



Aspen

Weekly

browse
categories
as digital
signage at



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BROWSE CATEGORIES AS DIGITAL SIGNAGE AT NASHVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

ARTICLE BY BRYAN NEIL JONES

Occasionally one of our partners does something so cool and unique with existing Aspen features and tools that it simply blows our minds! Such is the case with today's guest author, Bryan Jones from the Nashville Public Library. Nashville used Aspen's Browse Categories and some custom CSS and JavaScript to create custom in-library digital signage for their branches. Below he shares exactly what they did as well as links to a few of URLs that are used on the actual signs.

Nashville Public Library uses 32" all-in-one computers for shelf or wall displays at some branches. These are portrait oriented and embedded in the shelves or walls. This hardware used a bespoke content management system (CMS) that displayed book covers from staff-created Aspen lists.

The workflow and the bespoke software was somewhat janky so we thought why not just cut out the middleman and display the staff lists as Aspen Browse Categories directly.

First steps

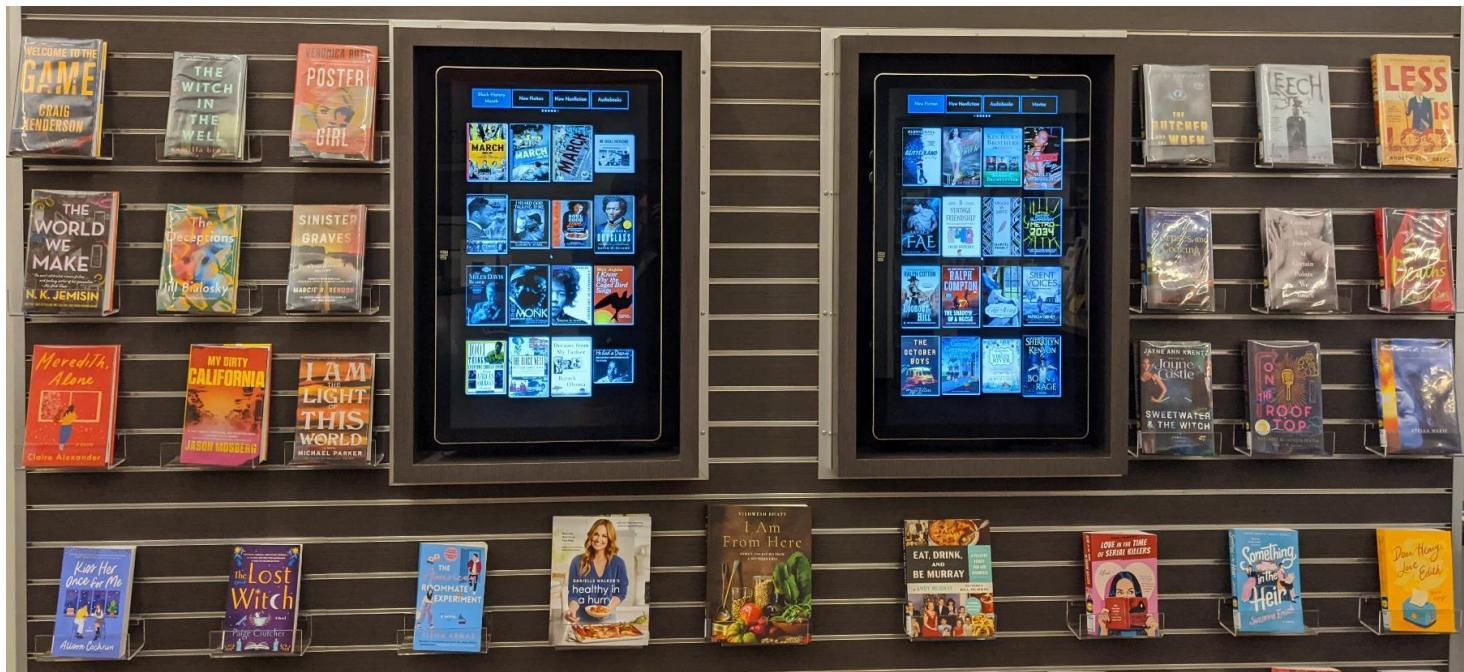
The custom CMS had kiosk-like features that would launch the software in fullscreen mode and lock the touchscreen. We needed to find a replacement. Ultimately, we went with Kioware ([Link](#)) as this satisfied the security concerns of our IT department and we were already using it on our OPACs. Depending on your circumstances, Firefox in kiosk mode ([Link](#)) could be a great free alternative.

Staff at affected branches were accustomed to creating content specific to their branch. To achieve feature parity with the old software with Aspen, we created a dummy location and a Browse Category Group for each such Location; e.g., the Maplewood branch got a Location called Maplewood-Display and Browse Category Group also called Maplewood-Display.

Theme

As regular Browse Categories are primarily designed to be interactive, we needed to create a custom theme just for display signage. Jenny Ellis, our frontend lead, built a beautiful, minimalist dark theme with a lot of custom CSS. The CSS eliminates the scroll bar, the footer, the mouse, and sets the correct number of rows for the size of the hardware. We assigned this theme to the dummy display locations.

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JavaScript

The old software displayed covers as an animated scroll. We had to figure out a way for the Browse Categories move on their own. James Staub, our senior systems librarian, wrote a JavaScript snippet to automate the rotation of Browse Categories. The snippet causes the current Category to advance to the next Category after twenty seconds and refresh the page after reaching the last Category in the Group. The last part is very important because this is what enables staff to make changes from their workstations without have to touch the hardware itself which is difficult to access. When the page refreshes, their changes appear.

