

Stay & Play

Stop Hiding Your Best Resources

As presented by Andrea Siemens, Caitlyn Hicks, and Jaime Griffis

Slide #1 Stay and Play: Stop Hiding your best resources

Today I will be focusing on adding new programming styles to your roster and Jaime and Caitlyn will discuss how we were able to shift our focus in the Children's Department by changing our space and collections budget to fit our needs.

Rethink Your Programs

Slide #3 Librarians venn diagram

I got this venn diagram from Fake Library Statistics but I think there may be more than a little truth to it, especially when it comes to the Children's Department. We are amazing at repurposing, reusing and having an eye for unique projects using little funding. In other words, one person's trash is a Children's programmer's treasure.

Slide #4

This is a corner of my own office, the cardboard packing crates were stacked up outside of IT services when they were "rescued" from the recycling. We have a different sort of lens when it comes to garbage. We know some of it can get re-purposed for programming even if we don't know how,,,,yet! So we store it for the day when it makes it glorious debut as a castle or minecraft bowling (or any of the thousand ways we can use those packing crates). I bet if we played a game right now in the room, we could have 20 new programming ideas using these crates. This is why I love to work in the Children's Department.

Slide #5

This is a picture of someone's actual work space in our department. After many years of programming, extra "stuff" just accumulates. And it is hard to get rid of resources that might get used in the future.

Slide #6

So why am I talking about garbage you ask? Well I think this is a mentality that goes beyond just the Children's Department. This mentality extends to more than just the "stuff" we collect at our own desks for individual projects. We have a mindset that more is more and more is better.

Slide #7-8

More books in our collection equals a better collection. More programming resources in the closet equals better programming.

Slide #9

More tables and bookshelves and displays equals a better space. I am going to speak to how we have tried to change this mentality this year at Idea Exchange through renovation, furniture arrangement, new collections focus, new programming models and simply cleaning up.

Slide #10

This was hard because I would argue that we are still acting as guardians of the stuff. Sure, we don't keep books behind desks anymore and ask that they fill out a card to get one. But why are we protecting the old felt board stories and the fun PD Day Frozen games that someone made for one event in the storage closet?

Slide #11

What I am leading up to is: it's not our stuff! What is the purpose of having all the fun stuff sitting in storage somewhere? They really only serve a purpose if they are used and is it more effective to have it used by a handful in your 30 minute program or put it on the floor to be used by those visiting at any time, adding to the sense of play in your department.

Slide #12

PLAY. I'd like to talk a little bit about play. We know it builds literacy, creativity, curiosity, empathy and many other life skills. When the all-day kindergarten curriculum focus became play based learning we all for the most part worked to adapt our programming to the current trends. This is not really new to us as Children's programmers, we've been working at making literacy and learning fun and interactive for years in our programming.

Slide #13

But do our spaces also reflect our dedication to fun and do they encourage young learners to explore, discover and grow with each visit. I'm not talking about colour choices and displays. Are our spaces static? Do they offer new opportunities to initiate learning and play? And I don't believe you need a large renovation budget to experiment with providing unique and interactive experiences for families when they arrive in our departments, the key may be just what you already have in your closets.

Slide #14

We were preparing for a special program in our department where the pool noodle hobby horses pictured in the closet here were going to be used on a track. The track was created with masking tape on the floor in a dotted line that formed a circle in front of our Children's desk.

Slide #15

The program happened on a Tuesday and since it would be repeated on a Thursday, we decided to leave the masking tape circle on the floor of the department. For two days we watched as little children ran into the department and followed the circle, jumped on one leg around the circle, counted the dotted lines, played ring around the rosy with their parents and patterned their books inside of it. There were few that didn't interact with it in some way upon entering the department. Simply having masking tape on the floor became a little piece of magic in the department for a few days. From this experience, I began to think of programming and our space in new ways.

So when we began to have problems with capacity in our program room, we saw it as an opportunity to experiment with a different play based learning style of program.

