

DRAFT -- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

By Warren Buckleitner and Carol Wachter

CHAPTER 1: FROM SMALL TOWN LIBRARY TO A SLICE OF SILICON VALLEY

“The old model for libraries, where we waited for kids, families and community partners to come to us, is quickly becoming outdated. One of the responsibilities of the 21st Century librarian is to reimagine what the library walls are and move outside of them.” - Shannon Peterson, president of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a suborganization of the American Library Association, from Educational Week, September 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Picture a typical small-town East Coast public library. Chances are, you’re visualizing something similar to the Flemington Free Public Library (FFPL), located in Western New Jersey. Leafy old oaks shade the garden outside the children’s room. It’s the perfect place to sit down for a good read.

INSERT chap1image1.jpg (front of library)

Caption: The view of the Flemington Free Public Library from Main Street.

When the double glass doors of the library's main entrance swing open, you see multiple reading options; on screens and on paper. There are shelves of books sharing space with digital media, music CDs, DVDs, periodicals, historic displays and local art.

INSERT chap1image2.jpg

Caption: A view of the downstairs portion of the Flemington Free Public Library (FFPL), featuring Washington's portrait. Next to the elevator, a portrait of Jean Nevis, a former patron who left the funds used to refurbish the second floor.

This includes a life-size portrait of one of our town's famous visitors, George Washington, who camped nearby before crossing the Delaware River to fight the British in the Battle of Trenton.

Silver-haired patrons exchange hushed commentary around a large table, as they share sections of the newspaper. Up a small flight of stairs, young children play in the colorful, orderly children's room, all while an ornate antique grandfather clock ticks peacefully behind the circulation desk, near a sign that reads "we all need help sooner or later... if you have special needs please talk to us."

The seven public access computer terminals are constantly busy. Each is powered by Microsoft Windows and is protected by Clean Slate (www.fortresgrand.com) software that erases any downloaded content and personal information at log-off or reboot. Each computer is hardwired to a single router and a large capacity printer/copier. Patrons are limited to two 45-minute computer sessions per day, which is tracked using Time Limit Manager, a utility also licensed from Fortres Grand. Besides the annual subscription to the management software, the computers are used nearly entirely for browser-based, Internet activities.

If you have a mobile device, the downstairs area is accommodating, with no-hassle password-free Wi-Fi and power outlets near the seating areas. Another computer is used exclusively for the online library catalog.

In the children's room, the books are mixed with puzzles, puppets and a wooden train set, or displayed in a large play house. It is a bright, happy, orderly place, where anyone would feel instantly welcome.

Debbie Moore, the children's librarian, has been around for years, and she knows the local children as well as she knows the latest children's books. She has developed a knack for matching a child with just the right book; and there's plenty of books to choose from.

The children's library opens into a well-kept courtyard with a teak table and chairs that invite you to sit down and relax, perhaps with a book, a tablet or a laptop. There are

regularly scheduled story times and other special events, and new books are highlighted in display areas to match the season or a current event.

The library is a place where anyone can walk in for the latest news, be greeted by a smiling face, and find a clean restroom and some shelter—cool in the summer and warm in the winter, with a gas fireplace and comfortable chairs. While the tone is generally hushed, it is a far cry from, "Shhhh!" We like to call it the town's living room.

Libraries that provide access to this type of technology can be found in many towns. Until you go upstairs.

WHY FLEMINGTON, N.J.?

In 1995, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better setting than Flemington, N.J., (pop. 5,000 or so) to raise a family. It was a town with tree-lined streets, a Civil War statue at one end of Main Street and an eclectic mix of offices and retail—antique shops, restaurants, dentists, lawyers and banks.. There are many historic buildings from the 1800's, including a large courthouse that was the site of the 1935 "Trial of the Century," otherwise known as the kidnapping trial of the Charles Lindbergh baby.

IMAGE chap1image3.1.jpg (court house)

IMAGE chap1image3.jpg (main street)

Caption: Views of Main Street Flemington, NJ

Many businesses bore the names of the families who started them. Behind the counters were colorful personalities that could have stepped out of a children's book. Jerry the Jeweler will tell you a funny story about his pet pig; Marshall at Higgins News Agency had jars of hard candy and fresh stacks of today's newspaper; and Stryker's Paint Store was in need of a paint job—and it still is today.