Granular Permissions

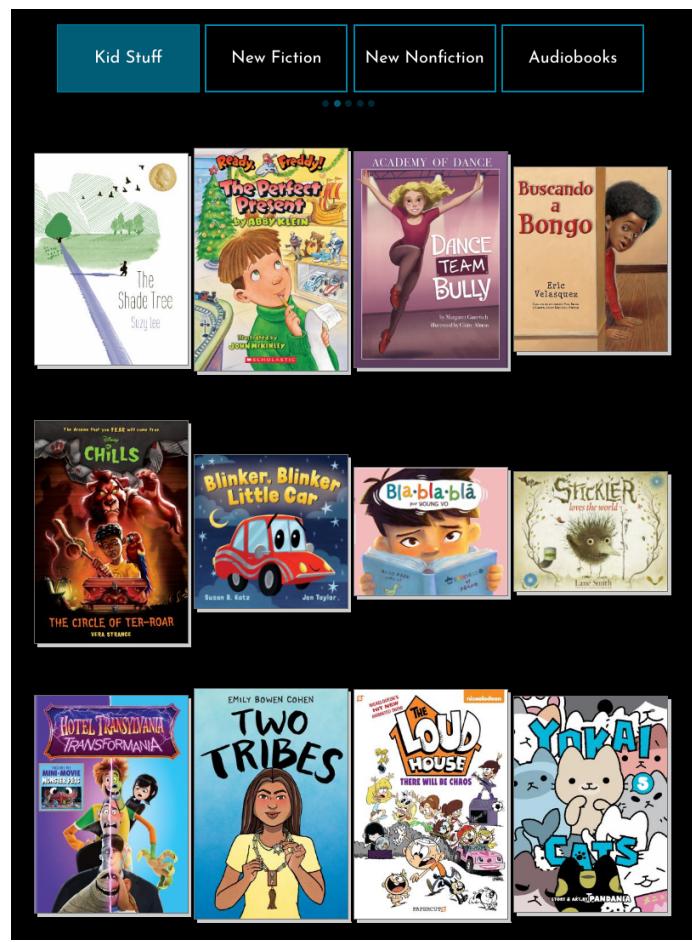
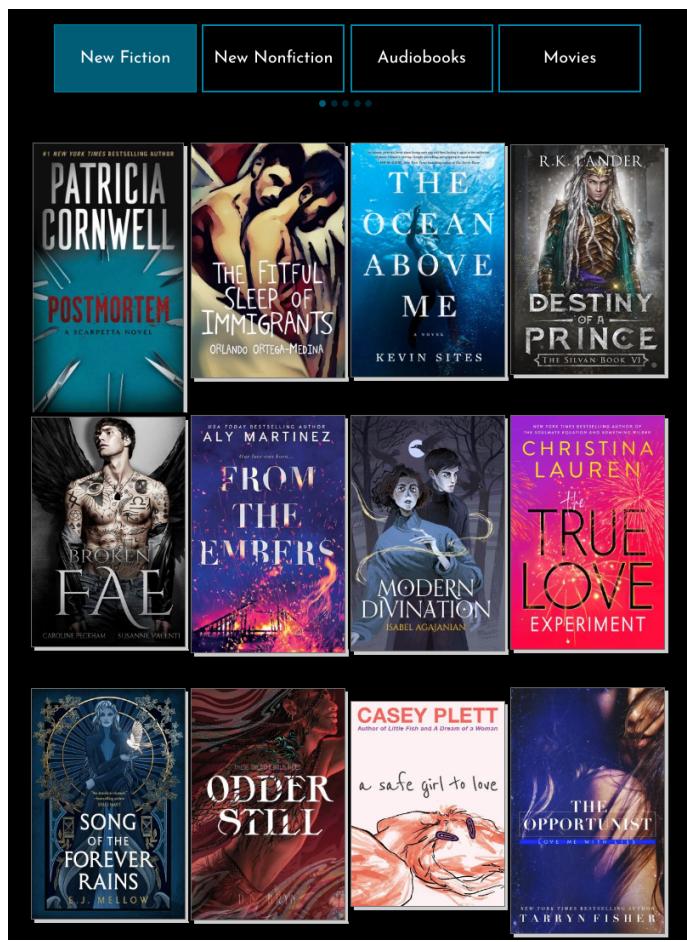
We have a lot of Browse Categories at our library (probably too many). The Collections & Technology team manages the system-wide Browse Category Groups centrally and we didn't want anyone

moving our stapler. With the release of Aspen Discovery 23.06 we had the ability to granularly assign permissions to specific staff members to edit only specific Browse Category Groups. Maplewood Librarian can be given permissions to edit only the Maplewood-Display Browse Category Group. No one moves our stapler.

Staff Training

The staff who were creating content with the old system didn't know about Aspen Browse Categories. I created a document that walked them through the process of creating Browse Categories. I also made myself available for video calls for any interested parties. The first link on the training document was the Aspen Help Center. The documentation in the Aspen Help Center was a boon to both me and the staff who are the folks actually creating content.

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Future

Our next step is determining if we want the displays to be interactive. With the old software you could tap a title to bring up an info box about the title. Again, the info displayed was pulled from Aspen. If we decide that is an important feature, we then have to determine if it is something we can make happen in house, or if we'll need help from our colleagues at ByWater or a third party developer. The future is unwritten. If you want to checkout the current display Browse Categories, you can visit the URLs of the dummy locations. Viewing them in fullscreen mode on a large-ish portrait monitor will give you the idea of what they look like on IRL:

- bld.library.nashville.org
- bx.d.library.nashville.org
- epd.library.nashville.org
- mad.library.nashville.org
- sed.library.nashville.org
- wpd.library.nashville.org

Access the code snippets below to see how they these were created.

CSS &
Javascript