Creating an engaging space for children and caregivers

Lessons learned in ~~a year-long~~ space redesign project

an ongoing

OLA Superconference 2020

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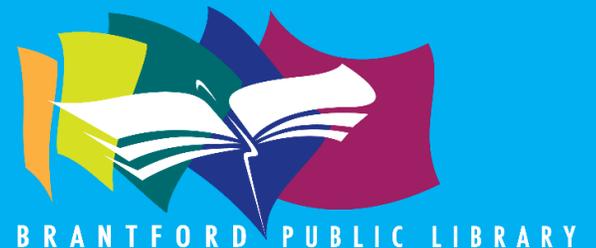
Outline

- Brantford Public Library context and information
- Summary of Project Phases
- Phase 1 – Research and Consultation
- Phase 2 – Design
- Phase 3 – Planning
- Phase 4 – Execution
- Post project activities
- The unexpected
- Challenges
- Lessons Learned

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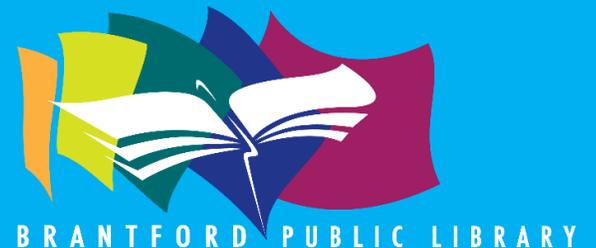
Brantford Public Library

- Community context
  - 97,496 pop. (2016 Census)

- Location of project
  - Main Branch (downtown)

- Activities of branch
  - 889 programs
 - 19,765 attendance
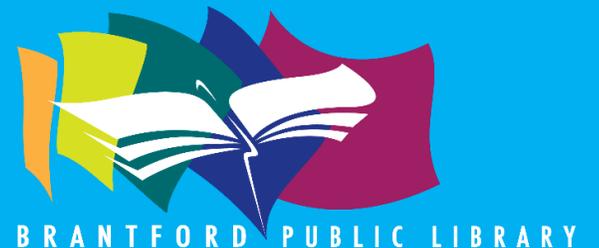
The Project

- Space
  - Last major changes in 1990s

- Objectives
  - Create a flexible space
  - Create a distinguishable space
  - Create areas/spaces for each age group (including adults)
  - Facilitate interaction, engagement, and collaboration
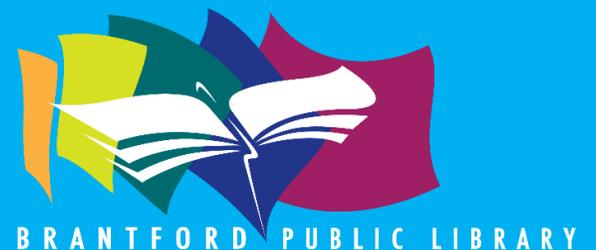
The Project (cont.)

- Scope
  - Include what will or will not be addressed and items "to be decided"
- Budget
  - $75,000 to $130,000
- Committee
  - Children and Youth programmers