For our young family, moving from a college town in Michigan to Flemington was incredibly liberating. Flemington was real. It had history, culture and diversity. It was a community where multiple languages were spoken on the streets and in the homes. I spotted a small office for rent, and we purchased a house. I could walk to work, get to know my neighbors and eat fresh Chinese food. Coming from the Midwest, that's a big deal.

From a developmental view, there were plenty of options for adults--ornate Victorian homes, shops and restaurants, not to mention a library full of good books. The wide sidewalks and large shop windows were wonderful for walking dogs and strolling with baby carriages. For most, life was good.

But for children, especially young adults, the downtown wasn't as desirable. The police were known to break up groups of teens that were "loitering," a term subject to interpretation. Other than hang out at the pizza shop, there wasn't not much for local kids do. A near by parking lot posts a sign that warns, "No Skating, No Standing." For a teenager in Flemington, "No" was the operative word.

INSERTS:

chapter1image4.png

chapter1image5.png

chapter1image6.png

Caption: Where are the "Yeses?" The idea that my own children would be growing up in a town as bored middle-schoolers was an inspiration to start thinking about creative solutions, such as Mediatech.

Edna Vandanz was the kind of neighbor that greeted you with a warm smile and a plate of fresh chocolate chip cookies. About a year after we moved to Flemington, Edna took me aside and invited me to take her seat on the Board of Trustees of the Flemington Free Public Library.

I wasn't eager to accept, imagining a group of silver-haired seniors exchanging recipes. Instead, I found myself talking shop with a town councilman and a school superintendent. The monthly library trustee meetings pulled me out of my office and into the bloodstream of a small town.

THE QUARTER MILLION DOLLAR ELEVATOR TO NOWHERE

It was during one of these meetings that I noticed a recurring monthly fee in the treasurer's report. It was a monthly maintenance fee for an elevator, which the library installed with the help of a grant so that the library would be compliant with regulations set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But there was nothing on the second floor that was used with any regularity. One day after a board meeting, we went upstairs to investigate a roof leak. It was like visiting the storeroom of a museum. There were two musty rooms packed with old newspapers and Native American artifacts. The rooms were used for safe storage by the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

INSERT: chap1image7.png

Caption: Picture of the community room, before

The room had a cold tile floor and was filled with the type of clutter that many libraries accumulate over the years: obsolete card catalogs, old circulation files, extra chairs and AV materials. There was an abandoned bathroom and a stairwell used to store ladders.

During one of the Trustee meetings, I mentioned a community technology space I had seen when I was in Italy. Library Board President Anne Thomas asked for details. I explained the idea. It was apparent that I wasn't the only person who wondered why we weren't using the space on the second floor.

"This might be a good use of this space, and we could refurbish the community room using the Trust money," she said. Given this bit of encouragement, I continued exploring the idea.

LESSON #1: In the beginning stages, don't push any idea too hard. If the main stakeholders don't buy in, you'll probably fail.

INSERT: chapter1image8.png

Caption: Mediatech, around 2009

MEDIATECH: A SOCIAL TEST LAB

Today, the room upstairs has a different atmosphere. At times, it is filled with the animated conversations of teenagers and pre-teens. At other times, it has been completely quiet for reasons that will be made clear later.

There are two ways to get to the upstairs room: you can take the elevator; or do what most kids do after school, which is walk in directly from Main Street, climbing the 18 well-worn steps, each adorned with a plaque for sponsors who donated \$1000. A total of \$18,000 in sponsorship money was needed to create a non-profit foundation and get the Mediatech Foundation off the ground in 2003. Mediatch asked stair potential sponsors to, "help us take a step up."

Photo: The Flemington Lions Club, comprised of many local businesses, donated \$1000 to receive the top stairstep. They were given a wooden plaque to thank them for their donation.

INSERT: chap1image9.jpg

Caption: A happy day, when the Flemington Lion's Club donated \$1000, in return for a plaque.

A SOCIAL PLACE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

On most days after school, if you climbed the stairs and turned right into Mediatech, you would walk past the supervisor's desk and see a room filled with busy people, young and old, and an array of glowing computer and TV screens.

Eight older boys mill about; three are excitedly playing a Sony PlayStation 3 soccer simulation, and the others occupy nearby computers—four donated Windows XP PCs and four Mac minis.

