

Papers 3 – Vantage Points

The Mixed-Up Files of a 21st Century Librarian: Changing Demographics, Conceptions of Democracy, and The Public Library

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With the rise of the internet, the role of the public library as a distributor of education, skills, and cultural capital has come under question while continuing to grow increasingly vital. This paper examines how libraries are dealing with changing technology while negotiating their relationship with their diverse patron populations. Using the concept of chronotope, a specific space and time that gives rise to a particular understanding of a person's character or an idea, this paper explores conceptions of patrons through systematic assumptions about patrons' background and needs. Through the library's continued inclusion of technology in its services, it seeks to reach out to more patrons and support existing ones. This paper makes clear the connections between the current state of the library, its diverse audience of patrons, and the need for new ways of measuring library usage to generate a more nuanced understanding of patrons.

Keywords: Chronotope, Public Libraries, Technology, Third Space, Generational Differences

INTRODUCTION

Today, city financial woes combine with concerns about poverty and crime to position the library as a possible way for the government or other area residents to attempt to help, though education, those hit hardest by poverty. These ideas of government action, amongst many others, are then enacted by librarians and through library programs and services. Much of this paper examines how the library and librarians within it deal with changing identities due to social and technological change as well as how the ghosts of chronotopes of past libraries are still influencing how governments and sectors of the population view the scope of library services.

The internet make many forms of information available to people that previously only existed in books as well as offering a new world of social media and technical skills. These skills and social expectations of knowledge are only accessible to those with internet access, becoming markers of cultural capital, a form of social standing. Younger generations are growing up in a society where an online presence is often socially necessary and where the ability to navigate social media and complex technological programs are necessary for a variety of job opportunities. Due the the appeal of technology to younger people, many institutions and businesses seek to incorporate technology in their company or institutional image to attract generations that might otherwise associate the company or institution with older generations. In Chicago, the public library system is trying to broaden its appeal to younger audiences while also confronting the growing technological gap between lower income and higher income residents. To make the best of limited budgets, the library needs to reevaluate how its patrons use the library resources and space, as well as developing better metrics for understanding the variety of ways librarians serve patron needs that are not currently taken into account when measuring the productivity of libraries. Changing how the library measures usage and librarian activity will yield more accurate data of the complex and

changing role the library, as a social and informational institution, is and must continue to change to meet changing societal needs.

METHODS AND THEORY

My research consisted of a number of observation sessions in various parts of the Park Library and interviews with the three main librarians who worked there. I also conducted an extensive survey of the paper materials librarians hung in various sections of the library, which advertised not only library events, but also information on the local area and other governmental resources. Examining the material artifacts of the library helped me understand the ways that the librarians conceived of their patrons, evidenced in how they planned and organized library spaces and events. I was thus able to construct a partial picture of the relationship the librarians had with their patrons, which I then compared to my observations of how people actually used the library, which often conflicted with how some of the librarians conceived of a librarian's place within a community. I did not interview patrons and other library employees because the librarians were concerned about my work interfering with the patrons' own activities as well as the limited schedules of the librarians.

I view the library as a civic institution that is subject to the identity of its employees and patrons, as well as changes in the informational landscape. The library is subject to both local and national discourse making its specific region of Chicago and even particular neighborhood locations highly relevant to policy changes. Librarians frequently made reference to how things were in the past and how they must operate in current times, making a review of temporal assumptions about library activities essential to understanding their commentary and relationship with the city government and the main library branch. Since time and space play such a large role in understanding the identity of not only the librarians but also the changing demographics of Chicago neighborhoods, I found the framework of Bakhtin's chronotope (Bakhtin 1988) extremely helpful. Since the idea focuses specifically on the way that time and space influence identity and reconciles the present with the past, it provides a language to discuss how assumptions about how the library functioned in the past are influencing how libraries and librarians deal with current issues.

LIBRARY DYNAMICS

The Park library, as the first purpose built neighborhood library, showcases both historical ideas of what a library should be and the changes that neighborhood branches have made to appeal to modern patrons. The building itself consists of a large reading room with long wooden reading tables, a nod to the reading rooms popular at the time it was built; however, it now houses almost a dozen computers to meet patron internet needs. The majority of the patrons I observed in the library were older, over the age of 50 or 60, people of color and they tended to congregate in the large reading rooms checking email on library computers, reading newspapers, flipping through magazines, or becoming deeply involved in their own research projects that required a number of books and yellow notepads. A smaller reading room was also rarely empty as the two small tables were frequently populated by patrons working on their own computers or using library books. Since this was the room all of the teen materials were stored in, it was also where a few teens came to study for various college