Before
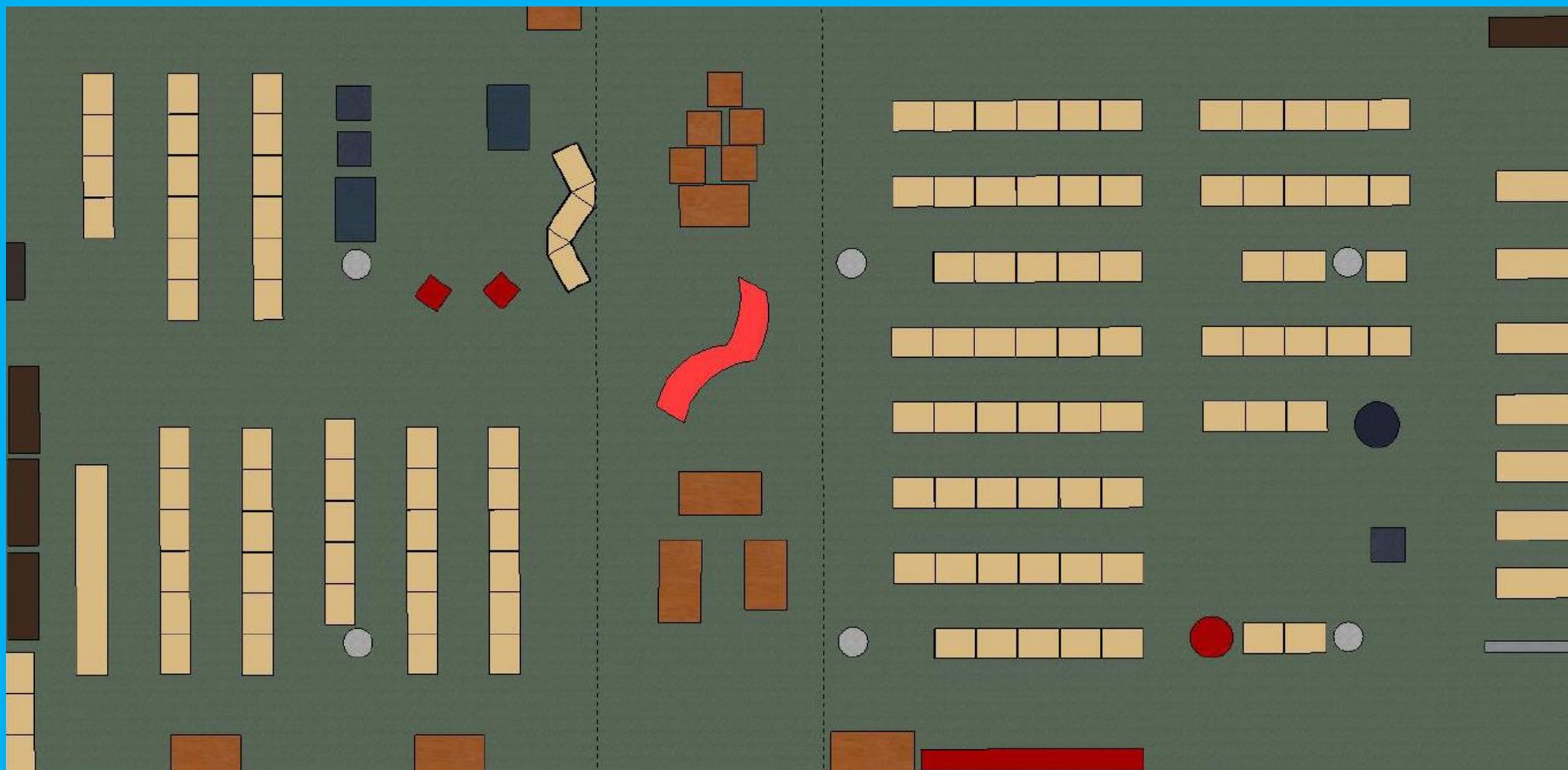
Project Phases

Planned: January to December 2019

1. Phase 1 – Research and Consultation
2. Phase 2 – Design and Planning
3. Phase 3 – Execution Part 1
4. Phase 4 – Execution Part 2

Actual: January 2019 to May 2020 (?)

1. Planning
2. Phase 1 – Research and Consultation
3. Phase 2 – Design
4. Phase 3 – Planning
5. Phase 4 – Execution
6. Post project activities

Planning

- Attended workshop on human centred design
- Researched how to carryout design/renovation projects
- Formed a project committee
- Developed a project charter
- Planned Phase 1
- Ran first project meeting

Human Centred Design

Design Thinking Process

- **DEFINE** — Describing the problem as they currently understand it
- **RESEARCH** — Doing the homework on the problem space, context & potential solution spaces
- **IDEATE** — Generating possibilities
- **PROTOTYPE** — Making something in order to make it better
- **TEST** — Soliciting feedback to improve or validate what we've discovered or designed

Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem solving[…]. It's a process that starts with the people you're designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailor made to suit their needs. Human-centered design is all about building a deep **empathy** with the people you're designing for; generating **tons of ideas**; building a **bunch of prototypes**; **sharing** what you've made with the people you're designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.