The following copy was taken from an article that ran in School Library Journal: Isa, aged 14, checks his Facebook page as he monitors his new smart phone, while Doug, 17, has checked into his AP English class blog page using a school issued laptop, a process made easier by the fact that there is password-free Wi-Fi.

Below: Some days after school, it was nearly standing room only. But the kids don't seem to mind. If the station they want is busy, there's usually an open option.

INSERT: chap1image10.jpg

Caption: The crowd gathers.

Below: We experimented with having "standing" stations, for checking reservations, showing a friend some photos or a movie. This computer screen was mirrored on the projector. Notice that there are opportunities for three types of technology use -- individual, small group and large group.

Image chapter1image11.jpg

Capture: children sign up for games on a chart.

Above: During the Rock Band and Guitar Hero craze, a sign-up sheet was used to so that the next band could form and wait for a turn while they watched the current performance. The video output was mirrored on the wall using a projector, to make it easy to see what was going on. Five years later, groups of kids still like to play, and our drums still work.

INSERT chap1image12 (rock band on big screen w/projector)

INSERT chap1image13 (family playing rockband)

INSERT chap1image14 (family on big red couch)

Above: Having tablets near the well used red love seat worked well for the tablets. Here, an older brother provides a tutorial on the differences between iOS and Android.

INSERT chap1image15.jpg (group of kids)

Caption: If you build it, will they come? In our case, they did. Once our membership crossed the 700 mark, we started to attract noisy, rowdy kids. Behavior management incidents and theft increased and we needed to hire a second supervisor. This drained our

funds and patience. We discuss some of the management problems learned the hard way, in Chapter 8.

A COOL PLACE FOR HOT GAMES

Joe, an 18-year-old high school senior, and Danny, 17, browse the new video games from the 1,400 available for circulation (as of September 2013), a process made easier by the labeling system identifying the game system, the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) rating, and whether it is a new addition to the collection.

The center is "cool" in the literal sense--part of the library's \$100,000 remodeling investment included a new air conditioning system. Other elements that make the place "cool" are donations from some Mediatech members, including a large plastic watch/wall clock and several robotic toys, including an Elvis head. Your definition of cool may vary.

INSERT: chap1image16 (red couch w/ipad)

Photo caption: The iPad, donated from anonymous visitor, is tethered to a long cable and stored within reach of a preschooler, so it is easy to explore independently. A single charge lasts all week.

INSERT chap1image17.jpg (child getting games from shelf)

Photo caption above: We keep a stepping stool available so that shorter children can browse the higher shelves, although preschool materials are always get lower space.

INSERT chap1image18.jpg (Nintendo DS tethering system)

Photo below: We also keep the Nintendo DS units tethered and charged, for playing or sampling a cartridge on site. The Nintendo DS has been a very strong performer for day-to-day use. Carol's husband, Bill Wachter engineered this system, discovering that he must sand the cover back of a Nintendo DS so it is flat and the glue will bond effectively, before adhering the mounting plate.

INSERT chap1image20.jpg (tethered iPod Touch)

INSERT chap1image21.jpg (child using iPad)

Photo caption: The tethered iPad and iPod Touch 4 gets a lot of use. It has been pre-loaded with 200 apps selected by age and arranged in folders that are locked owns. The build in iOS management features have been activated so that it is impossible to erase or add apps, without permission. We used on Otterbox for protection, and a super-glued plate is affixed to the back.

Because the games are part of the library catalog, it is possible to reserve or hold a title from your home computer.

See <http://youtu.be/793Ge-yKfHM> or scan the QR code below.



A PLACE TO REST OR MAKE NEW FRIENDS

One day, an exhausted young mother with two young boys rested while her baby slept in a stroller nearby. Her extremely active toddler explored a low shelf of age-appropriate materials under the watchful eye of the supervisor. He ended up pulling out a storage container with the Leapfrog TAG Junior reading system. He wasn't aware of the fact, but he had stumbled upon the perfect way for him to explore English, which would be helpful because his family spoke Spanish.

He struck up a friendship with Todd, a middle school boy who spoke no Spanish, but had dropped in to play a video game with some friends. He was bored, and a conversation with a toddler seemed like fun.

The two boys were different in just about every way, yet they formed a bond around the technology, and a friendship formed that increased the possibility that a group of middle schooler kids with time on their hands just might view a young mother pushing a stroller on the other side of the street as a friend rather than a stranger.