Slide #16 Explore on the Floor

Explore on the Floor is a program with 6-8 discovery centres placed throughout the Children's Department with the idea of caregivers and little people engaging in free play together.

Slide #17

We have a lot of young families that come to our drop in programs. We offered two registered totstimes and two drop ins per week at the Queen's Square location and all four were filled. Our drop in totstimes on Tuesdays and Thursdays would fill within minutes of opening and we had many families disgruntled and disappointed that they could not join in. Many would try and sneak into the program room or hold the door open so they could listen along. In response to this and the changing play based learning curriculum, in 2013 we started gathering materials for a program called Explore on the Floor.

Slide #18

Offered in the Children's department space (not the program room), this program overlapped slightly and directly followed totsttime so disappointed families would have something to do in the department and our totsttime families could extend their visit after the program.

What we found? People started coming specifically for Explore on the Floor. It has since become one of our most popular programs and has been rolled out to all locations in 2015.

Slide #19-21 Not Expensive

Some of the lessons learned: the program does not have to be expensive. Use what you have. We took the puppets out of the closet, put on the music in the department to give it a start and end feel. Once the music starts, we start! Once the music ends, we clean up.

Slide #22 Model Play

At first, we had a lot of caregivers sitting off to the side and the little people needing a lot of guidance. Our goal in this program was to guide and model play so that caregivers use the materials to interact with their little people. This was more difficult than we had anticipated. We have set people up for years in a style of programming where they are often more passive participants and in terms of the caregivers often not participants at all.

Slide #23-25

As we know, the real learning and bonding happens in the interactions that are face to face and hands on. So it was key to encourage opportunities for adults to play with their little people. Gentle guidance for the first few weeks such as: "Is little Annie's adult here? She is exploring something new!" or "I bet Sam's grandpa can get the ball through the hoop!" After a few weeks, there was no need to direct and guide, the adults were as engaged as the kids.

Slide #26-29 We Are Messy

We are messy. Very messy. We use sand and water and pumpkin guts and whatever we think will be fun. We have tarps that cover most of the mess but there were some projects that got too messy for us. We learned that the vacuum does not pick up hamster shavings from the carpet. That was a fun day. We learned that cloud dough can get ground into carpet and never ever come out. We learned that custodial staff are really fantastic people that are very very busy. We learned that cleaning time after the program is sometimes substantial and we build it into our Children's Department schedule.

Slide #30 Stay and Play

The second problem that we tackled in our 2015 programming schedule was long Fall session. In the past, the Fall programming session was 12 weeks long. Children's programmers felt fatigue and attendance started to dip as we got closer to December. As a test, we cut two weeks of regular programming and advertised three weeks of STAY AND PLAY activities instead.

Slide #31-33

Some of the great benefits we observed: Great way to use the rest of the PA Day, Summer Reading Club and other special program activities. We had crafts and activities such as Minecraft minigolf and etc. and ended up with more room on our shelves.

Slide #34 Beware How You Advertise

We became a victim of our own success at times. We had placed an article about the activities on our website, "Take a robot for a spin, tie die a shirt, make something for the holidays, play a game, build a tower - there are so many possibilities!" Well we had one complaint from a family that came in specifically to do the tie dying (which was only offered at one location on one particular day).

Slide #35 The Fear of Losing Stuff

Some of our biggest hurdles: fear. Fear of losing stuff. Little pieces. The whole thing. Often we keep our stuff in the back closets in order to safeguard them and keep them from getting worn. There are a few fears to unpack here. One, what if I need something and it is not there anymore and 2. I don't like kids playing with my stuff when I'm not watching.

Slide #36-38

Well, as I highlighted before, it is not our stuff. It belongs to the library and losing some bits and pieces is the cost of doing business. We started looking at our resources much like we see our collection and incorporated any needed replacements into our collections budget. Jaime is going to talk about that process later. However, in the month where we had 6-8 stations out all day with only one desk person watching over it, we didn't lose a thing.

