Testing Innovation

Dispatches from Year Two of Wake County Public Library System’s Test Library
Library System Overview

- 7 Regional Libraries
- 13 Community Libraries
- Local History Library
- Test Library
Library System Overview

System Services
- Administration
- Collection Development
- Digital Services
- Library IT

Staffing
- 362 Permanent Staff
  - 121 w/ MLS
- Temp Library Assistants & Pages

By the Numbers
- 3.4 M Visits
- 12.6 M Checkouts
- 11,300 Programs
- 411,000 Attendees
WCPL Program of Service

**Youth**

- Available at all branches
- Divided into four age groups: Baby/Toddler, Preschool, School Age & Teen
- Daily story times, weekly and monthly programs as well as "Super Special" events

**Adult**

- Adult Programs and Services were largely exclusive to Regional Libraries
- Divided into four areas, each focusing on different programs and services
Test Library – Fayetteville St.

Located in downtown Raleigh in the first floor of the Wake County Office Building
Overview

• Originally opened in 1985 as the Business and Professional Library
• In 1992, rebranded as Downtown Popular Lending Branch
• Closed in 1996 for renovation, reopened as Electronic Information Center in 1997
• Rebranded again as Express Library in 2009
• From 2015 through 2018, operated as a satellite of nearby Cameron Village Regional Library
• 2018 rebranded once again as WCPL's Test Library
What is a Test Library?

TEST KITCHEN MENU
Goals of the Test Library

• Create an innovation lab for WCPL

• Develop enriching experiences for library clientele

• Provide additional leadership opportunities for librarians
Recruitment

• Planning
• Mentoring
• Problem-Solving
• Decision-Making & Accountability
• Strategic thinking
Recruitment

- Email to all Librarians
- Information Session
- Internal recruitment
- Five interviews

Boss: why do yo--
Me: shhh
Boss: what's your biggest wea--
Me: shhh
Boss: (whispering) you're hired, welcome to the library
First Test Library Manager
First Steps

• Rob and Katrina met to brainstorm ideas

• Three of the most promising ideas were taken to the Library Director and Deputy Director as proposals

• With feedback and guidance from Library leadership, we settled on a course of action and began developing it
Test Library in Action

- Focus on attracting Wake County Office Building Employees
- We surveyed WCOB employees
- Based on these results, we looked for ways to increase engagement within the building
Testing Awareness

- All WCOB employees were invited to Open House, featuring refreshments, prizes and a chance to meet a local artist
- Attendees heard about new programs and services
- 124 Visitors over 3 hours, kicking off our weekly programs
Testing Awareness
Programmatic Innovations
Testing Programs

- Weekly lunchtime half hour programs for six months
- Music, Crafts, Book Discussions
- Average attendance of 14
- Now launching as permanent ongoing programs
Testing Services

- Express Book Bags for Kids, a new service aimed at busy parents
- Express Book Bags, an existing service for adults
Operational Innovations
Testing New Hours

• Starting April 1st, the Test Library opened at 8:30 a.m.
• Consistent growth between 8:30 and 10 a.m.
  • from 262 extra visitors in April to 385 each in June and July
Testing Staff Skills
Testing Collections

• Based on the reading list included with Wake County supervisor training
• 28 titles related to management and leadership, suggested by County Leaders, librarians and other experts
• Averages 20 circs/month, nearly double the average for Business Books at the library
Testing Success

- In 4 out of 5 months, Test Library programs tied or outdrew Adult Services programs at larger branches
- EBBs for Kids averaged six bags a month
- For January through June, door count was up 11.4% compared to the previous year. (WCPL- 3.7 %)
- Open House expansion
Testing Leadership Development

• Develop and implement a project
• Meet with and learn from library managers
• Present regularly at manager meetings
• Participate in interviews
• Attend a Board of Commissioners Meeting
• Attend Supervisory Training
Testing Beyond the Test Library

Please rate your Library experience today:
- Very satisfied
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
Outcomes
Rob's Outcomes

- Managerial "Soft Skills"
- Where the library fits in the bigger picture of Wake County Government
- What Library Administration and Senior Management is looking for and how to communicate with them efficiently
Library Admin's Outcomes

• Create an innovation lab for WCPL
• Develop enriching experiences for library clientele
• Provide additional leadership opportunities for librarians
Testing Management No More

Congrats!
Questions?
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Senior Library Manager

Test Library Manager