Project Charter

1. General Project Information
2. Project Team
3. Stakeholders
4. Scope statement
   a) Purpose
   b) Objectives
   c) Deliverables
   d) Scope
   e) Milestones
   f) Major known risks

5. Communication strategy
6. Sign-off
7. Notes

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First project meeting

1. Introductions
2. Project Charter
3. Expectations
4. Project Binder and shared folder
5. Design process
6. Phase 1 activities
7. Next meeting goals and action items review
8. Tour of current space

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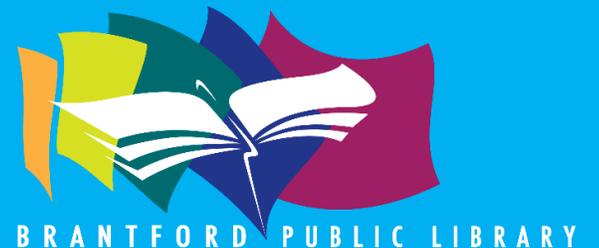
Phase 1 – Research and Consultation

- Tours
- Readings
- Idea bank (Inspiration)
- Surveys
- Staff consultation
- Customer consultation
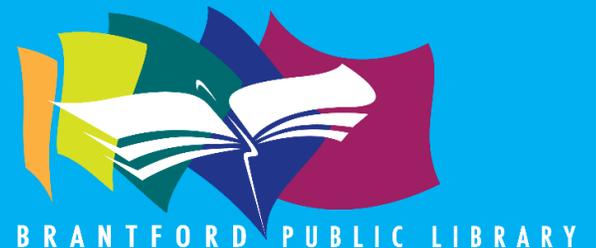
Tours, Readings & Idea Bank

- Tours
  - Be open to different tour locations
  - Travel in groups for different perspectives

- Readings

- Idea Bank
  - Encourages creative thinking
  - Helps develop a vision for the space
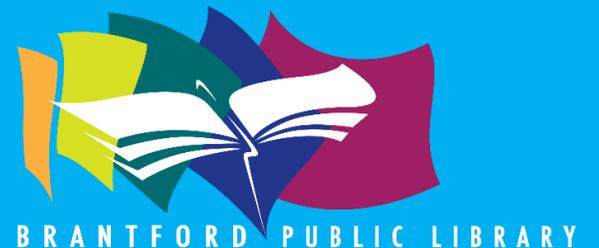
Staff surveys & Focus Groups

- Surveys
  - Identify the goal of your data collection and ensure your data collection method and questions are in line with this goal

- Staff Focus Group
  - Involve staff in focus groups to develop understanding around the project and create buy-in for the project

Customer Focus Groups
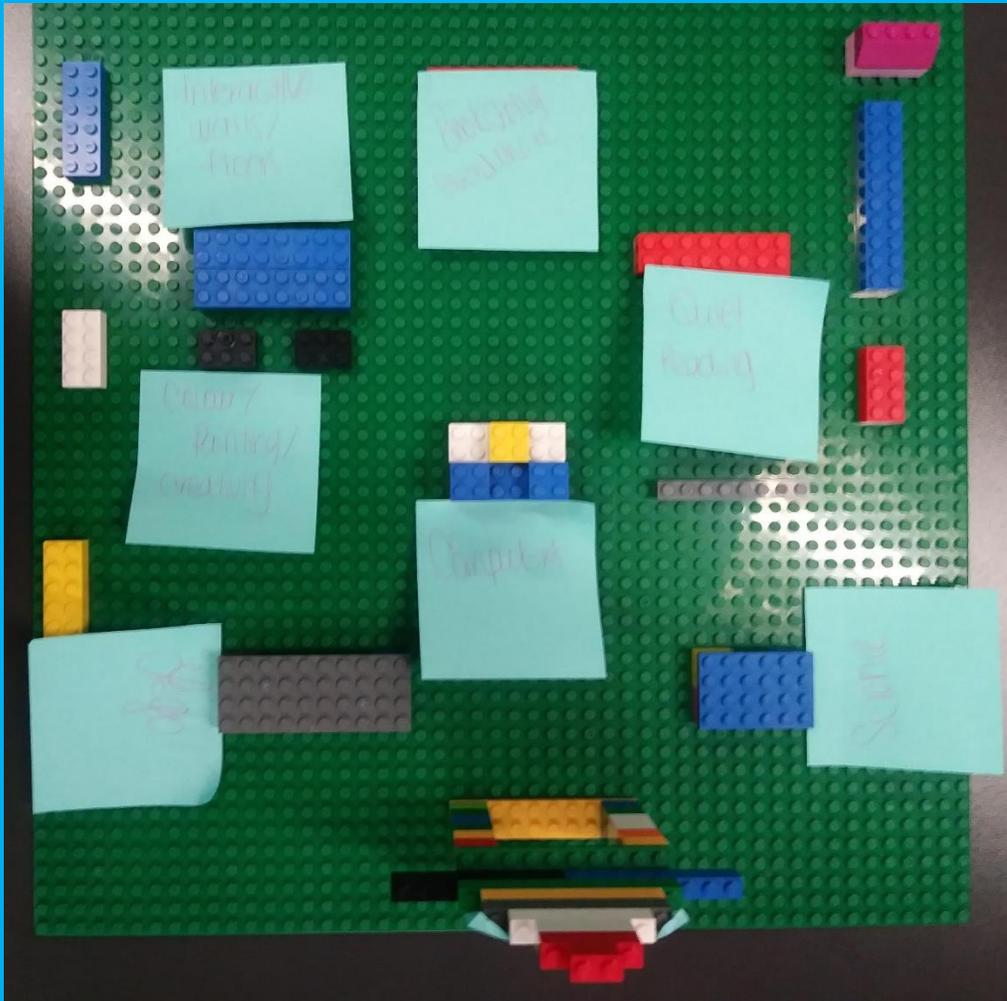
- Explain the project and the objectives of the project
- Outline ground rules for discussion
- Offer focus groups when caregivers are already in the library
- Create a relaxed social environment to encourage participation and constructive feedback