Slide #39 Don't Be a Slave to the Theme

Slaves to the theme... My original instructions for Stay and Play activities was for programmers to sign up for a day and plan and coordinate 6-8 stations that would be put out on the floor. My actual wording was "a station can be as simple as putting out the white board and markers". Nothing new was to be created, nothing new needed to be bought. Take stock of your stuff and put it on the floor. I remember when I started programming years ago, my boss told me "Don't be a slave to the theme" but for some reason this is a VERY difficult concept to actualize in the Children's Department. We plan programs and search for materials based on a themed criteria but I would argue that it needs to be fun, it does not need to be matchy matchy.

Slide #40-42 Frozen Day

But as people signed up they started calling their day "Frozen Day" or "Spongebob Squarecrafts" and etc. It got to the point where members started calling daily and asking "what is the theme today?" This also had a lot to do with the fact that programmers were using leftover crafts, games and activities from events that had been done once like the PD Day Frozen program. My advice would be to break up activities that are themed on different days so you are not setting an extra expectation of programmers and members.

Slide #43-45 Taking Statistics

Gathering statistics for this unprogram program was also a challenge. I created a tick chart that had blocks of time 10-12, 12-3, 3-5 and so on instead of individual program names. This became useful information for me as a manager as well since I now had information on popular times when people were in the department using the materials. Our slow period (between 12-3) is often when we offer afternoon PA Day programs, so this is useful for future planning. The biggest shift was convincing programmers that desk time is now the programming time. When you have a "desk" shift, you are supervising, refilling, interacting, playing and guiding members through discovery centres, not sitting at the desk waiting for questions and doing other work.

Slide #46-47 Organize Cleanup Procedures in Advance

That brings us to clean up. Again, the program does not have a leader but a coordinator. And the Coordinator was not necessarily there for set up and clean up. We ended up getting two empty carts - one for loading

tomorrow's Stay and Play activities with instructions and one for putting today's on for clean up the next day. This seemed to work but the clean up can be substantial so if you can get paiges on side with you at the end of the night, it works best.

Using the Stay and Play format, our December program attendance increased at Queen's Square by 69% over 2014 and 62% overall at Idea Exchange.

Slide #48

So does this style of programming show results? Our Queen's Square location total attendance in the Children's Department went up by 18% in one year. In 2014 we had a total program attendance of 17,606 and in 2015 it rose to 21,564. And that's only at one location. Our average per program attendance went from 35 per program to 39 in one year as well. This is largely due to our new space and ability to program in new ways. We see more and more regulars coming in to see what is different about the space and excitement from teachers, parents and children.

Slide #49

I've talked a lot about "the stuff" but ultimately, our best resource is our staff and the creative ways they use "the stuff" to engage our members. Having people that look at the world and see cardboard packing crates as opportunities is an amazing resource to tap into. Let's not hide it away. Give them new challenges and we may see some amazing results.

Now that you can see the results of shifting our programming focus, we'll go back and highlight how we changed the space and collections budgets in order to create this opportunity.

RETHINK YOUR SPACE

Slide #51 We Are More Than A Warehouse of Books

The children's department at the Queen's Square location as it used to look, could perhaps be described as a warehouse of books. Walking into the space, you were greeted by rows and rows of books. This wasn't a sad sight by any means, nor was it entirely void of seating areas. And it didn't seem to disappoint any of our members. But what if it could be something more than just a storage space?

Slide #52 Amazing Spaces Don't Happen Overnight

Walking into the department now, you are greeted by the people and the engaging activities being offered. But this amazing space wasn't transformed overnight. You'll notice that the department has one large open space where tables and chairs, couches and ottomans, can be easily moved aside when a Magician comes calling. Or you may also notice that there are two large walls of front-facing materials. This flexible space can be transformed in so many different ways, as Andrea demonstrated, and yet it still manages to highlight the collection.

Slide #53 Renovation Floor Plan - Measure! Measure! Measure!