entrance exams, but teens were largely absent from the library for reasons to be discussed later. Adults in these areas often spent anywhere from 20 minutes to a few hours, often without checking out materials but nonetheless using library services via the free library wi-fi, an internet session on a library computer, or paging through books or magazines. Most of the patrons who spent significant periods of time in the library were older and/or people of color whereas the second major user group I observed, younger white families with children, often bolted for the children's section, chose a few materials, checked them out, and left without spending much beyond 15 minutes in the building. White adults, whether with or without children, did not spend a lot of time in the library for themselves, either focusing on materials for their children or picking up their own holds. I was often the only white person under the age of 50 using the library wi-fi or working at one of the tables.

The children's section is the most highly controlled space in that no one over the age of 14 is allowed in without a child under the age of 14 in order to make sure that the resources there can focus on children. The only group of kids that spent significant time in the children's section, during my periods of observation, were children of color ranging from 6 to their early teens who met with their tutors on a quiet Saturday afternoon. According to the children's librarian, there was also a large daily influx of children after the school day the block let out for the day as kids waited for their parents. The librarians' offices were mainly located in the main circulation area across from the circulation desk and in the children's area, but given that there were only three main librarians, they were rarely in their offices.

The Park Library offers a chance to see how an organization like the Chicago Public Library adapts to different regional and generational integrations of technology. The neighborhoods in Chicago cannot uptake technological innovations in a universal way due to socio-economical stratification throughout the city. At the same time, younger generations are growing up surrounded by internet culture, regardless of their ability to access the internet from their homes. The technology the library offers is not just a framework for understanding the multiple ways various socio-economic classes are taking up technology, but also how these differences are reproduced in new forms in new generations. Chronotope gives a frame for discussing these multi-level and multi-dimensional time-spaces relative to each other as "space" is defined not only in terms of geographical location, but also social spheres and available government resources. "Time" can then be defined in terms of generational differences, technological development, and types of technology interactions or uptake by residents of the area and users of the library.

Librarians

The role of the librarian is highly relevant to the discussion of the changing informational interface since librarians are the interactional face of the library system for patrons. Despite the passage of time, librarians are often still imagined as authoritarian figures who yielded or denied material access to patrons or enforced strict institutional policies on silence (Wiegand 2015, 120) or as the happy, almost always female, educator (Leigh 1950, 25). In the 1940s and 50s, The American Library Association asked The Social Science Research Council to conduct an extensive examination of how libraries were used and what roles librarians had within them. Three assumed functions of librarians were listed: Maintain the physical collection to promote citizenship and enhance personal lives, be a source of accurate

information, and offer opportunities for continuous education (Bryan 1952, 5). In the 1980s, Abbot, in his survey of a variety of professions, included giving access to entertainment (Abbott 1988, 217). While this last one was not stressed in the more recent handbooks for librarians (Prentice 2011, de la Peña McCook 2011), the majority of the collection at the neighborhood branch I observed was fiction and included movies, music, and fishing poles. While fishing poles may seem a little odd, they are actually part of a movement of libraries across the country finding new ways to reach out to patrons. Other libraries loan out board games, devices to check electrical connections in power outlets, and various other non-book materials that patrons may want or need. The main branch in Chicago also offers board games and puzzles to play or complete while in the library. This suggests that technology and a widening idea of what resources can be made available to patrons is not fundamentally changing the idea of a library as a space where all are welcome. These past evaluative frameworks suggest that, despite a significant passage of time, the essential idea of the purpose of libraries, and thus their staff and some elements of the institutional character, perseveres.

The Patrons

To begin unpacking the chronotopes involved in the public library, it helps to break down the categories the Chicago Public Library system currently uses and the implicit expectations of users in each group. The public library formally divides its patrons into three major age categories, and allocates resources and imagines identities accordingly: Adults, which the library generally defines as those over 18, Children, who are under 14, and Teens, who are 14-18. The creation of a teen-specific subset of patronage is a relatively recent development in Chicago and throughout public library discourse. In consequence, funding and human resources originally allocated to the broad category of children aged 0-18 was divided between the two departments. Children are supposed to learn academic skills like reading and socializing, following the skills-focused pattern of technology classes that one of the librarians sought to implement. Teens, in this particular branch, are largely left out of branch-programming. Adults are often discussed in terms of seeking further education for themselves through online and in-library resources like librarian-lead classes or through books and library computers.

