

LIS 610 - Public Library Environmental Scan

Environmental Scan: Exploratorium - Public Library

Public Library Group: Baggett, Bryce, Harris, Staples, Van Norman, & Vreeland

University of North Carolina Greensboro

LIS 610 - Project Part A

Dr. Kevin Washburn

Example Environmental Scan and User Profile for Public Library Setting:

ImaginOn, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library System

Charlotte, NC

Library Webpage:

<https://www.imagion.org/>

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Exploratorium Environmental Scan

Introduction

Founded in 2019, Exploratorium is an urban “hands-on” public library specifically for patrons ages 0-18. The facility is 100,000 square feet located in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, serving the city of Charlotte and other bedroom communities within Mecklenburg County. Exploratorium is a unique branch in this system but shares the common vision and goals of the greater Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library System.



Imaginon outside. (2019).

Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ImaginOn>

With vibrant décor in bold colors and neon lights outlining the welcome desk, patrons ages 0-18 not only feel welcomed, but that this is “the place” to be.

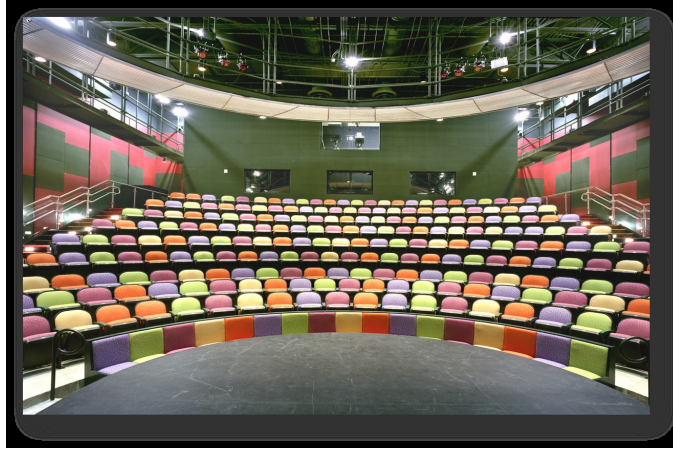


Imaginon information desk. (2019). RetrieveCopyright © 1992 by Rose Tremaind from <https://www.cmlibrary.org/blog/whats-your-favorite-place-charlotte-mecklenburg-library>

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The Children's Library is found on the first floor of the Exploratorium. Its collection focuses on books and materials for ages birth through fifth grade, as well as a collection within this collection that appeals to teachers, parents, and caregivers with an emphasis on homeschooling resources (Imaginon, 2019). Two large conference rooms with SMARTboards are available for training and meeting.

The second floor is dedicated to the in-house theater. There is a lobby area with bistro tables, benches, and box office before entering into a 450-seat theater with small orchestra pit (Imaginon, 2019). With state-of-the-art sound and visual systems, the theater is home to the Children's Theater Series and summer workshops.



Imaginon Theater. (n.d.). Retrieved from Imaginon Theater, <https://novawall.com/gallery/colorful-performance-venue/>

The Teen Loft is approximately 4,000 square feet located on the third floor and is a space dedicated to tweens and teens (grades six through twelve) (Wikipedia, 2019). The collection housed here includes graphic novels for juveniles and young adults, as well as two Makerspace areas, and small break-out rooms for group project planning. A computer lab with twenty-five computers dedicated to this age group is housed here in the Teen Tech Center. Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult when in the Teen Loft.



Teen Loft. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.imaginon.org/the-loft>

Mission

The library's mission is to improve and empower the community through free access to information and the world of creativity. The goals and objectives are to ensure each patron and community member believes "I can" through a library system that imbues a joy of reading and learning, promotes and provides opportunities to grow and connect, and builds bridges between individuals, communities, and our world. Through targeted programming, educational partnerships, and a wide variety of services, the library strives to be inclusive, inspiring, and engaged in the life of the community (About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, n.d.). As a unique branch to this greater library system, we endeavor to focus on instilling a love of reading and learning in the youngest members of our community through hands-on exploration, STEAM programming, and close educational partnerships (About ImaginOn, n.d.).

Objectives

The library's main objectives are:

- To increase community awareness and engagement through varied partnerships, useful programming, and free access to material, information, and other resources
- To foster a love of reading and learning
- To inspire and excite young minds and provide a space for exploration and creativity specifically for ages 0-18 (About ImaginOn, n.d.).