Customer Interviews

EMPATHY MAP

Tell us about your experience.
What situation or experience are you thinking of?

I wish the space felt homier, more nooks and cozy carpets, the computers are the first thing my kids see, I want them the new book as soon as the walk in. I like that there is coloring but chairs are not inviting for children

What are you **thinking?**

What do you **see?**

Construction & computers

What do you **hear?**

What are you **saying?**

What are you **feeling?**

What are you **doing?**

Space feels clinical, I feel like I'm at McMaster. We love animal characters on shelves, have conversations about them as we walk through stacks – what are they doing? Etc.

Looking through new books, dvds & games, love dvds, love interactive video games, video games help get my kids excited to come to library. Hard to find tween books. No space for tweens in-between child and teen

Mother with school age kids

What were you trying to achieve?
1. Wanted to spend day in library on freezing cold winter day with nothing do (library still under constructions)
2.
3.

What do/did you need to achieve this?
1.
2.
3.

What made it difficult to achieve the above?
1.
2.
3.

What single change would make the biggest impact?

Other comments: Fun to have mascot for children's library area (ex. bunny)

Children are first nations – loved Paul Racher presentation on Brantford from Below. Would like to see more child friendly presentations on local indigenous history. Would like to see dedicated first nations book section AND an expanded first nations collection. Currently hard to find and not a lot of options

- Practice conducting customer interview and build confidence in the process
- Explain the project and the project objectives
- Explain the interview process
- Be responsive the social cues and conduct interviews based on customers' comfort level

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Children's Activities

A BIGGER PLAY AREA AND More games

LIBRARY
Our Dream Library is full of nature + trees, + a community garden for everyone!
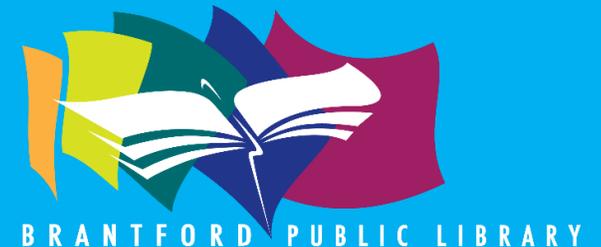
- Create opportunities for children of all ages and abilities to provide feedback and ideas
- Prioritize easy and quick participation for best response rate
- Facilitate activities with questions and prompts to encourage deeper thinking

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Phase 2 – Design

- Design checklist
- Prototyping
- Testing
- Final design

Design Check List

- Create a design checklist based on research and feedback collected
- Revisit your design checklist throughout the design project
- Use your design checklist as a decision-making tool