Adults – Adults showed the highest diversity in ways of using the library space and technology within the library. They are the clearest example of the ways that different people inhabit different technological presents. Presents in this sense acknowledging that there are multiple ways of living with current technology: some brought their own laptops, smart phones, or music players while others used library computers. The primary space for adults to spend significant periods of time was a reading room which visually evoked the reading rooms of years past and seemed to maintain similar standards of behavior. In photos of the original organization of the branch, this room had long tables that stretched the length of the room and dominated the space (City of Chicago 2010). Over 110 years later, long tables still dominate the space; only shelves and a dozen computers have been added along the walls and parallel to the tables. This room also offered a prime viewing opportunity of the ways different groups use the library space; use patterns which, in my observations, seemed to follow racial and age lines.

Across from me in one fairly typical observation session was a black man, probably in his late 40s to early 50s, wearing two small gold rings, one on each ring finger, a NY sports-team sweatshirt whose logo I could not make out, and glasses. He had a laptop in front of him with a wireless mouse, a yellow pad of steno paper, a laminated sheet of paper, and white earbud headphones. He sat down at the table not long after me, opened his computer and never got up for the two hours I was there. Down the table from him was an older Asian man, maybe in his sixties, with thinning black hair. He was also there for quite a while, at least an hour and half, quietly reading a book or newspaper of some sort which, from my chosen seat, was obscured behind the other man's laptop.

Facing the walls was a set of library computers where people circulated more frequently. Patrons could access the library computers by using their library card to login to the terminal for up to two one hour sessions a day. People came, logged on, and spent anywhere from 20 minutes to two hours doing various things. There was a young black woman, probably in her late twenties, who sat down at one of the computers half an hour after I arrived, leaning against her purse. One computer over from her sat an older Asian woman wearing a brown sweatshirt. The one time she looked up, it appeared she was reading a webpage with Chinese or Japanese characters on it. People were not just using the computers or tables as a workspace, but also as a space to relax, watch a few YouTube videos, read magazines, or stay abreast of current events via the newspaper collection. This was expounded upon in my interviews with the two librarians responsible for the adult area, with one librarian explicitly pointing to a stated library goal of becoming a third space, a space between home and work. This allowed the library to expand their services beyond just providing informational resources, as a social space and a place for people to go and spend their free time pursuing entertainment or resources like the internet.

This use of the library shows how the library must contend with diversity in social space and circles divided along lines of age (an element of time) and race (social space), with more people of color and people over the age of 60 spending significantly more time in the library space. I was one of only two or three white people who sat in the room working, the other white patrons mainly standing in line to check out materials at the circulation desk. The white patrons tended to be younger, in their late twenties to early thirties, and did not seem to stay very long at the library. This pattern of usage turned out to be quite common throughout my time there and I quickly found myself thinking of this space as primarily an adult area. The behavior of the patrons suggested that there were different chronotopes of library usage in play within one physical space, each bound by age, race, and socio-economic class. The older patrons, patrons of lower socio-economic status, and a higher number of patrons of color depended on library services to access current technology in the forms of basic internet access. Younger patrons, patrons of higher socio-economic status, and a higher number of white patrons used library technology like the website to turn the physical space into primarily a material retrieval space.

Adult usage of the Chicago Public Library system reflects a growth in diversity of library services in recent decades as some adults use the library primarily as a borrowing service, others as a third space, a place to be social or pursue their own interests, and still others as a place to access various types of government aid or information. Each of these usages depend on the current technological presents, those of the variety of patrons in the area see well as the library itself. These presents are in a dialectical relationship with patrons, with limited technological access potentially limited people's socio-economic status. This

also influences how people in different socio-economic spaces interact with the physical and online space of the library. These categories of usage each represent a distinct chronotope, a space time that a patron or group of patrons inhabit that describes their technological needs and desires. However, these chronotopes also depend on the relative age of the patron, adding an additional temporal dimension to consider. The majority of the adults I observed in the library were using the library as a “third space” (Chicago Public Library 2017) which the library explicitly states on their website as being a place “where people come to improve their lives, nourish their intellect or savor entertainment” (Chicago Public Library 2017). Unlike children, where many of the programs are explicitly educational, and many of the people I observed in the Children’s area used the space for this purpose, adults can seek more than just library materials. Here the library is a conduit to broader community interests and resources. The librarians, in the name of creating this third space, post flyers and display handouts with information about the locations of job-retraining services, the locations of the nearest food banks, phone numbers for legal advice for seniors, and veteran’s services. The librarians do not make these posters but rather the posters are sent to them from the main library office if they are governmental in nature or brought in by local non-profits and posted at the discretion of the head librarian.