INSERT chap1image19.jpg (father/son playing Wii)

Photo: Two Mediatech regulars, a father and son, especially like two player competitive racing games, on the Nintendo Wii.

A PLACE TO STUDY OR WORK

Not everything that happens at Mediatech is about play. People come to do homework, to write a paper, edit a photo portfolio or get help with tax returns.

Each spring, Mediatech gets busy as representatives from the federal Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program use its computers and printers to assist the elderly and low-income patrons with their tax returns.

One summer, as a part of a research project with Consumer's Union, we turned Mediatech into an SAT test-prep headquarters. For eight weeks, high school juniors came in to work through problems while they listened to classical music and sipped ice water.

INSERT chap1image22.jpg (SAT Test prep class in session).

After visitors sign into the log book, a three-ring binder by the supervisor's desk, they are free to explore more than a thousand shelved video games. Signing the sheet doubles as an acceptance of Mediatech's acceptable use policy (see Appendix 1).

You can check out a game for use at home or play it on the spot using one of the available consoles or handheld game systems. Educational toys, such as Leapster, V.Smile and LeapPad, are available, along with eight Internet stations. Unlike the traditional Internet stations downstairs, there are no time limits on the computers. Potential time conflicts are managed on an individual basis. All the computers are equipped with speakers; earphones are available for Internet games and music videos.

INSERT chap1image23.jpg (boy and Grandmother with flight sim)

Caption: Tim, age 12, shows his 94 year old Grandmother how to take off and land in a flight simulator.

One of the stations is equipped with a flight simulator controller and a pre-loaded edition of Microsoft Flight Simulator that has the ability to mimic Charles Lindbergh's famous transatlantic flight. Because the famous Lindbergh kidnapping trial took place in Flemington in 1934-1935, there is still a lot of interest in the Lindberghs and his flight. A video projector is ready for large group presentations or for showing off a video project.

Along the wall, three middle-school students using iMac minis are immersed in their own virtual world that can be played from anywhere, on any device. But somehow it's more fun sitting next to the person you're exploring with. Over the years, there have been many virtual worlds that have been popular with the children.

The current popular game, Minecraft, is a bit like tag, where children can work collaboratively online to build virtual worlds.

One boy uses a computer to watch YouTube videos about Minecraft, while the other two explore the same landscape together. A cell phone is used to keep in touch with a fourth player, who is stuck at home. This is a typical Friday afternoon in Mediatech.

Formally, the nonprofit 502 c (3) center is called the Mediatech Foundation, but to the kids it's simply "Mediatech."

Many people think it is part of the library. In reality, it's an independent, self-governed organization with its own board of trustees. It has a separate Wi-Fi account and router, a Facebook page, YouTube channel, website, alarm code and entrance, in addition to elevator access through the library. It works in close cooperation with the library and the newly formed library friends group, sharing some staff and the online circulation system. But it could be located in any other building, town, state or country.

INSERT chap1image24.png (screen capture of Mediatech.org website)

Caption: The Mediatech website (www.mediatech.org) offers a digital hub for news and special events. One of our board members, Bob Flisser, designed the site and pays for the hosting. Login credentials are kept by Bob, the Library Director, and the Mediatech supervisor.

The room offers a very different ambiance than the library below. For some, it is an after-school refuge--a place to study or to hang out with friends until mom comes home. For others, it is a place to sample from a digital buffet that serves up the latest tablet, toy or video game.

BUILT ON A SHOESTRING WITH NO TAX DOLLARS

Money has always been Mediatech's biggest challenge. We didn't want to become another draw on local taxes, and we certainly didn't want to appear that we were drawing from the limited library budget. Instead, we wanted to be a "value add" to the library.

So the strategy was to use existing town resources and volunteers, and leverage the great location and existing library resources.

But this required fundraising and the use of a lot of used materials, including a room in the library. Besides the initial \$20,000 raised prior to opening day, Mediatech has been able to raise funds from research projects (two, at about \$10,000 each) and from about \$5,000-per-year in private donations from local foundations. The rest of the \$7,000-to-\$10,000 annual budget comes from summer camp registrations and special events like free concerts where we pass the donation hat.

