

Fig. 1. Garden City Municipal Seal

Garden City Library
6015 N. Glenwood St.
Boise, Idaho 83714

Library Visit and Diversity Assessment Assignment
LIBR 275
Instructor: Arglenda Friday

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Abstract

In this report, the treatment of diverse populations at the Garden City Library in Garden City, Idaho will be addressed. Like Garden City at large, the city library also tends to focus on the concerns of the majority population, with special attention given to children and senior citizens. However, there are a number of programs designed to promote a sense of community, such as English/Spanish conversation groups. Despite the close knit nature of the community and the cozy feeling engendered by the library environment, a community meeting space is one of the more prominent issues which needs to be addressed by the city government and the library.

Introduction

Garden City is located in the southwestern portion of Idaho, and is completely surrounded by the larger city of Boise, Idaho. Boise is also the state capital. Garden City is a small town of about 20,000, while Boise's population is approaching 215,000. The Garden City Library is a public library located in the city hall buildings of Garden City. Because of the sprawled-out nature of the city surrounding the city hall building, there is no true downtown in the sense of the word. The library's immediate environs include: the city hall and related city services, a post office, an apartment complex, a gas station, a baseball stadium, and the state fairgrounds.

Now, all of these amenities might sound significant to the person who is unacquainted with the area. However, most of these services require a considerable amount of walking. Transit service to the area is good during the day, but shuts down after 6 PM. There is adequate parking and about 3 handicapped parking spots. There is a bus stop nearby, but because of a bank building nearby, not to mention the fairly expansive parking lot, it is difficult not only for people who walk, but for disabled people with mobility issues to access the library if they utilize the transit system.

Mission Statement

The mission statement for Garden City Library (2013) reads: "The mission of the Garden City Public Library is to provide a welcoming environment with access to library services and materials that encourage early literacy and lifelong learning for the people of the community." As one can probably discern from looking at the brief mission statement, there is no mention of diversity in any form. However, you can also note that the library has a special focus on children, especially the very young (who need early literacy programs to help them learn to read) as well as the nebulous term "lifelong learning" which indicates a focus on older users as well as children and students ("About Us").

Demographics

Data from the 2010 census indicates that Garden City has a population of 20,290 people, with children under 19 representing 26.9 percent of the population. The racial breakdown is as follows:

- 89.6 percent white
- 0.8 percent African American
- 0.8 percent American Indian or Alaska Native

1.2 percent Asian
0.1 percent Native Hawaiian
9.9 percent Hispanic/Latino (of any race)

Thus we can see that while whites represent the largest demographic group, there is a large Hispanic minority, with a smaller proportion of Asians and African Americans than nearby cities. There are 8,359 households in the city, with families representing 5,373 of those, and 567 single-mother households. There are 911 households with an individual over the age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). However, the census data fails to address the growing number of refugees from countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia/Herzegovina, and Burma/Myanmar, among others, who are being resettled in the Boise area. On multiple occasions, I have observed refugees using the resources of the library (primarily computers, but they also occasionally borrow library books)

For purposes of comparison, the surrounding city of Boise will be looked at. The website for the city of Boise, which surrounds Garden City, states that Boise has a population of 210,673 people, and a median household income of approximately 49,000 USD. The predominant racial group in the city of Boise are whites, who represent approximately 87 percent of the population, and Hispanics make up about 7 percent of the remaining 13 percent. African Americans represent about 3 percent, and Asian ancestries represent 2 percent, and finally, native Americans represent about 1 percent of the population. In terms of age, the population of Boise is somewhat skewed towards younger individuals, with children aged 0-14 representing the largest demographic group, with young adults aged 25-34 being the second largest group. Major economic concerns include Micron Technology, St. Luke's Medical Center, Hewlett-Packard, and J.R. Simplot.

Income is fairly well distributed, with only 7.7 percent of the population earning 150,000 or more. 41.9 percent of the population earns between 15,000 and 49,999 USD. 13.9 percent of the population earns below 14,999 USD. The largest segment, 15.4 percent of the population, according to the US Census, earns between 50,000 and 74,999 USD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

In terms of educational attainment, the population of Boise is at least adequately educated, if not fairly well-educated. There are several schools near the Garden City Library, although none of them are within Garden City's municipal boundaries. Capital High School, Riverglen Junior High, Shadow Hills Elementary are all within a 2 kilometer radius. Granted that reaching the library without transit or bicycle would be somewhat difficult, as there are several roads to cross and the buildings are all fairly sprawled out. Boise Bible College, a non-denominational Christian university, is within a 1 kilometer radius. For secular colleges, however, the distances are more considerable, as Boise State is over 9 kilometers away. Over 91 percent of Boise citizens have a high school diploma, and 33 percent of citizens have a Bachelor's degree, and of those possessing a Bachelor's degree, about 10 percent of them also have a graduate or professional degree (City of Boise, 2013).