For example, against a back drop of library computers and the adult audio-visual collection, two rotating cork boards were covered in posters addressing low-income adults looking for opportunities for self-improvement. Most of the board was plastered with neatly arranged social service themed posters advertising food pantries, legal advice for seniors, career training, veteran services, applying for federal aid for college, and a poster advertising tax preparers with tear-away phone numbers. The posters themselves offered a limited color pallet and stereotypical clipart or photo images of smiling people, or mournful images of a flag for the veteran’s affairs one. The paper handouts and posters are the library’s main way of informing their patrons of area services. There is no comparable area on the library website. This means that the city and area services who use the posters to inform area residents, assume that residents in need of these services go to the library in person and do not rely solely on e-books or the library’s online presence. The library, as a system, is thus making assumptions about who has internet access, assumed to be younger and wealthier residents, and who is spending more time in the brick and mortar branches, those of socio-economic status and/or people in need of governmental assistance. The forms of assistance advertised varied between a few library branches in terms of what types of handouts were available, with the Park library focused on food pantries and employment services and the major branch downtown offering classes on passing immigration exams, as well as resources for questions on recent changes in immigration policy. While my observations to some extent support these assumptions, the assumptions still simplify the reality of the complexity of technology access and economic status. For instance, there was a man who brought his own laptop to the library but who could be found on a street corner with a cardboard sign asking for money when the library was closed for the day. The concept of chronotopes helps understand the apparent oddity of this patron by offering a multi-dimensional way of understanding the social and physical spaces this patron inhabits as well as the technological present and economic times he faces.

Technology in the adult section highlighted the diversity of technological and economic space-times that patrons inhabited. The librarians were aware, to some extent, of the diversity of the technological landscapes their patrons inhabited and the librarians tried

to support this diversity by offering a few different types of computer classes. Suzanne, the Adult librarian, talked at great length about a series of upcoming programs she was organizing to create social learning circles, where people could socialize and achieve self-development by completing a free online course together. While that class assumed a higher technological fluency, another class she offered showed the wide-range of technological realities patrons faced. In a previous month, Suzanne offered a class on creating websites which filled up quickly due to a shortage of library computers and the number of individuals interested who did not have a personal computer. Based on enrollment numbers, Suzanne's classes were successful in that the topics generated a lot of interest and filled up quite quickly. Keeping track of just how fast various classes fill up and how many more people may want to take such classes would be a possible way of gauging how community needs are changing as well as suggesting ways to continue to improve patron services. The target audience of many of these library programs are those adults who do not currently have desirable skill sets and could not possibly afford classes or the technology to develop such skills without the aid of the library. Such patrons were continually called upon by the librarians to justify the continuing need for libraries in the future. In a city like Chicago and especially on the South Side, there is no apparent shortage of such possible patrons.

As a city, and even within the neighborhood of the library, the wide range of socio-economic standings of patrons and the ensuing range of types and levels of technological access possible underscores the challenge of program and material development for the Chicago Public Library. Technology usage within the library highlights preexisting socio-economic inequalities within the larger society but also points to the technology divide between those of higher and lower socio-economic status and how continued technology development can further the divide. Recent library funding cutbacks from the government limit the types of books an individual branch can buy but makes resources available online, showing how tough economic times makes serving the diverse space-times of patrons difficult if not impossible. This makes measuring how the library is used differently in the neighborhoods all the more important for understanding how to develop better library budgets that meet the needs of area residents while also dealing with financial short-falls. The holes in understanding how patrons interact with library and what they are looking for make trying to understand how library systems are made up of diverse patron needs and community patterns challenging in the best economic times. In an era with heavy budget cuts, such information could lead to better decisions about ways to adjust budgets in ways least likely to affect patrons and their librarians.

Children – Technology does not divide all social groups in the same visible way. Technology use in relation to children in the library was more rare but there was a similar level of concern about self-improvement through library resources. Children, as the Chicago Public Library defines them, are those who are under 14, and are the population whose presence in the library is the most often talked about and worried over. Librarians are charged with guiding young minds to resources that are appropriate for their developmental age, but also with recognizing the possible dangers of some materials or situations children might face in the library. While my neighborhood branch did not discuss what materials it deemed unsuitable, one of the librarians did share the branch's rules for who was allowed in the children's section. The stated policy, which was also posted in the library by the main librarian's office, which was a significant distance from the children's room, was that only

children under 14 and their accompanying adults were allowed. This rule did not seem to be enforced, however, as it was quite easy for me to peruse books or work at tables in the space. However, as the noisiest space in the library, there were not many people who seemed to want to spend time there without being associated with a child. Despite the presence of computers in the Children's area, there was no explicit mention of helping children develop technology skills, instead the focus was on measurable forms of institutional education, like completion of school assignments.