Looking back on Mediatech's progress over the years, I often wonder if our lack of funding comes with a silver lining? While the donated tables and chairs don't match, they're easy to maintain or replace, and the people who donated them feel a sense of ownership about them.

They're a far stretch from luxurious, with a few exceptions: A marble-topped reception desk was donated by a local business when it remodeled its office.

The hodgepodge collections of furnishings creates a "feeling of ownership" that has, perhaps, accounted for the lack of theft and vandalism. But theft also remains low

because of old-fashioned good supervision. Mediatech is a place where everybody knows who you are and what you are doing.

There's no designer furniture or shelves--nearly every item has been recycled, donated or picked up off the street on recycling day. The 836-square-foot room is noisy, but orderly, and extremely well supervised. It wasn't always orderly and, at times, it wasn't well supervised.

Mediatech's nine computers—all donated from local businesses--run Windows XP and Mac OS. The Windows computers are protected by Clean Slate (www.fortresgrand.com); the Mac minis take care of themselves; the browsing history and desktop are periodically cleaned by the supervisor.

Mediatech's Wi-Fi service is free, courtesy of the local phone company.

Game consoles, as of summer 2013, include a Microsoft Xbox 360 Kinect and an older Microsoft Xbox; a Sony PlayStation 3 with Move and PlayStation 2; a Nintendo Wii U and an original Wii. Handheld options include two Nintendo DS's, a Leapster, an Android tablet, an iPod Touch and an iPad 1. The handheld systems are all equipped with locks and cables that prevent them from "walking away." The game hardware was donated, arriving as test units from the hardware manufacturers for editorial purposes.

On the shelves are more than 1,200 circulating video games--all review copies from Children's Technology Review--which can be checked out, just like books in the library. Each visitor can check out up to four titles for two weeks.

INSERT: chap1image25.jpg (Mediatech log book)

Caption: When patrons sign the daily attendance list for Mediatech, they are agreeing to abide by the rules of conduct restricting use of M-rated games (video console or online) and improper websites. They also are agreeing to a photo release form, which means that they understand they are in a public place, so any activity can be recorded for research purposes.

A MEETING PLACE

Mediatech has been hosted birthday parties and for several years was the site of a youth-organized New Year's Party. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOp_Ld3WK50. In each case, parents volunteered to provide supervision, and donations covered the extra staff hours.

INSERT chap1image26.jpg (Greg's birthday party in progress).

INSERT chap1image27.jpg (child made party sign outside on street)

Both formal and informal events are held at Mediatech. Every Friday is Serious Game Testers Club (SGTC), when new games, gadgets or YouTube videos are previewed. This is not unlike a book club that many adults are used to--only with new digital materials. It's a time when the adults can learn from the kids things like the trending videos on YouTube, and children can share technical challenges they've been having, such as how to post something online, recover a lost password, or set up a server for multiplayer game. Other special events include a week-long programming camp, SAT test-prep sessions, and workshops about Facebook, Google and social media. A "Sweet Talks" lecture program featured entertainment provided by local musicians, "sweets" and fresh fruit plates for refreshments, and a brief presentation on a current topic. (More in Chapter 8, Special Events.)

BEFORE YOU START

We were able to prove that creating a drop-in technology center can be done without big grants as long as you have a solid physical location and it doesn't negatively affect the regular functions of a traditional library.

You can have your cake and eat it, too. But, you have to have the basics in place, know what you're doing, and have clear goals. It also helps to have several thousand video games.

These questions might sound obvious, but they need to be asked.

- Do I have the space? Ideally, this is a dedicated room that can support noisy, social play and handle up to 25 children at once. Remember: some adult patrons won't want to be around noisy children and video game systems, so this space should not serve as your public access computer area for the general library patron.
- Do I have the staff? If a group of rowdy middle school and high school children show up, am I prepared for the issues they bring with them?
- Can my circulation system handle digital materials, including video games and/or hardware items such as special game controllers, video cameras or tablet computers? Am I ready to build this type of collection?
- If a patron came in with a box full of used video games, would I know how to circulate them?
- Am I ready to take on an exciting but sometimes bewildering category of tablets, routers, game consoles, social media and online games?
- Can I teach myself to crimp an Ethernet cable, change the light bulb in a projector or reset a router? If I can't, can I find somebody else who will?
- Can I properly supervise a healthy dose of unfiltered public Internet access? And am I prepared to set family-friendly limits on that access?
- Am I prepared to enforce the guidelines and suspend privileges for those who break the rules?
- Am I good at begging, borrowing and adapting?