Prototyping
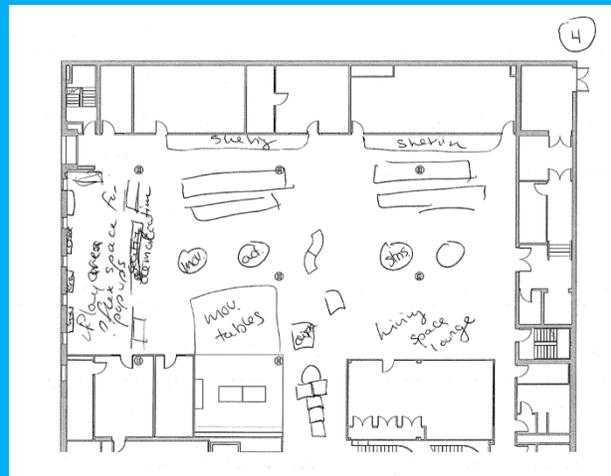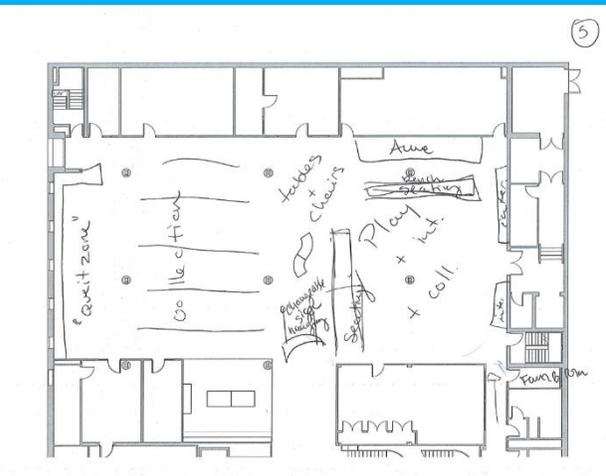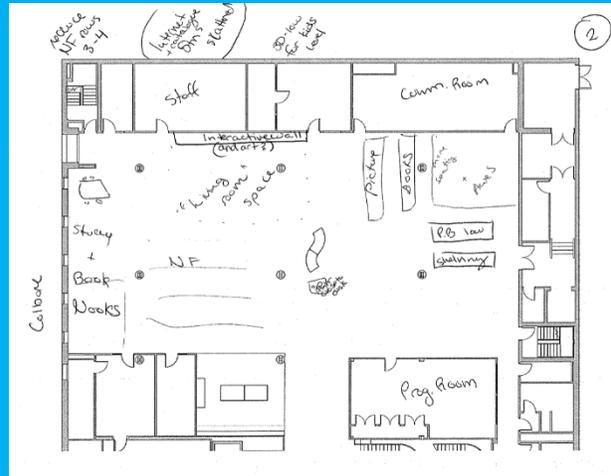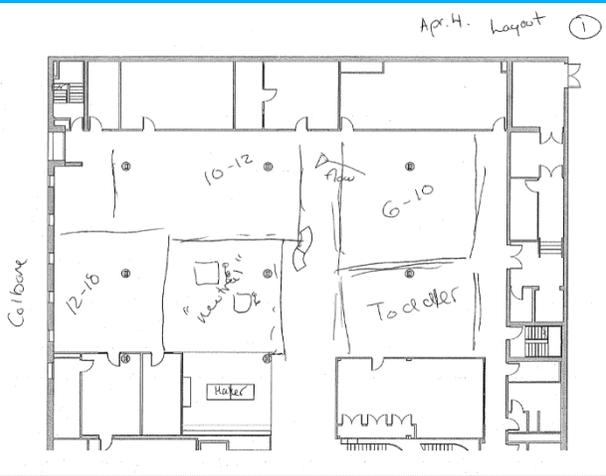
- Create rough prototypes that welcome constructive feedback
- Use prototypes to make ideas visible and clarify understanding
- Explore different ideas in initial prototyping stages