The educational aims of the librarians are seen in the physical design of the room which advocated educational play and in its ability to provide a space to seek additional resources for completing school work. The section featured 5 wooden round tables with 4 chairs each, spread around one corner of the room. There was a long row of 8 computers in the center of the room, also on short wooden tables, as well as two more computers at the far end of the room, closer to the door connecting the room to the rest of the library. Like the other sections of the library, there are high ceilings and tall windows that let in a lot of natural light but, compared with the adult section, there was less artwork on the walls. There was only one piece of artwork, an image of a small black girl sitting under a tree, looking at a large orange/yellow moon and some flowers. The main form of decoration in this section came in the form of a collection of educational posters taped to the sides of the shelves, outlining the names of planets, how fractions worked, and different musical time signatures.

Although white families appeared to spend time in this room beyond that required to acquire their desired material resources, in contrast with the social patterns observed elsewhere in the library, the area nevertheless continued to reinforce racial patterns where white patrons still spent significantly less time there than patrons of color. Frequently on weekends there was a flurry of tutors meeting their students in the library. Since not all the tutors used library materials, they demonstrate another way of using the library as a third-space.

In a clear age-difference within the library, the library provided toys and puzzles in the Children's area, where in the adult area patrons could use books, magazines or a computer as primary sources of entertainment. The toys, like the fishing poles in the adult area, show a way that the library is trying to adapt to the variety of possible patron uses for the library. The toys, in addition to providing social interaction between children, also facilitated the adults' ability to examine library materials and paper materials in greater detail. The pamphlets offered information deemed of interest to the caretakers of children, including changes in the public school curriculum, the Teacher in the Library program, a game day, variously aged fiction book clubs for school-aged children, and a trifold explaining the benefits of reading as preparation for attending school. By including toys and information about the school system, the library is creating a third-space for children and parents while also recognizing the space of the local school system and a time marked by recent curriculum changes. In this case, time is defined less in terms of technology uptake by patrons and more about the level of scholastic achievement necessary for children to be considered successful. Computers in the area were infrequently used but multiple librarians mentioned them in terms of facilitating children's ability to complete school assignments. While there were only a four computers in the children's area compared to the dozen or so in the adult area, the rate of usage seemed to be much lower despite the demand the librarians perceived. However, the computers in the children's section were also subject to more strict waves of usage, since kids were in school for more of the time the library was

open in a given week. The question of access to computers for homework was not at nearly the same level of concern for the librarians as their concern about adult access. While they gave no explicit reason for this difference, it may be that schools have a significant number of computers that children can access if the technology is needed for homework. Weighing computer usage as a function of both the target age group and the amount of time patrons in that age group use computer as opposed to other activities in the library would yield a better picture of how generations have similar or different needs within the library. Such a measurement would allow for better budget planning in the future and a more dynamic understanding of the diversity of patron needs. The chronotopes of child patrons are defined by play spaces, their developmental ages, and the technical skills like reading and math required for academic achievements rather than the employment objectives and technical fluency and access of adults.

While technology is not an explicit focus for younger children in terms of library programming, developing social skills necessary for success in school were the foci of library programs and informational pamphlets. The children's librarian described the importance of early literacy programs as not just because they expose children to reading materials but also because they are group gatherings that let children learn how to play with each other and allow parents and guardians to socialized with one another. Here the role of the library was not focused on those of lower social economic standing to quite the same degree as in the adult section, because in order to participate in the early literacy programs children need a parent or guardian who can take them to the library in the middle of the standard workday. However the programs for school-age children assume that more children have guardians who work long hours or who are otherwise unable to help with homework assignments. The after-school homework help and the educational focus of many library programs offered a chance for children to get learning support beyond school and home. The librarians stressed that many children use the library as a place to wait for their parents or guardians after school and the homework help aids kids whose parents or guardians might be busy at work or do not have the knowledge necessary to assist kids with homework.

There are two major chronotopes of possible child patron-library interactions, those of younger children who have more temporal access to their guardians during the day, and those of school-age children who need the library to provide extra support in place of guardians. Technology, while not at the forefront, is still a key element of defining how children can interact with the library because children depend on parents and guardians to bring them. A child is thus socialized to use the library based on how their parents use the library. If their parents use the library as a space to meet tutors or access computers, then the child is more likely to see the library as a third-space. If a child's parents rely more on the library website to order books and make only short trips to pick up books on hold or do a quick selection of picture books they are less like to see the library as a social/work/third space. Technology does not act in a primary distinction for how children use the library but rather as a secondary force through what children observe their parents doing and thus how they are socialized to think of the library as they continue to grow.

