisory interview is to demonstrate that the conversation should be viewed to be as important a Public library service as is answering reference questions. I found that one of the most interesting appeal I this paper to the reader is that the basic elements of which are pacing, characterization, story line and setting. The Paper devotes an entire Content in this version on how to articulate those elements, to get the reader to describe what it is about that Paper that makes them want to find a similar one.Author's goal in this paper to introducing the materials, skills and philosophy of readers' advisory service. This Paper will be a very useful training tool for libraries and librarians interested in learning how to provide readers' advisory service in their libraries. In Public Libraries, Reference librarians are often called on to make recommendations to readers, sometimes in genres that they don't personally read. Learning how to frame a discussion and articulate the appeal of a Paper, author, or genre marks the essence of a successful readers' advisor. Since there was sufficient interest within the library for developing the service, the next step will be to create a working group to collaborate on the final development of Book Suggestion App. Where we go with it remains to be seen. But the most empowering aspect of the approach so far has been the way that HTML5 and common web development techniques have opened the door for simple prototyping. As we continue with the full development work, these same capabilities promise to help us quickly and efficiently build out a service across the multiple platforms people are now using every day.

Introduction

Readers' advisory is defined as "Services provided by an experienced public services librarian specializing in the reading needs of public library patrons". A successful readers' advisory service is one where knowledgeable, non-judgmental staff help readers with their leisure-reading needs. Because the library can often be confusing in their organization and layout, readers' advisers are crucial in providing the library's leisure-reading material to the reader. Readers' advisers should endeavor to be "knowledgeable about both fiction and nonfiction—particularly what is popular in their libraries" Readers' advisory is defined as, "patron-oriented library service for adult fiction readers," according to Saricks, a noted expert on the subject. In the completely revised third edition of Readers' Advisory Service for Public Libraries, Saricks updates this critically acclaimed how-to guide, making it more helpful than ever. As reference librarians seek support in guiding adult readers, they've come to trust this authoritative resource. It has been expanded and improved with: Easy ways to create "read alike" lists, identifying what else is "like" a favorite book; Practical guidelines for conducting the advisory interview so it's a comfortable exchange; Confidence-boosting tactics for drawing on reviews to make recommendations; Methods for incorporating nonfiction into the discussion; More resources and online tools; Using the proven strategies in this newly updated, back-to-basics overview, librarians providing readers' advisory services will find the answers they need to help customers make appropriate choices.

Most readers accept the fact that a reader's advisory service has been a core component of public library reference services dating from the beginning of the 20th century. This practice of conducting a reference interview to find people's interests and tastes and then offering them pertinent book to read has wavered as traditional reference services have become less about guiding readership and more

about focusing on research needs. But in thinking about how we could provide better discovery services to our library patrons, I became interested in the ways we might move the classic practice of reader's advisory services into our digital library environment.

Readers' Advisory services have experienced many ups and downs throughout its history in libraries. Initially, Readers' Advisory was seen as a way to improve the reading habits of adults through directed readings in a form of adult education. Interest in the service waned during and after WWII because it was thought that any librarian could perform the service and leisure time was lacking for many. In recent years, readers' advisory has experienced resurgence in popularity due to librarians reformatting the services in order to regain personal contact with the patron, something that had been lost over the years. Librarians in the past thought of themselves as educators and today's librarians (since 1980s) consider themselves 'links' between patrons and materials.

Fresh Technological Approach in Digital Environment in the Public Libraries with special reference to Book Suggestion App

The rise of apps and mobile devices has opened the door to small. Dedicated software programs that are focused on singular tasks. From my perspective as head of digital access and web services manager at Montana State University, these apps offered an opportunity to build a focused digital service aimed at allowing someone to enter a search for a title or subject, Match an item, and then receive a list of suggested related items. In essence, it would be a user- mediated reader's advisory. The result was Book Me Up, a web app prototype incorporating many of the emerging features of HTML5 to work across smart phone and tablet platforms as well as on the traditional desktop.

Top Requirements for Book Suggestion App for Reader Advisory Services

For Creating the Good Book Suggestion App, Western Public Libraries started to sketch out a few requirements. This following is among the top-level functional requirements:

- Compatibility with existing skill sets in the organization
- Ability to rapidly iterate and prototype
- Access to the internet for using web services and APIs
- Access to geo location hardware or setting on desktop computers and mobile devices
- Ability to scale the app into multiple design environments: desktop, smart phone, tablet, etc.