Defining Users

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library system, located in Charlotte, North Carolina, has 22 branches across the city (CMLibrary, 2019). As of 2018, the city was home to 872,498 residents, with a median resident age of 33.9. Of the 872,498 residents, 80,241 are between the ages of 18-24, and 146,499 are between the ages of 25-34 (American Fact Finder, n.d.). These age ranges fall into the category of "younger Americans" that have "distinct book reading habits, library usage patterns, and attitudes about libraries" (Zickuhr, 2014). It is important to consider these groups and their library usage.

There are 200,384 Charlotte residents under the age of 18. As of 2017, 218,502 residents over the age of three are enrolled in school, including college and graduate degrees. Within this category, 156,953 children are enrolled in preschool through high school. City residents with a high school diploma make up 88.6% of the population. Furthermore, 154,050 people over the age of 25 have at least a bachelor's degree, and 79,906 people have a graduate or professional degree (American Fact Finder, n.d.).

As of 2017, the median household income was \$58,202, and the percent of individuals living below the poverty level was 14.9%. Looking at demographics, 413,212 people consider themselves White, 289,406 consider themselves Black or African American, 2,523 American Indian or Alaska Native, 51,437 Asian, 483 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 45,268 people consider themselves 'Some Other Race' (American Fact Finder, n.d.).

In the previous fiscal year (July 2018-June 2019) there were 384,450 active library cardholders that had used their card in the past two years. Out of the roughly 6 million items that were borrowed in the past

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year, 1.3 million of those items were digital. In 2015 Charlotte Mecklenburg Library launched the ONE Access program which provided students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system with free library cards. Since its introduction, 239,000 students have utilized their accounts (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

Our proposed library will be youth focused, and will serve users from birth to age eighteen. Our library's designated spaces will include one for children 11 and under, one for teens only, a makerspace and multimedia production studio, and an interactive exhibit space. The library is designed to be a one-of-a-kind youth destination (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

Collections

Our library's collection is divided into the children's and young adult departments. In both departments there is a dedicated space for all print materials. The goal of the collection is to represent the library's users and this is accomplished by offering a diverse collection. There are also designated areas for computer usage, optimal seating, and non-print materials (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

The collection in its entirety includes

- Easy Readers
- Browsing Easy and Early Readers
- E-Picture Books
- Board books
- J Nonfiction
- J Biographies
- Braille Books
- J Graphic Novels
- Children's and Teen's Magazines
- J Fiction
- Read-Alongs
- J Audiobooks
- Children DVDs
- Children CDs
- Playaways
- YA Fiction
- YA Manga
- YA Graphic Novels
- YA Nonfiction
- Reference

Programs and Services

As a unique youth destination library located in Charlotte, NC, this library is visited by more than 300,000 people annually and offers a vast range of services and resources to their diverse visitors. This library brings stories to life through extraordinary experiences that inspire and educate young minds (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019). Each of the programs that are offered fall under one of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's three programming strategic initiatives:

1. **Economic Opportunity:** programs that focus on computer skills/technology, job readiness, and volunteering
2. **Literacy and Educational Success:** special events, STEAM programs, special guest presenters, book clubs, writer's groups, youth art clubs, gaming, a variety of community service efforts, self-directed activities, and outreach programs
3. **Humanities:** genealogy, history, and multicultural programs

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The library's audience is divided into two main departments: children and teen. The children's department primarily serves ages birth to 9 years old. This department also includes a specialized preteen area that serves ages 7-11 to prepare this age group for the transition from the children's department to the teen area. The children's department facilitates roughly 70 programs per month. (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

The programs include:

- Daily family story time
- Daily video and board game activities
- Weekly specialized story time for babies
- Biweekly volunteer Paws to Read program
- Preteen Lego challenges
- Weekly story explorers program for school-age children
- Monthly puppet shows
- Bilingual story times
- Movie showings
- Guest presentations
- Preschool program

The library's teen department primarily serves ages 10-18 years old. This department has a gaming corner, booths for study groups and teen meet-ups, a makerspace, and an audio and visual studio. The teen department facilitates roughly 25 programs per month (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

The programs include:

- Daily makerspace activities
- Monthly video game tournaments
- Daily video game activities
- Monthly trivia programs
- Movie showings
- STEAM programs
- Monthly teen art club
- Monthly cooking programs
- College and career readiness programs

Along with the main in-house programs that are offered, the library also actively participates in system-wide programming efforts including:

- **Active Reading:** a partnership with Read Charlotte that intends on building kids' language and vocabulary skills to prepare them to become lifelong readers
- **Summer Break:** encourages children, teens, and families to read for 20 minutes each day and engage in learning activities during the library's summer learning program
- **Community Read:** created to bring people together to read and talk about a single book. The goal is to create a community of readers of all ages
- **An ongoing partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools:** the main initiative is the One Access program that allows students to use their student ID numbers as a library card. This initiative provides library access to students and has increased library card utilization among youth (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2018).