Teenagers – Teens in the library, unlike children, are assumed to be interested in technology, but this group suffers from more funding difficulties than children and adults in the library. The teen space of the library shares a small room with the new Adult books, the large-print collection, and audio books. The distinctly 'teen' aspect of the space was in targeted

messaging about tech programming. On top of the waist-high bookshelves there was a set of postcards/bookmarks in a small plastic display stand, behind some books, that advertised the library's technological services through a program that is offered at multiple branches of the library, but not this one in particular. The program offers teens, and only teens, access to many cutting-edge computer programs and classes relating to media creation and editing. In the main branch downtown, the library has sound mixing boards, video and photo editing software, and classes on how to use them. This YouMedia project is heralded as an icon of teenage productivity and ingenuity in mayoral statements and by the Chicago Public Library Foundation.

Faced with substantial budget cuts, the library system is increasingly dependent on the fundraising efforts of the Chicago Public Library Fund, run by a number of local high-ranking company executives, and the Foundation. With the blessing of the mayor, the focus is technological development around teenagers, with specific aims to keep teenagers using technology in socially approved formats. The YouMedia program offers those between 13 and 18 a chance to use high quality audio-visual media editing software often with the aim of teens learning skills to make them employable in growing industries. This program is also part of a larger national discussion within libraries about how to make the libraries relevant to 21st century teens in a variety of class and cultural identities (ALA 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). However, this program ignores the needs of older adults struggling to learn new skills to stay in the job-market and types of technology use outside of employment or academic needs. The program itself does give teens access to classes in employable skills while assuming a higher level of technical competency but is less available than adult technology classes. Whereas most public libraries have computers and varied classes for adults, depending on what the librarians at that particular branch decide to offer, YouMedia is only offered in a few branches, making teen access to technology classes more difficult. To date, only 12 of the 70 libraries in the system have a YouMedia program, leaving much open space for Teen program development. The library system foregrounds technology as a way to appeal to teenagers who are more online and thus may not need to visit the physical library as much. This contrasts with how the library presents adult programming, which assumes the presence of adults as well as a lack of technological capability.

Part of the technology approach to reaching out to younger patrons was a covert acknowledgement of some existing suspicions about young people on devices in public spaces and some continuing library concerns about teens in the library space. The branch manager told me the same story, more than once, about a group of kids sitting around a table texting on their phones without really acknowledging each other or using any of the library resources. Her concern seemed to center on how teens were not making appropriate use of the library, evident as she voiced concern about teens being unoccupied. However, she never complained about the number of adults using their phones or their own electronics in the library, suggesting that while the library supported technology use and the use of the library as a third-space, there was still some concern that the younger generation was not using the library in an appropriate way.

Technology in the teen area highlights not only how teens are perceived differently from adults and children, but also how the library is still undergoing a continuous process of integration and development with technology. Teens live in a different social space than children in that teens are more independent from their parents and their technology usage might be more unmediated, but they are also different from adults in that they have grown

up in the world of social media. Even if one does not have social media accounts, one still lives in a social culture dominated by social media influence. Because of this assumed technological fluency in teens, libraries are seeking to adopt highly technical classes or devices to appeal to this social group that grew up in a very different technological present than their parents. Librarians are still running into the economic challenges technology poses due to the high cost of gaining access to program or devices, and because this is a main part of their outreach to teens, budget limitations are more keenly obvious in this area.

Another key difference between how the library views adult and teen technology usage is that the adult computer classes are led by librarians and are managed by librarians within the individual branches with no additional budget, while YouMedia is a city-wide program and has a completely different funding source, the Chicago Public Library Foundation. YouMedia is a more expensive set of classes to run, not only because the classes tend to require higher quality technology, but also because the people teaching the classes may not be librarians and may require more physical supplements. One librarian described having to find outreach programs with new budgets while another said that it was basically impossible to get a YouMedia program at the Park branch because there was not enough space in the library building for the teen-only area and technology storage required by the program. The challenge of the Chicago library system's technology programs is not just that adults are expected to be less technologically capable and/or have less access than teenagers, but also that the teen program calls for a specific physical space while the adult classes are open to all over 18 and occur in pre-existing open library spaces.

The social distinctions between children, teens, and adults exist outside of the question of technology in libraries, but the compact physical and social space of the library point to more specific and detailed ways that chronotopes bound by age and technology usage socially and economically divide people. Teens, as a middle ground in the age categories and a marker for new levels and styles of technology integration into society, offer perspective on how these various elements interact within the library as the library continues to develop and move forward with technology.

