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LIS 662 – Information Services for Diverse Client Groups

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Term Project Product

Introduction

Throughout the entire project, which focuses on senior citizens, two main themes kept coming up. Those themes were the perceived lack of honesty in information sources and services and the technological know-how to make full use of those sources. Put them both together and you got a major threat that could prevent libraries from fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. I aim to do something about that by coming up with a product that provides the best of both worlds for our senior community. The goal that I aim to accomplish with this paper is to lay out a kind of blueprint for the product that I have come up with. I will lay it all out on the table one step at a time like pieces of a puzzle. By the time I am finished, all of the puzzle pieces should come together to make one beautiful portrait that is the information product, which should make getting information access easier for our seniors. In an age where evolving technology has a strong grip on our daily lives, it is going to be vital that we teach seniors how to adapt and embrace the latest in information technology. That, along with acting as the pan that separates the dirt (fake news) from the gold (honest news), is what is going to allow libraries to develop a positive relationship with the senior community.

A Library Program for the Senior Community

The information product that I came up with is actually a service that libraries can provide to seniors in the form of a program. This program would be an event that would ease seniors into the latest technology that the information field offers. It would also introduce seniors to tools like the CRAAP test that would help them find those honest, high-quality sources. Finally, the library will introduce the senior audience to library services that have nothing but honest sources.

The majority of the seniors that I interviewed have said that they use Google as their main consultant for information. While Google is a decent and popular choice for information access, it's not the most reliable option if you are looking for best-quality sources, which are honest sources that don't shove a ton of advertisements into your face. In my opinion, Google is best used as a tool that could be implemented to season the main dishes that are the top-quality sources that our seniors are looking for. It also doesn't appear to know how to separate fake sources from factual sources. This program would serve as a way to introduce seniors to library services that could help them find exactly what they are looking for.

How to Reach Out

The first thing that needs to be addressed is how would a library go about reaching out to the senior community. This could potentially be tackled on two fronts. First, the library could make use of social media sites like FaceBook to promote the program to the seniors who have opened up to technology. As for the seniors who prefer sources like the newspaper, a good strategy could be to work with their local newspapers to promote the program on one of their pages. Since the newspaper seems to be how most of the tech-resistant seniors get their information, this avenue seems to be the best way to go.

Location of the Program

Another issue that needs to be taken care of is the matter of where the program would be located. After all, how are seniors, as well as patrons in general, going to attend if they don't know how to get to it? The answer that I have come up with for this question would probably not come as a surprise. The program would be held at the community's local library. Doing this would make seniors, especially seniors who are resistant to technology, get more immersed in the library experience as opposed to just reading about it from a computer or TV screen. They could either drive themselves to the library, provided that they are able to of course, or they could have a family member or friend drive them there. The latter would allow their relatives to participate as well, which would allow them to help the seniors learn and embrace library technology easier. It would also create a more exciting and interactive experience as well for the targeted client group.

As for the seniors who can't make the trip to the library at all, especially seniors who have a good relationship with technology, the library could stream the event live and record. It would pretty much be similar to how WebEx works. Overall, the goal is to try to bring the library experience to seniors by bringing them to the library, which can be accomplished both physically and virtually. Lastly, the program would be held in the early afternoon, from 12PM to 2 or 3PM. Based on observation and experience, it seems that seniors mostly prefer to stay home when it gets to be close to nightfall.

The Specifics of the Program

To get into the specifics of this program/service, how it would work is that it would begin by the library's staff giving the seniors a tour of the library, which will include the different departments and collections that it has. At the end of the tour, the seniors will be lead to a conference room, which is where the presentation on the latest information technologies and honest sources would be held. Depending on the technical knowledge of that the library staff has, it would either be run by their technology expert or a third-party technology company that helped the library get their systems set up. For the most part, it would run similarly to how a teacher runs a class.

The presentation itself would be a PowerPoint presentation, which would be comprised of texts, images, videos, etc. It would also contain a demonstration of the library's services and systems, which would be carried out by a library technology expert. Some of the main points that the presentation will cover are the following:

- What the current library technology is at that time.
- How does it work?
- How to use it to locate honest sources.
- CRAAP Test (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) and how to use it.
- Other strategies and methods for separating fake sources from factual sources.
- Q&A for anyone who has any questions at the end.

Overall, that is pretty much how this would work. Since technology is always evolving, the program would be constantly edited to include subjects that deserve the highest priority. However, the core purpose of this service will forever be there, which is to create a positive relationship between the senior community and library technology. In turn, this will help seniors find the high-quality sources that they are looking for without any hassle or harassment from advertisements and fake sources.

Conclusion

My vision for this program is for it to serve as a bridge that will allow seniors to take the complete, smooth drive into the technological world. This bridge will not have any tollbooths or roadblocks that are in the form of the swarms of advertisements and fake sources and services that waste time and money. My hope for this plan is that it will help libraries gain the trust of the senior community as whole, who still seem to be hesitant about working with the wild beast that is twenty-first century information technologies. While it may not be the be-all and end-all way to quell all the issues and tensions that the senior community has, it is at least a good start for libraries to play a bigger role in the lives of senior citizens.