But how did we get from A to B? To put it simply, it's a lot of hard work. We started by walking through the space, trying to understand the ways in which it was currently meeting or failing our needs. We thought about the natural pathways that a child or family might take when searching for picture books, chapter books, or even the washrooms. We knew we wanted an open space that could host large events and smaller programs. We knew that all collections should be visible upon walking into the space for ease of navigation. We knew the washrooms needed to be more easily accessible and that we finally needed the drinking fountain that had been requested for so long. So we made lists, drew floor plans, and measured, and measured, and measured.

Slide #54 Stats! Collection Performance

Having this vision in place didn't make it any easier when it came time to deal with the collections. Having just done all of our measurements, we knew that we were going to have to aggressively downsize our collections in order for them to fit into the new space. I think at one time or another, we've all been guilty of avoiding aggressive weeds. Sure we use our judgment and find support in our circulation statistics, but how many of us have actually taken the time to look at the space and realize that these shelves don't belong to a particular collection just because it's always been that way?

So we started thinking about our shelves like prime real estate. Circulating materials get the best real estate and non-circulating materials don't get any at all. So we measured how many linear feet our current collection was taking up, and then we mapped circulation statistics to it. Our Easy Read collection was yielding 700 checkouts per foot, while our Non-Fiction collection was only yielding 44 checkouts per foot. Between the two, which collection would you cut? Suddenly it wasn't such a hard decision.

Slide #55 More is Not Better

I wish I could say that there is a magic formula to help you decide just how much real estate each collection gets, but your calculations must take into account the natural flow of the space and the limitations of where shelving can be re-located. So we went back to our floor plan, where every unit of shelving had been clearly drawn, and we started assigning collections to each unit, in order of the best performing to the lowest performing collection. Then we calculated how many linear feet of shelving was now allocated to each collection, subtracted that from the original starting point, and voila! we had our target weeding percentages. We were going to weed our fiction collection by 30% and our non-fiction collection by 34%.

Slide #56 Timelines: Not In Your Control

Now this type of collection and space redesign can be done at any time, but when it is part of a larger renovation, you must be prepared to move quickly. The entire children's department was going to be renovated at night and maintain full service to the public during the day. This meant that everyone had to move quickly - really, really quickly. We did our best to pull in support from other departments, because this really was an all-hands-on-deck situation. You'll note from this diagram that almost the entire collection was sitting in the area labeled, 'Phase 2'.

Slide #57 Planning

When you commit to a renovation, your contractor provides you with this wonderful schedule that outlines exactly when each task needs to be completed by, because time is money and a public library doesn't have a lot of cash to spare. That didn't make any easier when we realized that we would have just 4 days to re-locate nearly the entire collection. Now keep in mind that the books had to move twice - once onto a temporary shelving unit, and then again when the old shelving had been dismantled and moved to its new spot. You may notice the absence of any photos...

Slide #58 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

I'm not sure I would want to take photos if I had the chance, but let's just say that I was otherwise engaged. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that my team and I were all suffering from PTSD. Why you ask? The constant stress of the daily changes, the brewing staff breakdowns, the disorganization of our collections and programming resources, THE DUST, the hazards that suddenly appeared because construction crews don't realize their drills are Bob the Builder toys, the lack of staff to assist with the re-shelving or re-organization of stuff, the tight schedules that meant there was no time for any advance program planning, and the deficiencies tracking... I was warned, but it wasn't until I was neck deep in deficiency tracking that I truly

understood how a 5-week renovation could become a 5-month renovation. And have I mentioned the month of weeding that led up to the renovation?

Slide #59 Staff Confidence: The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Right about now, most of you are wondering how I managed to survive without a mutiny. I was calm... a vision of *complete* serenity. For some reason, that didn't seem to be enough. The many successes that Andrea highlighted were yet to come, and all we had was a vision. So, we decided to offer Staff Discovery Days, where staff could experience the joy of playing and making, and where the vision would come to life and they could come to believe that all their hard work was worth it. The Children's staff were designated as the 'play leaders,' to help guide people, but everyone was clearly told that there were no expectations and the only goal was to let off steam and have fun.