TECHNOLOGY: A CHANGE AND A CONTINUATION

In order for the Chicago Public Library to adapt to recent technological and demographic changes while simultaneously maintaining its objectives, libraries need to take better stock of how their librarians currently spend their time and how patrons currently interact with the library. Because the public library is open to any area resident to spend time in, and is controlled and partially financed by the city, state, and national government, the library serves as a way for the government to interact with a potentially wide sector of the population on an intimate level. In this capacity, the library offers a network of support for area residents who need additional educational, career development, or other services but cannot afford them through other institutions. Recent technological developments have made more services available through online interfaces, offering a way to cut budgets by eliminating physical resources in times of economic insecurity. However, the apparent boon of technology has a hidden cost to library users. Moving library services online and not offering physical equivalents assumes that all library patrons have access to internet devices when the reality is that many of the library's frequent users in cities like Chicago are low-income and depend on the library for computer access. Changing regional demographics and

library policies offer a chance to view the shortfalls of governmental and institutional assumptions about patron behavior as well as the challenges of actually supporting those who are economically disadvantaged.

To move forward the library needs to, once again, change its stated goals and systems of measurement to highlight how, despite the internet, people still need the library and its services. The library started out as an institution to support the idea of liberal education but has moved back and forth along a continuum of focusing on education and focusing on serving as a third space, a space between home and work. Current library procedures design programs and spaces around simplified ideas of patrons' needs and desires and current measurement practices do not sufficiently allow for recognizing the variety of patron needs the library is called on to serve. Many outside of the library take its existence for granted when in reality many libraries across the country are shutting due to a lack of funds. Through a brief examination of the history of public libraries in the US and then an analysis of a neighborhood library in Chicago I sought to understand how some librarians view patrons and recent changes in library policy. In particular, I was curious to understand how librarians and libraries were dealing with changing patron basis and patron needs and desires in the era of the internet and rapidly changing technology. Recalibrating how the library measures its role in different neighborhoods offers a chance for librarians to better understand the effect of time, like generational difference in technology usage, and space, such as social space and socio-economic status, on their patrons. By understanding the space time (chronotopes) of their patrons better, libraries can better their services and justify library funding to city officials facing difficult budget cuts.

Technology is not just about the continued existence of a public institution like the library, it is also about changing conceptions of education and what skills are deemed socially valuable, like the ability to use social media, or skills that translate into better-paying job opportunities, like coding or video editing. In this way, the Chicago Public Library's technology efforts are just a new strategy for supporting local residents' educational and informational success. A 1970s study financed by the US Office of Education to aid in the government's efforts "in defining its relationship to the public library" (Wellisch et al. 1974, xiii) argued government support of the US library project offered the chance to "exploit the potential of the public library for providing information and educational success" (Wellisch et al. 1974, 256). While Benjamin Franklin might not have imagined a self-selecting elite chosen through technology access, the idea of class and education playing a large role in the political process follows his assertion that an elite would emerge in a democratic society. The technology programs offered by the library recognized a wide diversity of level of technology access while the move to offering some materials at fewer branches and online assumes that all patrons in the city have equal access to the internet or technology devices. The reality of levels of access is supported by librarians like Suzanne who suggest that many of the library users in this particular branch do not have computer access at home. Technology access and skills are a new form of cultural capital, skills that can mean the difference between pay grades in various sectors of employment and wider social standing. In offering programs to help patrons learn how to use technology, the library is trying to offer patrons a chance to improve their social standing through education that a patron may not have been able to afford otherwise.

Limits on the cultural capital and leisure time of individuals restrict their ability to participate in politics because they do not have the resources to learn the official language of

power, namely how to navigate the upper echelons of society (Bourdieu 1991, 172). Cultural capital is a social resource that is not equally distributed throughout society but it provides social standing for those who have it. Librarians then do not just maintain a physical collection, but rather act as delivery people for cultural capital. The library serves many sub-groups, each of which has its own exact criteria for cultural capital, but the main concern librarians must contend with is whether or not materials are “appropriate” for various other sub-groups of the library, historically women, now mostly just children. This makes the control of what the library collection contains an often political challenge as librarians and community members seek to create the collection in their respective imaginaries of what materials are the most representative of the conception of the library as an educative, and third space.