Testing
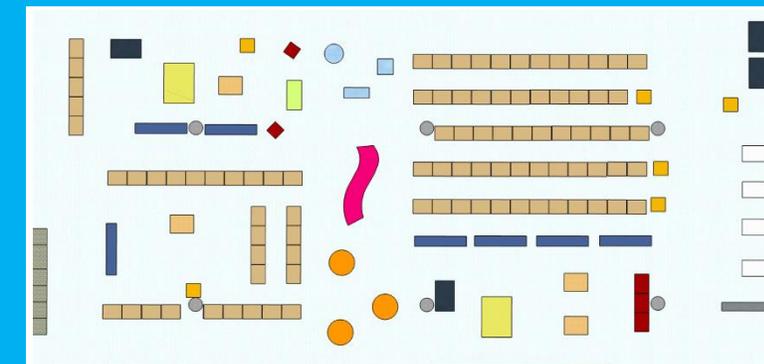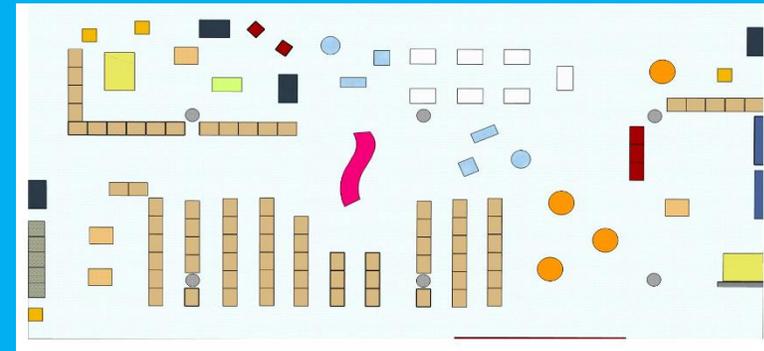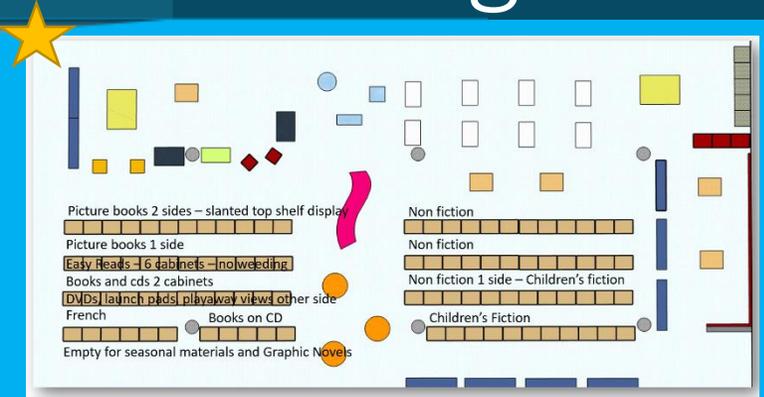
- Expect to revisit design decisions and be open to making changes throughout the prototyping and testing phases
- Choose testing methods that allow for dialogue between designer and end users
- Be mindful of how accurately your prototype reflects the customer experience

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Final Design

- Find themes and common elements in idea bank images
- Set aside personal preferences and choose design elements based on project objectives, design check list and overall longevity of the design
- Start final design discussions early and anticipate lots of back and forth discussion
- Look for big impact design choices, like interactive art, that create an engaging environment for everyone entering your space
- Select activities for multiple children, activities that facilitate open ended imaginative play and activities with longevity
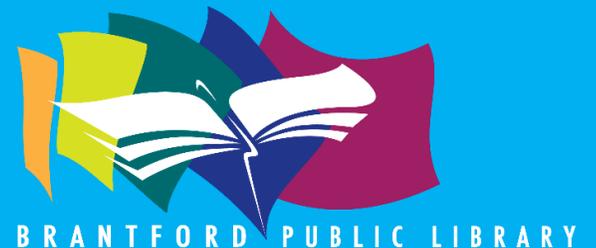
Phase 3 – Planning

- Develop rough execution timeline

- Create a list of items to purchase

- Create a list of tasks and who should complete them

- Complete the necessary steps to prepare for purchasing

- Seek and hire trades as needed (paint, carpet, electrical...)