Services

The Garden City Library offers most services that patrons would expect from a public library - lending books out to patrons, provision of public computers (according to my observations, one of the more popular services), free WiFi connections for users with laptops. According to the website of the Garden City Library (2013), the library has five departments, which are the reference section (tasked with “information, research, interlibrary loans, readers advisory, and the computer lab”), Circulation (which handles “checkouts, holds, renewals, fines, volunteers and adult programs”), a youth services department for teens and children, and the Technical services department, which is in charge of all “processing and cataloging of our collection.”

The reference desk is a central from which patrons can inquire about various services in the community and seek out information on various academic and non-academic issues. Many of the library staff often work the desk (however, at the time of the writing of this report, none of the faculty possesses an MLIS). Some of the staff speak Spanish to varying degrees of fluency, but they represent only four people on the staff. The Library, through the Libraries Linking Idaho program, also has access to a number of databases in English, Spanish, and French, which can be accessed at:

<http://notaquietlibrary.org/databases>

Although the computerized catalog contains items which may be in different languages, the primary language used on the catalog is English. If you were to use the catalog from the home page of the library’s website, you will find that a search will lead to an error page, and you have to use the “New Catalog” option in order to utilize the catalog.

The Computer Lab

As mentioned before, there are about 20 public access computer terminals that are well-used. Many days there about 10-12 of the computers are in use at any time, but earlier on Mondays, a large group of LDS missionaries comes in and uses the computers. There are about 10 to 12 of them, and the computer terminals all fill up. They mostly appear to be younger and white, although I have seen 1-2 individuals of Asian descent within the group. The Garden City Library also offers a printer and a copier, for 10 cents a page. There is a kiosk (with both a Spanish and an English option) which allows users to put money into the device for use in printing).

Garden City’s Bookmobile - “Bells for Books”

There is a bookmobile, termed “Bells for Books,” which was created in 1994 in response to a need for children within Garden City to have access to literacy-promoting materials. The founders of the “Bells for Books” program felt that “[t]he kids lived too far and on unsafe streets” to access the Garden City Library’s services. According to the Bells for Books website (2014), the collection of books the bus holds is about 8,000 books as of January 16, 2014. The bus also holds a number of adult books and bilingual books in Spanish. For further information on “Bells

for Books,” please visit the website:

<http://notaquietlibrary.org/bells>

Library Bookstore - “The Book Nook”

There is a library bookstore, nicknamed the Book Nook, which is located at the eastern end of the library. The bookstore is run by a group termed “Friends of the Library.” They sell items of general interest to the community. I observed that well over 90 percent of the selections appear to be either fiction in English, cookbooks, or biographies of individuals. 95 percent of the items are books, with comparatively few of the items being DVDs or audio books. The bookstore periodically runs smaller 1 USD book sales, and fairly large book sales that utilize rooms in the city hall.

Collections

According to the library’s “about” page, there are 36000 books, 460 reference works, 3000 audio books, 1000 music items, and 3348 DVDs (Garden City Library, 2013). As noted above, the library has 36000 books, but most of them are in English, and the largest collection of Spanish-language materials is to be found in the children’s section. Most of the adult, young adult, and DVD collections are “interfiled” with the English language materials. Only the children’s collection has all of the Spanish-language material located entirely on one bookshelf and conspicuously marked as such. Any Spanish DVDs are marked by a sticker (which says “Foreign Language” in English).

The collection development policy for the Garden City Library can be found at:

<http://notaquietlibrary.org/files/gardencity/APPENDIX%20H%2072013.pdf>

The adult book collections are a mixture of new books (about 10 percent) , mostly non-fiction books written in the 1990s (about 85 percent), and 5 percent of the books are older than 30 years, according to my observations. The DVD collections are roughly comparable to what one would find at a local Hasting’s bookstore, if only smaller in quantity and in terms of diversity. The music collections are mostly of interest to the community, with entire drawers devoted to country music, jazz, and classical, and only about 50 percent of one drawer is devoted to international music (mostly a medley of Spanish and Eastern European music).

Facility

The Garden City Library’s physical location is on the first floor of the Garden City Hall building and is therefore fairly easy for people who are disabled to navigate without the need for ramps or other accommodations. The building is relatively easy to access if you drive a car, but the bus stop is located at a particular remove from the actual library building and some individuals may have trouble crossing the intervening parking lots. On the north side of the library, facing the Boise River, there is a walking path that is level with the library. The library’s circulation department is partly located on the second floor of the city hall building. There are elevators to

that area, but because of the staff-only nature of the room, it is wholly unlikely a patron will see the inside of that room, unless they choose to volunteer and are assigned to that room.