Programming Highlights:

Makerspace

This is a designated space for youth to express themselves through videos, music, and other tools including graphic design, robotics, content creation. This space includes the tools needed to engage in visual literacy and storytelling (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019). In the space, the following equipment is included:

- ReadyAnimator
- Blue Screen Technology
- HTC Vive VR Setup
- Vinyl Cutters
- iMac Computers
- 3D Printers
- Sewing Machines
- Heat Press
- Foam-walled sound recording booth

In the makerspace a variety of different projects can be created from videos using the blue screen technology, animated movies using mixed mediums, 3D print designs, and music and podcasts in the sound booth (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019). The possibilities for our youth are truly limitless in our makerspace!

Group Visits

Our library offers a variety of specialized programs for group visits year round. For school-aged children, the visits focus on specialized story times and enrichment activities for ages 3-11. For teen groups, visits focus on makerspace, team building, gaming, book browsing, and trivia activities for ages 10-18 (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019). Each group visit lasts one hour and is facilitated by a well-trained staff member.

Outreach

A percentage of our library's programs consist of outreach visits. The visits take place at local community sites, Charlotte Mecklenburg schools, charter schools, and other partnered organizations within Mecklenburg County. At the current moment, both the children and teen departments facilitate roughly 8-10 outreach visits per month, with a set goal to increase that amount within the next year. The goal of these outreach visits is to bring the library's resources to those who need it most, and to meet our customers where they are to create lifelong library users.

Budget

About 90% of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's operating budget comes from Mecklenburg County, but a small portion of funding comes from the State of North Carolina, the Mecklenburg ABC Board, and the City of Charlotte. To supplement the budget, the library seeks individual contributions, sponsorships, and grants throughout the year (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

As a part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's larger system, our library operates on the same budget fiscal year which begins on July 1st and ends in June of the following year. For fiscal year 2020, the library proposed 41 million which is a slight increase from the 40 million budget that was adopted in fiscal year 2019. The bulk of the system-wide budget is proposed to be spent on salaries and benefits while the smallest amount is set aside for personnel related expenses (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

Our library is proposing an operating budget of \$500,000 which will cover new library salaries, additions to the collection, professional services, new equipment and technology, facility related issues, personnel, and programming. This does not include any funds that will be given through private contributions and through the support of the library's foundation (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2019).

Wish List

The following items are on our library's collection development and programming wish list:

Children's Department

Print Materials

- Picture Books
- Board Books
- Read-along books
- Easy/early readers
- Juvenile Fiction
- Juvenile Nonfiction
- Children's audiobooks, music CDs, and DVDS
- Children's Graphic Novels
- Children's magazines and periodicals
- Braille children's books

Technology

- [Aquos Board](#)
- Children's Learning Computers

Other

- Interactive manipulatives
- STEM kits
- Social-emotional literacy kits

Teen Department

Print Materials

- YA Fiction
- YA Manga
- YA Nonfiction
- YA Graphic Novels
- YA Reference Materials

Technology

- TVs
- 3D Printers
- Device charging station

Miscellaneous

Training budget

- Professional development courses
- Conferences

Magazine subscriptions

- School Library Journal
- VOYA
- Horn Book

Conclusion

Thanks mainly in part to Mecklenburg County, the State of North Carolina, the Mecklenburg ABC Board, the City of Charlotte, and our various individual donors and sponsors, we've been able to create a unique space specifically for Charlotte's youth. By keeping up-to-date with collections, emerging technologies and trends, and innovative programs, the Exploratorium can continue to create "extraordinary experiences that challenge, inspire and excite young minds" (About ImaginOn, n.d.).

Bibliographic Section Assignments

Baggett - Teen Fiction, Graphic Novels, & Manga

Bryce - Early Literacy

Harris - Diverse (Children and YA)

Staples - Makerspaces (Youth)

Van Norman - Middle Grade Chapter books

Vreeland - Children's Skill Literacy

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