- Do I have the support of local VIPs, including the newspaper and a friends group to help me raise awareness and provide public relations or staff for special events?
- Do I get along with people of all ages and stages?
- Am I on a first-name basis with most of the families who might come to such a space?

If the answers are mostly yes, you're on your way. If many are no, don't feel bad. It is important to start any task with a realistic assessment of your strengths and weaknesses in order to have a positive final outcome.

The ornate grandfather clock is still ticking behind the FFPL reference desk as it has for nearly 100 years. Today, the soft ticks are joined by the sounds of mouse clicks, tablets and games; along with happy, busy children.

INSERT BOXES

ARE YOU READY FOR A CHALLENGE?

Gigi Tagliapietra, the founder of Mediateca in Italy, told me that if I was going to try to create a center similar to what he created, I needed to be "all in" for the first five years. I wasn't aware that it would be fifteen.

FORMING A BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Human nature dictates that people don't like change, so we naturally set up boundaries and establish feelings of ownership over ideas, organizations and financial resources. If you try to tinker with a tried and true organization such as a library, you should be ready to meet some resistance. To prepare, I attempted to give feelings of ownership to what I thought of four supports, with roughly equal support, and voting power, from each.

1. Businesses and technology gurus. Nationally known technology and educational consultants can be wonderful additions to the board. "Why not be an expert in your own backyard?" In the early stages, we used our proximity to AT&T to tap into the experience of Joan Fenwick to set up early conference calls. Other gurus included Edu-blogger Will Richardson and Ned Davis from the New Jersey Arts Education Collective. PC Magazine's Craig Ellison helped us wire our network and donated many used computers. All services were provided pro-bono.
2. Town government. We approached the borough council to let them know what we were doing.
3. The schools. As a former classroom teacher, I wanted Mediatech to be my new unconventional classroom, full of learning potential, but lacking the structured curriculum. One of our area high school teachers, Florence McGinn, was also named U.S. National *Tech & Learning* Teacher of the Year. Many college students helped out during

the summer as supervisors, and as "geeks" to help keep the equipment running, build shelves, paint and clean up.

4. The library staff. I was inspired by something I had observed in Italy--that the librarians were not in favor of the Mediateca, because they saw it as competition for patrons. I didn't want that to happen to us, so I made sure the library director held a voting position on the Board of Trustees and was aware of everything that happened. Hours were structured to supplement the library schedule, rather than compete with it.

Finally, I made sure that everyone was aware that the governing meetings were open to the public.

There were other organizations and businesses with which we found it useful to connect, such as the local historical society, a printer, the police department and churches. Add into the mix Friday of experts and it was relatively easy to come up with a very well qualified Board of Trustees. I also wanted someone with a strong business background and legal mind, so invitations went out to a respected CPA and a local attorney. Without legal and business advice, we would not have been able to form a nonprofit corporation.

Finally, because I knew this new venture was going to take time away from my family, I asked my wife to join the board, and she did for the first five years. As of the publication date, we remain married.

INSERT Chap1image28.jpg (the first board of trustees).

MEDIATECH FOUNDATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Here are principles that we followed as we designed the Mediatech space. Most of these are complementary with a public library formula that is based on an underlying philosophy of individual empowerment through choice and socialization.

Any work to apply technology to this formula should start with a solid understanding of the underlying principles and culture of the public library.

INSERT: chap1image29.jpg (first board of trustees)