There are about 7 rows of bookshelves in the adult book section, one row (against the northern wall) for young adults, and 4 rows of bookshelves for children. A disabled or aged. patron might have some concerns about shelving for the adult and young adult book collections. This would be especially problematic if they are in a wheelchair, since much of the adult collection and the young adult collection use shelves that are up to 2 metres high. In contrast, the children's collection and the DVD collection are on shelves that are about 1.2 metres high. However there is about 1.1 metres of space between the shelves.

I would say that the general environment of the library is relatively inviting to the disabled and senior citizens (and I have observed them using most of the resources the library has set out, such as computers and job-search assistance), but not too many resources for immigrants or those who have limited English fluency. The signage for the library building is almost exclusively in English (apart from a Braille translation on the entry sign). There are signs on the sides of the bookshelves for guidance through the Dewey Decimal System (which this library uses), but they are in English as well with no braille. However, the apparent lack of signage may be attributed to the fact that the library takes up only one floor.

As far as the general ambiance of the library is concerned, there are few to no posters of any sort. The library has some seating that would vaguely remind one of a cafe (the chairs are relatively low and there is very little risk of a person falling and becoming injured). What the library lacks in, it makes up for in terms of wall art. There is a general riparian theme, and there are murals of leaves falling on water and a fish-themed painting on the southern wall of the library in the children's section.

The library, regrettably, does not have meeting rooms within the facility itself, for meetings of community groups. There are a number of tables at the northern end of the facility, but they are not located in meeting rooms. There are meeting rooms in the city hall building in which the library is located, but to reserve them, they must be for officially-sanctioned library groups or for official activities, such as the library board of trustees.

Staffing/Volunteers

The "about" page indicates that the library currently staffs 17 part time employees, and 5 full-time staff members (Garden City Library, 2013). There is nothing to indicate whether the full-time employees are heads of the departments or merely employees who have been on staff long enough to have earned full-time status. Most of the pages and circulation department staff are part time, and much of the shelving is performed by volunteers. However, some of the

people who work in the offices have some measure of college education. There was one staff member who was in possession of an MLIS (the library director), but she resigned and was replaced by an interim director. The youth services department director is also working on her MLIS. From my observations, all of the staff members are white, and approximately 60 percent female, and 40 percent male. None are disabled (at least visibly), four members of the staff who are in charge of the reference desk speak Spanish. The staff mostly reflects the demographics of the community.

The volunteer service has slightly more diversity than the formally-paid staff, but they are also fairly homogenous. I estimate that the volunteer service is about 70 percent women and 30 percent men, and they are 90 percent white with about five to ten people who are Hispanic. The volunteers serve in three areas, the library bookstore, the programming department, and the reshelving and sorting of books.

Programming

The programs offered by the Garden City Library are mostly of general interest to the community (not to mention solely in English), with only about 3 programs dedicated to special demographic groups (Garden City Library programs website, <http://notaquietlibrary.org/programs>). They are presented on the Library's website and also on an HDTV monitor in the entrance. I have not seen any advertisements for the library's services outside of the library in newspapers or on local community bulletin boards. One of these is the "Fit and Fall Proof" programs offered to senior citizens by the local division of the state health department. This program is designed to help seniors not fall and to help them get exercise. The program is presented completely in English, and occurs at 11:00 - 11:45 am, a time which is not good for working seniors but works out quite well for those who are retired (Garden City Library, 2014).

The second program I will look at is called "Practice Aqui" and is a Spanish-English conversation group. The program is designed primarily for teenagers of all ages as well as adults. The meetings occur once a week at 6:30 pm on Thursdays (Garden City Library, 2014). The final event I would like to draw attention to is the Aventuras en Espanol program. I located a brief bulletin in the local newspaper for the January 16th meeting of this little group, and it occurs at 4pm every Thursday at the Garden City Library (Idaho Statesman, 2014).

Summary

The Garden City Library, at first appearance, does not appear to really provide the resources needed by a slowly-diversifying population. Despite this, the Library does have a number of services promote bilingualism in English and Spanish (and by doing so, helps people from both the Hispanic and Anglo cultures to understand each other better). The library often appears to merely comply with federal and state

anti-discrimination law, but at the same time, they are at least making an effort to try to integrate the large and expanding community of Spanish speakers and refugees in the area.

Recommendations

1. A space within the library for community meetings is needed. Although there is public seating within the library, some groups may want to meet in private. Currently, there are meeting rooms within the larger city hall building, but they are reserved for city business exclusively, and if the library wants to use them for events, the events need to be library-related. The library needs to make arrangements with the city to open at least one meeting room for library purposes, if not consider building one. Creation of a community space will allow groups to use the area and perhaps create an environment more reflective of the cultural and socio-economic diversity in the area.
2. The library needs to have braille directional and resource signs for visually-impaired residents, as well as a Spanish translation for residents who speak Spanish.
3. The library should provide listening devices such as CD players so that patrons can listen to music or other CDs on premises. Also the CD collections need to be reviewed to ensure they are reflective of community interest.

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