

Strengthening Technology in the Scranton Memorial Library

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### Introduction:

Even within the past ten years, technology has gone through such a drastic change in our everyday lives. From smaller computers to smarter phones, touch screens to HD screens, technology is constantly evolving and changing our methods of obtaining information. This change in our everyday lives also means there has to be a change in the way that libraries obtain information. In the case of the Scranton Memorial Library, this shift in technology and the ways patrons use it has not changed much of their hiring policies, but has changed how they view their staff. As a result, the proposal is to provide new criteria for future hiring policies in order to fully take advantage of a staff that is aware of the technologies in the library in addition to better serving patrons in the use of their own devices.

### Environment of the Library:

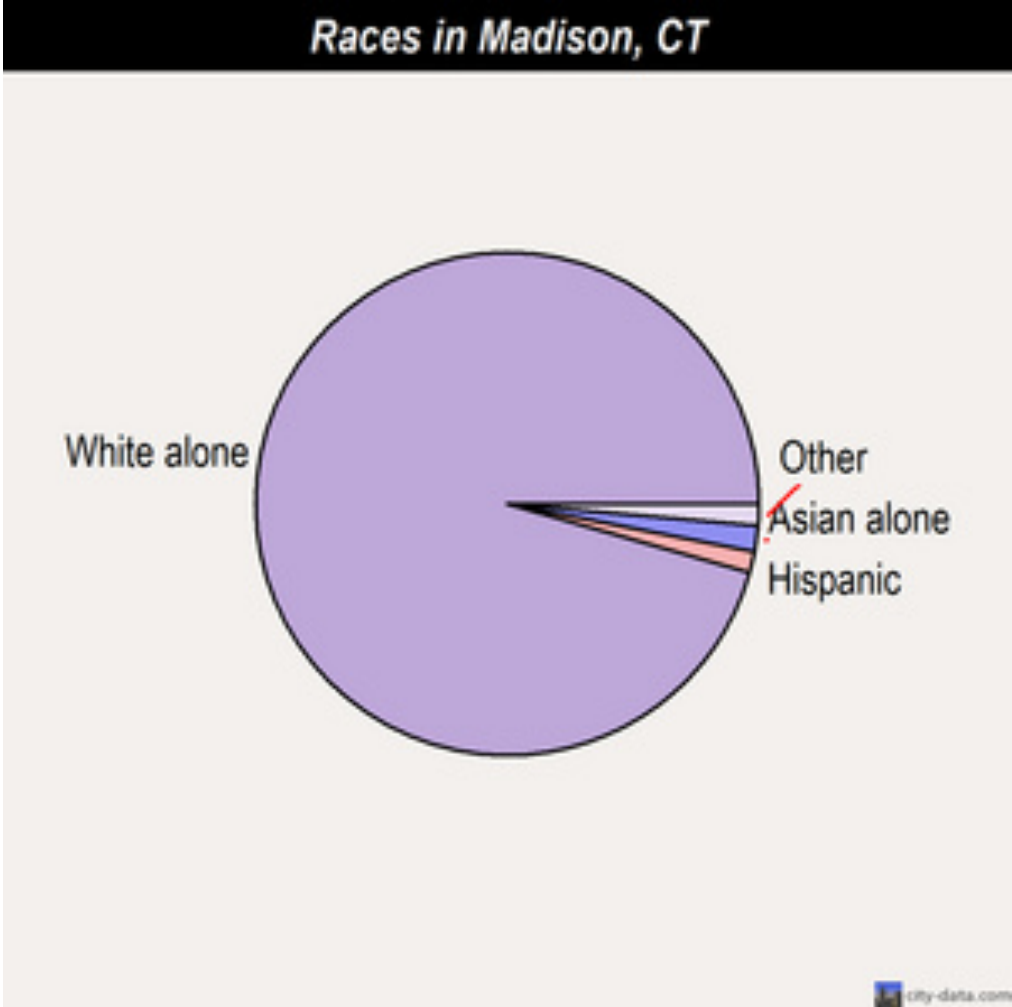
Set in a suburban town along the shoreline, Scranton Memorial Library serves a population of 18,269 (Census information from 2010 from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Madison-Connecticut.html>, 2013). The library has the familiarity of a small town feel and a welcoming and helpful staff. The library is built in three sections: the main library, the children's library and the historical room. The reference areas offers a variety of services to adults, the children's area has materials and stimulation for younger children and the historical room holds documents of historical value for the community around the library that patrons can access for research purposes in the subjects of history and personal genealogy. As part of the children's room, the teen programs and materials are coordinated in a close area in order to get more young adults active in the library community.

The library holds a collection of 98,686 physical books, as well as 6,124 audio books, a collection of 3,880 video materials, 195 subscriptions and 159 electronic books available to the public. In addition to these materials, the Scranton library has access to the complete statewide catalog. The library has held 675 programs for the public. The library has loaned out 16,970 items to other libraries and receives 14,795 items from neighboring libraries through the interlibrary loan system. Annually, the library makes over 300,000 transactions with the 18,000 plus residents who use the library (GEOLIB, 2011).