- Get approval for public art and hire an artist

- Select furniture vendor and finalize purchase list

Purchasing

- Review all purchasing policies that may impact the project
- Determine how your budget will be allocated
  - Don't forget to include taxes, shipping, installation
- Determine the appropriate way to purchase services and products
  - RFQ
  - RFP
  - Cooperative purchasing agreements
    - OECM
    - SOLS
    - SourceWell
    - Grand River Cooperative Procurement Group

Public art and hiring an artist

1. Get approval from Library Board
2. Proposal to Public Art Subcommittee
3. PA Subcommittee recommends proposal to Cultural Advisory Committee
4. CAC recommends approval and requests funding from City Council
5. Develop Call to Artists and Marking Scheme
6. A jury is created to review submissions
7. Artist is awarded the project
8. Coordinate with artist to complete the installation
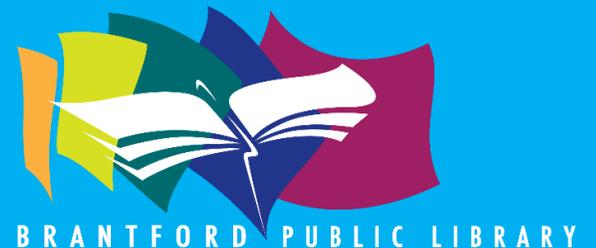
Phase 4 – Execution

- Plan and install temporary collection
- Remove materials and items
- Close space as needed
- Inform customers
- Maintain access to specific areas and offices as needed
- Schedule and coordinate trades
- Schedule delivery and installation of furniture
- Check quality
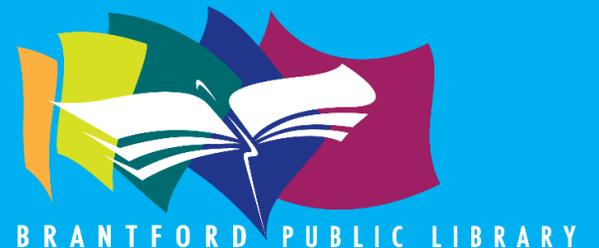
Post Project Activities

- Reviewing objectives
  - Debriefing
  - Evaluation
  - Observation
- Adjusting space as needed
- Celebration

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The unexpected

- Getting art into the space

- Integrating the collection into the new design

- Picking colours

Challenges

- Keeping all staff and customers informed, without overloading them with information

- Making final decisions

- Incorporating ideas and suggestions into final design

Lessons Learned

- Create opportunities for dialogue to get meaningful feedback
- Be open to knowledge and ideas from a range of sources
- Document everything you do, and keep your files organized.
- There is no one right way to do something

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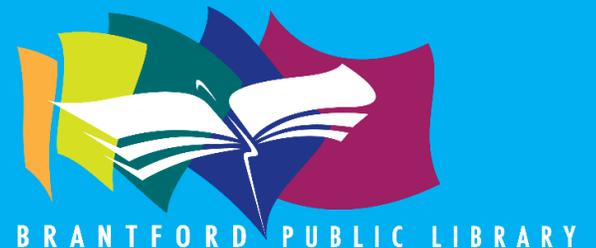
Thank you!

Questions?

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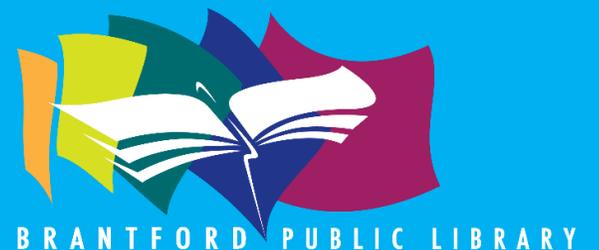
Resources

Books

DeViney, Jessica. *Inspiring Spaces for Young Children*. Gryphon House, 2010.

Moore, David R., and Shoaf, Eric C. *Planning Optimal Library Spaces: principles, processes, and practices.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

Rendina, Diana L. *Reimagining Library Spaces: transform your space on any budget.* International Society for Technology in Education, 2017.

Workshop

Human-Centred Design from Overlap Associates

Locations Visited (Thank you!)

Hamilton Public Library – Dundas and Waterdown branches

Idea Exchange – Old Post Office and Clemens Mill branches

Kitchener Public Library – Central branch

London Public Library – Central and Bostwick branches

The Museum

Waterloo Region Museum

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