Photo: Some of the first Mediatech board of Trustees pose with Jane Kennedy, the FFPL at the time. From left to right: Bill Hartman of the Historical Society, Joan Fenwick of AT&T, Warren Buckleitner and Ellen Wolock of Children's Technology Review, Edward Kurowicki, CPA; Florence McGinn, then a teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, and Flemington Free Public Library Director Jane Kennedy. Not pictured: Lou Hosta and Mike Sozansky.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Free. No entry cost to enter or use the facilities or check out materials. Special events may be supported by a suggested anonymous donation; however no child or family should feel compelled to donate.
- Public. Nobody is turned away, regardless of residency, citizenship, social-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity or disability. Some services may be reserved for those who agree to an "Acceptable Use" policy, and video game checkout is reserved for library card holders.
- Current. Provide access to the fastest Internet speed, the latest video games and apps, and the latest versions of computer tablets and game platforms.
- Educational. Support both formal learning through classes and informal learning by extending topics of study or directing patrons to appropriate resources or people.
- Reflect local culture. Celebrate the unique local culture by providing digital tools and server space for the archiving of oral histories, digitized newspapers, photographs, maps and other historical materials.
- Collaborate with other organizations. Provide support in a public, social context to identify community needs, to refer families to social programs to meet such needs, and to cooperate with other organizations, agencies and institutions, especially the schools and the library.
- Non-political and non-religious. Any town contains a variety of political and religious views. These must not influence the design or programming.
- Non-commercial. The center should not favor one brand or platform over another; any potential sponsors must be given equal access, on a first-come, first-served basis. Any income from any potential sponsor must be recorded in the public minutes of the board of directors. A community bulletin board should be maintained by the supervisor to insure free, equitable public access.
- All ages. We were careful to make sure that even the youngest child could find something and be successful with it within 30 seconds of entering the Mediatech space. Beside the addition of some talking plush toys, Leapsters and a V.Smile, one item that helped make this possible was a magnetic set of alphabet letters. With all materials, we were careful to avoid button cell batteries toxins and choking hazards. In addition, we made sure that all power outlets that could be reached by a crawling toddler had child safety locks.

TECHNOLOGY ACCESS IMPLEMENTATION SCALES

There are many ways that libraries provide technology access to children. Rather than thinking about technology as either “have or have not,” here’s a developmental technology implementation scale that ranges from beginning to advanced, so others can judge how their library is doing.

SCALE 1: INTERNET ACCESS

___ Level 1: No computer or Internet access. There are no computers, no Wi-Fi, no telephone access.

___ Level 2: General use. Internet station access is available in the general patron area, but not in the children's area.

___ Level 3: Expanded use. Internet access is available in the children's area as well as the general patron area.

___ Level 4: Multifunctional use. Both Internet access and video game console access that is leveled are available, so there are developmentally appropriate options for each age.

___ Level 5: Internet access, video game consoles for public use, handheld gaming access and circulation, video game console access that is social and leveled are available.

SCALE 2: VIDEO GAME ACCESS

___ Level 1: No access.

___ Level 2: A small selection of circulating video games.

___ Level 3: A larger selection of video games.

___ Level 4: A large selection of video games, plus some mainstream video game consoles available for quiet play.

___ Level 5: Gaming consoles available for public use; a wide variety of games titles available both for in-house (noisy) play or for check out.

PHOTO: Mediatech was the first public Wi-Fi signal in our county, according to our DSL provider at the time, Earthlink. Today, the aging sign in the window is in need of replacement, but it still works.

INSERT chap1image30.jpg (wi-fi sign)

SCALE 3: WIRELESS ACCESS

Anybody that has ever stayed in a hotel knows that finding a reliable Internet signal can be a major challenge. This scale assumes that a first-time visitor can easily find a strong wireless signal, and then get a web browser or email program to work. At Mediatech, there are two routers: Mediatech1 and Mediatech2, which makes the signal easy to identify. The levels of wireless access are below.

___ Level 1: No access.

___ Level 2: Slow access that is hard to find (e.g., the name might be something like “Linksys”) and unreliable.

___ Level 3: Access that is easy to find, but is hindered by configuration issues and the signal strength varies.

___ Level 4: Fast access with no configuration issues, is well named, and can handle most busy days.

___ Level 5: Fast public access, no timeouts or limits and it can easily handle a group using it at once to, say, watch a video.

SCALE 4: SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

___ 3D Goggles?

___ Large screen display, for public demonstrations or talks?

___ 3D printer?

___ Laser printer

___ Camera (e.g., for taking a profile photo)

___ Video editing equipment

___ Flight simulator

___ Game controllers for game sharing

ⁱ Barack, L (2011) *Game Station: Spare funds and some hand-me-down desktops have turned a forgotten room at the Flemington Library into tech central*. School Library Journal, Aug. 2011, online at http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/printissue/currentissue/891275-427/game_station_spare_funds_and.html.csp

The article is referenced at <http://www.thedigitalshift.com/2012/02/k-12/digital-learning-day-librarians-doing-great-work-with-tech/>