It's important to note that every single member of the organization attended, because the custodians help keep our spaces clean and vibrant. The reception, circulation and information staff promote our programs and hook new members. The processing staff make sure that new materials hit the shelves right when they're needed. And the digital services staff help incorporate new technologies into our programs. It truly does take a village to deliver excellent service, and we wanted to recognize them for it. Here, Janet is finding her zen with our magformers.

Slide #60 Fibre Art

Here, staff are learning the process of fibre art, a foundational element of the Idea Exchange gallery's history and permanent collection. You can see an example work of art being displayed on the easel. In the background, staff are giving arm knitting a chance.

Slide #61 Hardware Jewelry

On the left, staff were using nuts, bolts, washers, and you name it to create beautiful necklaces, earrings, scarf pendants, rings, and there was even a bookmark. On the right, staff were also given the chance to play with our new tech, such as Makey Makey with bananas or coloured water. Overall, staff commented on how great it was to have this hands-on experience for when they promote future exhibitions and programs and some insight into our future plans. So even though our only goal was for staff to have fun, suddenly we also had staff buy-in and an organization committed to our bold vision.

Slide #62 Drum Roll Please! March Break in the New Space

Simply by changing the flow and design of the space, we saw a 98.9% increase in attendance at the Queen's Square location during March Break. In one week, at one location, we welcomed over 3 thousand people into the space - but more than that, we suddenly had 3 thousand people that couldn't wait to come back. And as Andrea highlighted, we saw a 22.5% increase in total attendance over the year.

Slide #63 Drum Roll Please! Circulation Statistics

Despite the 30% cut to our fiction collection, we saw a 9.7% increase in checkouts over the year. With 99,056 checkouts in 2015, up from 90,292 checkouts in 2014. And despite the 40% cut to our non-fiction collection (slightly higher than the originally targeted 34%), we saw an 18.1% increase in checkouts over the year. With 19,501 checkouts in 2015 up from 16,512 checkouts in 2014. With circulation stats declining across the industry, these staggering increases are BIG news!

Despite our fears about taking such a bold risk with the department and our collections, families were excited by the new space and no one (and I mean no one) even noticed the 40% collection cut. In the new Queen's

Square children's department, families are inspired to read, play, and discover and the 'right' book for each child is easy to find, no longer hidden within a warehouse.

Rethink Your Collections

Slide #65 New Materials Project Another definition of collection – objects/resources

Slide #66 Approach & Methodology – How to choose? Circulation and space

Slide #67 The Funds – how we changed the collections budget

Slide #68 Divide & Conquer – Other departments involved – processing, delivery, storage

Slide #69 The List – What do we buy?

Slide #70 What Will We Continue

Slide #70-73 What Will We Continue – What worked, didn't work, new for 2016

Slide #74-75 Circulating Maker Kits

LOOKING AHEAD: BRANTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Slide #77 Children's Department: Before

This is the view of the children's department at the Main location of the Brantford Public Library, when I first started in my role. There was no clear pathway, it's not clear where I would be able to find each collection, the baby board books are located at the entrance of the department, pushed up against a couch, and there's no front-facing shelving. But thankfully the same model that I used at Idea Exchange can be applied to this space – minus the renovation!

Slide #78 Children's Department: In Progress

It's still a work in progress, but this is how the department looks now, 3 ½ months later. The visual barrier to the space is gone, though admittedly it is still being temporarily blocked by couches. We've started to create an open area that allows families to read and play together, and it also doubles as a small programming space where we've been able to set up 3 activity tables during regular or pop-up programs. The shelving you see behind the wing back chairs will eventually be removed, opening up this entire area and providing much needed front-facing wall displays.

Slide #79 Applying the Model

I've mapped out the number of checkouts per foot, and I've also added the percentage of items circulating. It was quite shocking to discover that we have 780 feet of shelving allocated to the non-fiction collection, but only 58% of the items are actually circulating. I want you all to note that this is a different organization, with different staff and different materials, but the model still works. [*Note: circulation statistics represent lifetime circulation statistics for items checked out once in the last two years, as year-to-date circulation statistics are currently unavailable*]

Slide #80 Realigning the Budget

The collection budget hasn't really changed much over the years, so it was clear that we needed to think about our budget more strategically and this is the budget realignment I've proposed to management. I've mapped the collection performance to the collection budget, which further highlights which collections require more or less shelving in the space redesign.