With these basic requirements in place, it became clear that an HTML, a PHP, a Java Script, or a CSS solution could work and might even be the preferred option. First this solution took advantage of the common web development skills in place at our library, as HTML, PHP, CSS, and Java Script are required, core skills of our digital team. There wouldn't be any need to invest time in learning the Objective-C (Apple) or Java (Android) programming languages or software development kits.

Additionally, the instant publishing model of an HTML based web app allowed me to work live and to rapidly develop using only a web browser and an internet connection. During this development phase, I could test and work through bugs immediately and wasn't subject to Apple APP Store restriction, laggy patching, or software deployments. The web app option also gave me access to the network on which my app could make continual HTTP requests for remote web services date and other dynamic data for page views.

Machine Learning Algorithms That Make Suggestions Possible

Data mining and machine learning algorithms have been around for quite a while. Finding ways to personalize user experience by filtering a view of data as it relates to a particular person is just one application of data mining and algorithms. More recently, similarity algorithms and the "More like this" relations paradigm have become common- place in search and browse interfaces.

Until recently, libraries have been using very simple ways to describe and define similarity relationships between items. Tags, Library of Congress subject headings, even simple related keywords have been used to build a network of related items. These methods often rely on matching related patterns of strings, and they work by associating exact alphanumeric strings from one record to another. This model can hold up on a very generic level, but eventually, the nuances of the relationship break down. And here's where similarity algorithms can be applied to pick up the slack. Consider the uncannily accurate Amazon recommendation system, which suggests similar products that customers have purchased as related to the current product.

Netflix user association learning models to suggest related items for users, Association learning models work to re-create the intentions of the user by recording and learning similar behaviors between common items and the people who browsed these items. The move away from simple pattern matching to intention recording and learning the relationships between similar users are what make these newer forms of recommendations compelling.

Reader Advisory with applying web Services: Why reinvent the wheel?

Fortunately, these association algorithms are not completely hidden. In fact, many internet companies and organizations are making pieces of their service data available via web services. The Amazon Product Advertising API is one of these web services that can be used under certain terms of service (http://goo.gl/Vmhll) to collocate related items using Amazon's data. Another feature of this API is the rich amount of book data related to each item returned: standard metadata such as ISBN, cover thumbnails, author(s) names, and prices. Using this API requires registering as an Amazon Associate and acquiring a developer key that allows Amazon to identify you and your application.

Once registered as an Amazon developer, I was able to build a PHP script that made a call to Amazon's web service using the search form input on the main page view of the Book Me Up app. When the results are returned to the Book Me Up app public interface, the user is given the option to check within World Cat to

find the location of the item. The request from the PHP script to the Amazon API has the following parameters:

One thing to note is the programming in the Book Me Up prototype app is specifying that only books within Amazon's catalog are to be searched. Search Index is the parameter controlling this option, and you could set it to look at other indexes or everything in the Amazon catalog. A successful call to the Amazon API returns formatted XML, which is used to create the display for a specific book item and the related books that the app user as suggestions. Here's an excerpt from the XML file that has the suggestions;

Within the XML file returned by the Amazon API, the Similar Products tag is where the Book Me Up app gets the suggestion info, and that info is the key behind the whole Book Me Up. I don't mean to trivialize the workings of the PHP script, because there is a whole lot going on. To see all the details, please have a closer look at the code by downloading or forking the Book Me Up source code available from my site (www.jasonclark.info) on on my Git Hub account (https://github.com/jasonclark).

Location Brows Point

Another feature I had sketched out in my requirements was a location browse point. Part of my logic here was that an important part of a reader's advisory was context. That is, where a person was standing in time and space could be used in determining what he or she might want to read. To this end, one can write java Script that can be used to call the geolocation API (a spec related to HTML5) and get some information about where a person is located.

Building location- Based Recommendations Using API and Cloud Services

The results returned are geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) based on where a person's device is located on the network. Once you have these location values, you can starts to use them to create some interesting relationships between someone's current location and item related to that location.

