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Design Thinking Project Proposal

**Project Idea**

My name’s Mikaela Slade and I am applying for the Circulation Manager position at Salt Lake City Public Library. I worked in SLCPL’s circulation department for around 4 years and during that time I issued a large number of library cards to new users. Part of the job was to give new users a short introduction to the library by walking them through a pamphlet with basics such as how many items patrons could check out or what to do if they lost their card. At the back of this pamphlet were some more resources and links. However, I suspect that after this initial information dump, most users forget about the pamphlet or don’t feel compelled to explore the library’s website unless they’re looking for something specifically. This leads to a lack of knowledge of all the wonderful services and databases available to them. Under-utilized resources waste library money and simply don’t fulfill the goal of providing patrons the best service possible.

Stated simply, my idea is to design and create a library orientation tutorial for first time and possibly current cardholders. The current vision is an incentivized, interactive tutorial that would walk users through the website. I arrived at this idea by imagining myself as a first-time library patron, overwhelmed with the amount of information and new terms. Empathy is often considered the first step in Design Thinking and its an important part of creating long-term and helpful solutions. I imagine a short, interactive, online tutorial that could briefly teach library basics and introduce new users to the library’s website which is where the majority of resources can be accessed. Users could complete this tutorial at the library after receiving a card or at home. Once they finished, the library would reward them with a tote bag or coupons for nearby attractions. This program could first focus on the basics but could eventually be expanded into more in-depth tutorials if proven successful or necessary.

I want to create this project using Design Thinking with Circulation library staff because they are the ones who are most familiar with library policies and interacting with new cardholders. Design Thinking makes testing and evaluation a priority, which is useful for producing effective, long-term, and user-centered solutions. According to SLCPL’s Strategic Roadmap (published 2017): “It is our commitment to continue the Library’s evolution from a transactional approach to a human-centered approach — to focus on the potential for self-directed transformation that exists in each individual and the potential for collective transformation that exists in our community.” The creation of the tutorial could aid patron discovery and navigation of the site, empower them to explore independently, and potentially increase both the use of library resources and patron satisfaction.

The following is a basic outline because more in-depth details cannot be provided at this time such as specific names of employees. Another note is in regard to the budget. This current iteration of the project can be done almost entirely no-cost besides employee compensation. In my opinion, it is best to start this project with no-cost or low-cost options and then invest in higher-quality alternatives as the project is proven successful.

**Project Outline**

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| **Action** | **Steps** | **Resources** | **Time (meeting weekly)** | **Desired Outcome(s)** |
| Present Project Idea to Stakeholders | -Identify stakeholders  -Develop presentation  -Schedule presentation  -Present | -PowerPoint  -Meeting room (Virtual or in-person) | 1-2 weeks | -Project approval  -Funding approval |
| Research/  Understand/  Empathize | -Assemble project team & assign roles  -Create and administer surveys/user Tests  -Research precedent & theoretical frameworks | -Free survey software  ex. SurveyMonkey or Google Forms  -Screen Recording Software  -Track through Google Sheets | 2-3 weeks | -Data about users’ attitudes & current habits  -Contextual understanding  -Awareness of available options |
| Define | -Develop statement & Project Goals  -Define connection to SLCPL’s mission | -[Design Thinking for Libraries Toolkit](http://designthinkingforlibraries.com/) | 1 week | - Project statement  -Defined, measurable goals |
| Ideate | -Meet to generate solutions | -[Lightning Round](https://medium.com/swlh/think-fast-create-fast-innovate-fast-a-lightning-round-on-rapid-ideation-ac48d1b6774f) | 1 week | -Create a solution that can be prototyped |
| Prototype | -Create inexpensive representation to test  -Gather test subjects  -Test prototype  -Meet to determine successes/failures | -[Prototype Report Card](https://www.designkit.org/methods/build-run-prototypes)  -Posterboard, paper, markers ($20)  -Track results through Sheets | 2-3 weeks | -Determine viability, strengths, weaknesses of solution  -Decide whether to make improvements, reject idea, or implement as-is |
| Implement | -Create plan for roll-out  (who, what, where, when)  -Communicate to appropriate parties  -Track progress | -Training software such as free [Easy Generator](https://www.easygenerator.com/) | TBD  2-3 weeks | -Implement solution in real-world setting  -Clear communication |
| Evaluate | -Measure against markers of success  Ex. Does it help users navigate better?  Does it improve interaction with e-resources?  -Track results & unexpected issues | -Google Sheets  -Screen Recording Software | TBD  2-3 weeks | -Observe implementation  -Determine current issues and improvements to be made  -Measure success in real-world |

**Assessment Plan**

The purpose of assessment is to 1) determine if the project is working and how well and 2) explore how it could be improved. For this project, the main goals of implementing a library orientation tutorial were to improve website navigation and discovery among first-time cardholders. The measurable aspects of this are mostly qualitative. Can we measure the website navigation ability before and after the tutorial? Can we measure the feelings and thoughts of users as they go through the tutorial? However, possible quantitative measures include the time it takes users to navigate and the user metrics of the library e-resources. It might be interesting to look at the user metrics before and after such a program is implemented but it could also be difficult to insinuate a direct correlation because there are a lot of variables that determine those numbers.

The best assessment plan would focus on user-testing. One such testing plan is task-based testing which involves asking users to complete tasks on the website and observing their movements. First, this method is time-efficient and cost-efficient because tasks can be designed to be quite short and a lot of information can be gathered from a small number of participants. Second, if the researcher utilizes screen-recording software, it becomes very easy to map the journey of the user. When one journey map is compared to another, it shows valuable user interaction patterns. Task-based testing can produce both qualitative and quantitative data. I think task-based testing is the best option for the Salt Lake City Public Library because it is relatively simple to achieve but can yield quality results.

I think measuring the responses of users is an important part of this project because it’s a project based in empathy. Empathy is an important part of considering the user’s experience. Emotions, such as frustration at slow loading times, are often subjective but are important to consider, especially in a service-oriented profession. The long-term goals of this tutorial should be to increase user’s satisfaction and confidence when interacting with it. One way to do this is to utilize multiple-choice or open-ended surveys to measure user satisfaction. This can be done both before implementation of the product and afterwards to see if there’s a change.

These results would provide insight into what parts of the project are successful and which could use improvement. My intent is that this would be a long-term project to be incorporated when introducing new patrons to library services. If the small tutorial of basic library services is successful, I could see this program expanding to include more in-depth explorations of other library resources. I think that this project is one that could constantly be used and adapted to fit the changing community and climate at the Salt Lake City Public Library. My recommendation is to revisit the project every few months and assess its effectiveness.

**Project Management Gantt Chart**

**A picture containing timeline

Description automatically generated**