Slide #81 Makerspace@BPL

We're also re-thinking our approach to our makerspace. Currently we have a Digital Media Lab that offers people access to great technologies and devices, but it's not very accessible to children and we realized that a 'makerspace' doesn't have to be a single defined space.

So now we go out to schools and host pop-up maker visits to showcase how new technologies can be incorporated into classroom learning. These same classes are now coming to the library for follow up maker visits, where we can offer a greater range of creativity tools.

We're offering new maker programs that will help model discovery-based learning, like our Maker Shop program that teaches youth it's okay to experiment with new technologies and our Discovery Zone program that blends maker and STEM activities to promote family learning and play.

We also want to make sure that the library is an enriched creativity zone all day and every day, so we've started circulating arduino kits, with snap circuits, ozbots, sewing machines, and other tools soon to be available.

We're also launching Digital Media Pods, where we're transforming old study carrels into small maker stations that allow some element of privacy while being visible and easily accessible. And we will be offering a Book-a-Maker service, which will encourage people to ask us for an introduction to our makerspaces, because not everyone instinctually understands how to tinker or how learn new technologies and they just need a little help at the start. So they will be able to book a 15-30 minute appointment with one of our tech experts.

[Looking Ahead: Idea Exchange Post Office Location](#)

Slide #83 Idea Exchange - Intro

This morning, I want to take you on a journey into the near future and present about our new Post Office digital library project. I would like to give you a quick snapshot of a few of the things you will find at the new digital library location that is coming November 2017.

Slide #84 The Rocket Ship: Post Office

Public libraries of the future will be catalysts and leaders in community-based economic development. We at Idea Exchange want to champion that goal. I would like to finish this morning's presentation by giving you a quick snapshot of a few of the things you will find at the new Post Office location that is coming November 2017.

Slide #85-86 300 Level – Maker Lab & Classroom

The top floor of the building is a great workshop space and collaboration studio. With 3D printers, a laser cutter, tool crib and other high and low tech tools, it is the innovation lab for the city's makers, tinkerers, and fabricators. A digital library means learning the language of the 21st century. With 3D printers using programs like Tinkercad and PLA, the classroom located adjacent to the maker space is place to learn that new language. Maker space members will complete certification courses to use the maker lab equipment independently and become teachers and mentors to others. The maker space will be Cambridge's entrepreneurial community hub! The Children's Discovery Centre is the place where fun and learn come together. As visitors approach the space, sensors in the projection system detect their movements courtesy of an ever-changing computer program.

Slide #87 STEM

The programming in the Children's Discovery Centre will be driven by STEM learning. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math are key curriculum areas. Come have fun with math and science at the Discovery Centre, then borrow books to take home and continue learning about how things work.

Slide #88 Flexible Design

On the main level, there will be a Reading Room and Community spaces. You can borrow a tablet to read an e-book, e-zine, or read for pleasure. Read print newspapers or browse magazines. Want to know how a 3D printer works? We will have pop-up demos to inform you and answer questions. These demos will entice you to explore the whole building!

Slide #89 Teen Space

The lower level of the building houses the Teen Space. Designed around professor Mizuko Ito's research into teens and media, there are 3 zones in which teens can Hang out, Mess around, and Geek Out. You will see these as the lounge space in the atrium, the multipurpose room with a performance space, gaming stations and tech tools and thirdly the A/V recording and editing studios pictured here. It is an out-of-school learning environment for teens to develop skills in digital media, music and performance.

Slide #90 Like Nothing You've Ever Seen

2015 was an amazing year at Brantford Public Library and Idea Exchange. We tried new strategies. We bought crazy awesome stuff and also learned some lessons along the way. We look forward to welcoming you to our digital library location next fall. We have fully embraced our mission to be a community led, broad based cultural institution built around Reading. Art. Discovery.