In the example, "lat" and "lon" would be the retrieved values from the previous geolocation request. Here's the real Power of map FAST: The request shown returns subject heading in the form of structured data that can be used to create an HTML display of subject headings. Using this information, the Book Me Up "where ?" page(www.lib.montana.edu/beta/bookme/index?view=where) prints out links of subject headings that can then be passed to the search of the Amazon Product Advertising API, and recommendations based on subject headings of the user 'current location are returned.

Book Suggestion App: Next Steps and Future Plans for Public Libraries

With the Prototype for Book Me Up in hand, I brought the demo version to the public services teams members to see if they thought it had any legs and, if so, to get

their suggestions for refining the app. In my experience, pitching a project always works better if you have a working prototype to help shape the discussion, and this case was no exception. Comments focused on the design and interface with specific suggestions for integrating the service into established library software. Among the highlights of the discussion, the team suggested the following:

- Integrating the service to point at item – level records in the local library catalog
- Opening the suggestions scope to include a wider range of items such as movies
- Introducing and promoting the project through library channels such as the library blog and Face book

As the discussion ended, I started to think about places where the technical pieces of the app could be improved:

- Caching the most commonly used files in the app to help with performance (cache manifest file)
- Using CSS3 media queries to create unique displays for multiple environments
- Using CSS3 to create" touchable " buttons that work better in handheld environments
- Creating search suggestions to help guide users to successful queries
- Providing the ability to share and bookmark book recommendations
- Encoding book recommendation in common formats such as Bib TeX. End Note, Ref Man
- Setting up SMS and /or texting capabilities to allow the app to push recommendations to cell phones

Since there was sufficient interest within the library for developing the service, the next step will be to create a working group to collaborate on the final development of Book Me Up.

Where we go with it remains to be seen. But the most empowering aspect of the approach so far has been the way that HTML5 and common web development techniques have opened the door for simple prototyping. As we continue with the full development work, these same capabilities promise to help us quickly and efficiently build out a service across the multiple platforms people are now using every day.

Reader Advisory services and blog

According to Ross and Chelton in their article "Reader's Advisory: Matching Mood and Material", recommend placing books in four areas of the library in order to make the most of merchandising. These four areas are the entrance, the ends of stacks, high traffic areas, and the circulation desk placing the display in these areas ensure that patrons will see and, hopefully, utilize the books on display. Ross

and Chelton also note that books, not posters and announcements, should be here because merchandised titles will circulate very quickly. Reading and/or maintaining a readers' advisory blog for a library can be beneficial for both patrons and librarians. Patrons gain access to book reviews and recommendations and librarians stay current on new releases and improve their readers' advisory skills. Two examples of RA blogs out on the web now are: In addition to readers' advisory blogs, there are many resources available to help the readers' advisor in their mission of providing just the right book for a patron.

- http://www.jackflannel.org/ra.html --The Readers Advisory Link Farm is exactly what it sounds like—it's a lot of links. This site gives you links to everything anyone needs to know about readers' advisory and reading guides. Resources are arranged by genre.

- http://www.complete-review.com/ --really neat site that compiles thousands of book reviews into an easy to use index. It also provides a helpful guide to Recommended books.

- http://www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html --Fiction_L listserv and archives. Compiled booklists from discussions on Fiction_L are available on the website. Arranged by genre, author, character, setting, and more.

- http://www.whatshouldireadnext.com/books/search --What Should I Read Next? Database that allows a user to enter a title and receive suggestions of books based on other user's favorite books.

- *What Do I Read Next* -- http://gale.cengage.com/pdf/navguide/wdirn_nvg.pdf -- a Thomson /Gale Database where one can find over 115,000 titles, 62,000 plot summaries, many author biographies, and reading lists? Subscription necessary.

- http://fictionfinder.oclc.org/ -OCLC's Fiction Finder. Provides access to 2.8 million works of fiction found in the OCLC WorldCat database. A user can search by genre, fictional character, imaginary place or setting, and subject, as well as title, author, etc.

Engaging Readers in New Contexts

Traditionally, Readers Advisory has occurred as face-to-face interaction between library staff and patrons, or through indirect prompts, such as displays, shelf talkers, or posted book lists. The common thread in traditional Readers Advisory has been the ability to engage with readers directly, at the library. As more and more people access library services remotely, library staff can employ an array of tools to maintain that meaningful connection with their patrons and provide personalized readers services, both inside and outside of the library.