The boundaries of these different sub-groups can be understood in terms of the chronotopic dimensions of space and time that affect the patrons, the library branches, the librarians, and society at large. The social space, online and physical space of the library, the geographical location of a person or a library branch within the city, and the socio-economic space provide a patron’s background and influence what a patron needs or wants from a library, if anything. The age of the patron gives clues as to how a patron may be socialized to think about a library with regards to how much a particular age group and social class is expected to depend on technology for cultural capital and hireable skills. Technology keeps moving forward but libraries and patrons alike uptake technology differently and live in different technological realities. As there is no universal answer to how humans use technology, there is no universal answer to what libraries of the future should look like and how they should function. Thus, understanding the time-space of patrons and their branches is essential to providing the best possible services and third-space options possible.

IMPLICATIONS

The Chicago Public Library exists within a specific time-space determined by current technological developments, the principals and authors of system-wide messaging, and the current understanding of liberal democracy and access to information. Technology is part of an ongoing library effort to re-imagine what a public third space, something between home and work, looks like and how it functions in a city where economic disparities and wide cultural differences offer a variety of perspectives on library usage. Key to this development process is understanding the diversity of factors affecting how people are actually using the library. Instead of just finding new ways of measuring library productivity, the library also needs to find ways to qualify the differences in patron usages of the library. Based on the limitations of this study, I cannot suggest specific programs to enact but rather ways that the library could change its internal measurement system to better depict the needs of its community members. Reevaluating the imagined patron types, the chronotopes, involved would facilitate a more accurate institutional understanding of the current and possible future roles for the library in the various neighborhoods in Chicago and allow the library to more effectively reach their target audiences.

Currently the library primarily measures its productivity based on the number of internet sessions, books circulated, and visitors to the library’s physical locations, which ignores the differences between users who spend significant periods of time in the library as a third-space and those who attend programs, but counts those who checkout e-books or

use online library services separately. It also leaves what librarians do during their shifts more opaque than necessary. It is clear that the librarians are busy, especially at branches like this one where there are only three main librarians to cover all of the library's open hours, but the time break down of what they do, how long it can take to answer more complicated questions, how many questions they deal with, event set-up and the like are not clearly measured. In the time I spent there, there was almost an un-ending stream of patron questions, even on days the librarians claimed were "quiet times." It was also hard to find some of the librarians when I arrived for the interviews as they were almost never at their desks but instead bustling around the building completing various tasks like breaking down boxes, letting in elevator maintenance people and the like. However, these various duties are not immediately visible to policy makers, making it easier to cut their positions or ignore the challenges they face when they are short staffed. To these ends, I suggest that a tally sheet be made with very broad categories such as "location" for people looking for restrooms, computers, and other general features of the library, "reference" for questions about books and materials, "services/programs" for those asking about specific programs at a branch or in the wider area, and "area questions" for those looking for information about the general neighborhood or city. This list is by no means exhaustive, but a list of 4-5 categories where librarians simply have to make a tick mark next to each type of question they answer on their shift would be a cheap and fast way to understand the types of reference questions librarians are getting asked nowadays.

New measurement procedures would allow for more data collection about patron needs and habits within the library as well as giving new ways of discussing patron identity within the institution and what identities the system or a particular branch wants to curate within a community. These new measurements would also show policy makers that the library is not just serving as a distribution center for books and technology, but that the librarians themselves are still serving a variety of informational roles that cannot necessarily be replaced by technology. This might make it harder to cut library budgets and lead to re-evaluating how library budgets are balanced to better reflect the use patterns of the libraries in various neighborhoods rather than a blanket policy. The library could also foreground the attendance of their events and the number of books circulated within a branch but not checked out. This gives a better, though not perfect, understanding of what patrons are doing within the library and how long they might spend there. It is not just that perhaps more books are getting used, but rather trying to find a way to measure how long patrons spend in the space without violating patron privacy. For the library website, they can measure the types of comments patrons leave on various materials via the commenting feature already in place. These comments, if managed correctly, could help foster a community for those who cannot be physically present in the library. If these results were tabulated and compared across branches and librarians given more freedom to manage their neighborhood branches, the system could develop a better understanding of the diversity of chronotopes affecting patrons and their needs that are currently being largely ignored.

CONCLUSION

Technology in the public library of Chicago offers the library system a chance to challenge established ideas of what patrons do in the present idea of a public library in an era of concern about democratic processes and equal access. Recognizing the differences and

similarities in the space times of the variety of patrons a library in an area serves and how technology is both reflecting and creating social divides can yield productive conversations about what democratic institutions should look like in the future. With its focus on education, entertainment, and being a third-space, the public library can change what equal access looks like and also serve communities as a neighborhood institution that understands that not all citizens of an area are the same. Questions of access have new meaning in the 21st century because of the internet and technology, and libraries have a chance to make a huge functional difference.

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