Community Description:

The E.C. Scranton Memorial Library is located in Madison, Connecticut. Madison is a small shoreline community in Connecticut, considered a part of New Haven county. Located equidistant between New Haven and New London, the town of Madison has access to two of the large cities in Connecticut, giving residents access to a wide variety of social opportunities outside of the library.. The population is 18,698. Ethnically, it is primarily white, as is most of the state, with minimal populations of African American, Asian, Hispanic and other mixed races. The town is primarily highly educated, 97% of population with a high school education or above, with much of the town achieving a bachelor's degree or above. The poverty rate is very low and the literacy rate for the town is very high compared to percentages statewide. In a 2010 census, the responders were a median age of 45 ((<http://www.city-data.com/city/Madison-Connecticut.html>, 2013).

The graph below (<http://www.city-data.com/city/Madison-Connecticut.html>, 2013) shows a representation of the race distribution within the town of Madison:



It can be seen from the graph, the racial distribution is not varied. The represented population is primarily white, with a few other races mixed in. This is something that needs to be taken into account when planning for providing for the population.

In the town population, age is fairly evenly distributed. This is a more important factor to consider, since the library should aim to get patrons of all ages into their building and getting the younger patrons to see the value in the library from a young age and become frequent users of the resources that the library has to offer.

Library Organization:

At Scranton Memorial Library, director Beth Crowley coordinates the efforts of the library and interacts with the Board of Trustees and other leaders in the local government. The library is broken down into three major sections: Circulation, Reference and Children's Library. Each of these sections has a 'head' that report to the director of the library. Within these groupings, there are other leaders, such as the Teen Librarian and the Interlibrary Loan Librarian. In addition, there is a collection of support staff made up of both full-time and part-time employees to fill in the hours needed for each department (Private Interview, 2014).

Within each of these departments, the staff communicates problems or concerns to the heads of each department, who then translate their concerns to the director. The director then discusses these problems with the town and the board of trustees. If the solutions are presented and possible through factors like timing, efficiency and budget, then the director will execute the actions needed in order to fully solve the libraries issue in a way that helps as many patrons as possible.

### Project Description and Justification:

The project in question would be developing new criteria for the library hiring of all future employees. The new criteria will be more focused on how patrons are affected by the constant shifts of technology. The criteria is based on the hiring policies of surrounding libraries in addition to understanding the needs of the public with the changing technological environment of the public.

Libraries in this modern era, as in all businesses, have begun taken the ability to work with technology and computers for granted. It is a crucial part of daily life to be able to work with technology, so it is generally accepted that a perspective employee would know how to work simple computer programs. While full knowledge of coding is not a vital hiring criterion, staff should at least have the willingness to explore and use technology. The new criteria will focus less on ability to use technology, but the enthusiasm to explore how to use the technology. While the traditional criteria are still very important, the new criteria will be as important. While some libraries have technical specialists, but for smaller libraries that cannot afford a technical reference librarian, it is often easier to have a group of staff who can collectively work together as an 'IT Department' as opposed to finding a whole new person.

In other libraries along the shoreline, there are similar opinions. Lew Daniels, director at the Westbrook Public Library, has taken the drastic shift in technology when preparing for potential future hires. Daniels believes that "young people are the future, and we're trying to make the library more accessible in a way they're used to. Not just having someone who can help with problems within library, but also use technology to amplify the library's presence online. We need staff who know more about social media

to get people seeing us on Facebook and Twitter” (Personal Interview, 2014). Daniels says that, when considering hiring options for a new position in the library, they will be looking for someone who is not only able to use these technologies, but proficient in these skills. However, Daniels says that he is also looking for someone who has more ‘traditional’ skills such as good interpersonal and customer service skills. While interviewing for the position next January, he’ll be looking for someone who can prove that they are technologically savvy in addition to customer savvy.

The Guilford Public Library, similarly, has more traditional ideas on hiring. However, they also see the importance of using technology as a tool. While Director Sandy Ruoff believes that technology advancements are important, she has been doing her best to improve her staff, instead of attempting to hire new staff specifically for technology skills. “If it’s something that can be achieved on the schedule,” Ruoff said, “and we have the money, we send as many people as we can. Obviously, we’d rather send a full-time staff member over a part-time person, but if there’s still space available, we’ll send part-time people, too” (Personal Interview, 2014). Ruoff does her best to send staff members to workshops and educational seminars about new technology, so they can be prepared for answering the questions presented by the public about these new technologies.

Many details of job descriptions will remain the same. Despite the changes in technology, the Scranton Library still needs to maintain the level of public interaction and friendliness that they are known for in the community. However, with the shift in technology, they need to be able to quickly adapt to the technological advances. As a result, the following ‘traditional’ criteria will also have to factor in the following ‘new’

criteria when considering new employees. The following is an example of a new list of criteria for a reference librarian:

Traditional Criteria	New Criteria
MLS Degree	MLS Degree with IT knowledge
Customer Service Experience	Familiarity with a variety of computer
Ability to perform duties on and off desk	systems
Enthusiasm	Ability to adapt (and use) new technologies
Ability to relate to the public	Understand more than the basics of
Capacity to work alone and with other	technology

Obviously, there are a variety of other traits that are important to this position (availability, years of experience, etc), but these new criterion are crucial to the consideration of future employees. This new criterion will be crucial, not only for the continued education of current staff, but also for the future hiring of new staff members. The current staff can be trained in workshops and learning seminars (such as the case of the Guilford Library) to enhance their current skill set to make the library a better place. The importance of a technically competent and enthusiastic staff cannot be emphasized enough in the current trends of the technologically dependant world that are living in today.



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