Shelf Talk blog and Reader input forms

Reader input forms provide an opportunity for patrons to indicate their literary passions, which library staff can then use to respond with customized catalog examples. These forms can be produced and distributed in hard copy, or posted online. SPL's online form, Your Next 5 Books, allows patrons to share their literary passions and receive customized catalog recommendations from a library staff member within days. SPL has received and responded to over 3,000 of these forms

in the past 2 years, which, in addition to providing personalized service to readers, also promotes a continuous feedback loop between the library and the community. SPL highlights some examples of reader inquiries and library recommendations at their Shelf Talk blog. Additional examples of online forms used by other libraries are available on the archive page, and range from fairly concise to very robust!

YOUR NEXT 5 BOOKS

What to read next?
Looking for something fantastic to read? Ask a librarian!

Fill out the form below and tell us a little bit about what you like (and hate!) to read. We'll email you a list of five books chosen just for you.

Name:

*Email address:

*Confirm
email address:

Library Card
Number:

* Tell our librarians about a few books and/or authors you've enjoyed, and what you liked about them. Also feel free to tell us about books you haven't liked, and why. What are you in the mood to read next? (2500 characters or less)

Reader Advisory services and Social Media

As with any communication channel, a library's use of social media is largely driven by community context and internal capacity. SPL provided several suggestions for engaging with booklovers using social media, applicable to communities where libraries are already connecting with their patrons online, as well as those libraries working to build that online presence.

Plano Public Library System
October 8

This is your afternoon reminder that Tuesday titles is happening right now! Every Tuesday we'll be recommending book titles on Facebook. All you have to do is tell us your favorite 3 books or authors in the comments below and we'll recommend up to 3 different titles for you to try. Your new favorites are waiting!

Like · Comment · Share

Libraries can use **Face book** to post prompts or questions that spark a dialogue about what people are reading, favorite authors and genres, etc. Plano Public Library hosts Tuesday Titles each week, a live Face book discussion between staff and patrons about reading recommendations. Libraries may also use **Twitter** to spark these discussions, as well as blogs to feature patron or staff generated reading lists or book reviews. Traditional media outlets may increasingly look to community content generated by libraries to inform their material, such as The Seattle Times books section, which features information on the top 5 eBooks at the Seattle Public Library. Like the use of forms, successful Readers Advisory via social media is largely dependent upon libraries creating an opportunity for patrons to provide their own input and perspective, and drive the conversation based on what matters to them. Social media may allow the conversation to move beyond books as well, and can be used to crowd source community input on collections or programs. Generating these public conversations may present new opportunities for partnership for libraries, in addition to new avenues for patron engagement.

Creative Cataloging

Many catalogue interfaces now support new means for Readers Advisory, including posting recommended reading lists customized to a patron, as well as suggesting alternate titles for materials that may be on hold. SPL provided an example of their **While you're Waiting For...**feature, which links to books in the collection that are similar to those that are flying off the shelf. Increasingly connected cataloging allows patrons to connect with the diverse offerings in a collection, and understand that the library has something relevant for them, no matter what.

While the tools for successful Readers Advisory continue to diversify and evolve, the foundation of personal connection remains the same. By using new means to identify and respond to patrons' personal reading preferences, libraries create newopportunities for community engagement, and keep the wonderful world of the book at the forefront of library services. Watch the **full archive** and learn from these inspirational RA leaders!

Recommendations

For many librarians, reading outside their favorite genre is easier said than done. In order to become more familiar with what patrons favor and to keep up with ever-changing trends in Publishing and writing, librarians should venture out and read different genres of books Joyce Saricks, a well known authority on readers' advisory, suggests discussing the new book/author with coworkers and fellow readers to get an even better feel for the genre. Maintaining a Staff Recommendations display is another way to improve a library's readers' advisory service. Since many readers are browsers, staff recommendations make it easier to select a book. Experts from Seattle Public Library's (SPL) Reader Services Department recently shared their enthusiastic and innovative approach to Readers Advisory in the Web Junction webinar Serving Readers: Beyond the Basics. As libraries evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, it is crucial to their continued community relevance that they retain and serve their core constituency of readers.

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