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Research Proposal - Circulating Game Systems

Introduction

Logan Library is located in a college town, just minutes away from Utah State University. Although a significant number of residents are college students in their late teens and twenties, there are also many families living in the area. Due to the campus library, the Logan Library sometimes seems more geared toward the rest of the population of families. However, it is invaluable to continue offering services to young adults that may not be available through the college library. One such service is the rental of gaming consoles. College students are notoriously poor, but enjoy spending time together in groups to hang out. Game systems are an expensive purchase, but being able to rent out a console and games from the local library to take home and play is an appealing and cheap way to have fun with friends. Where video games are already in circulation, offering to rent out the console as well provides more opportunities for more people. In addition, as this service is not provided in the college library, it could be useful for those studying game development and other game-oriented subjects, without the high cost of buying all the necessary consoles. Alternatively, simply adding a game room in the library may fit the bill. Patrons would be able to reserve the room to game with friends or alone. In addition, the library could host competitive events in the game room. This room would be equipped with game consoles and controls for public use. Studies have shown the usefulness of console circulation in academic libraries, but this research will focus on the plausibility of a game room or take-home console rentals in a public library -- particularly Logan Library -- based on patron interest, funding, and logistics.

Research Questions: What kind of access, if any, to game consoles do patrons of the Logan Library want, and at what cost? What gaming consoles are the best for take-home circulation, based on fragility in transport, ease of use, and maintainability?

Literature Review

Introduction

There has been a decent amount of research on the use of non-print library materials. This section talks about the literature surrounding the circulation of non-print materials, gaming within the library, and the overlap of circulation and gaming.

Circulation

Over the past several years, libraries have expanded their circulating collections to include more than just books. Galbi (2009) briefly discusses this in an article, noting the increased use of non-print items and the subsequent popularity. The article mentions some unique items, such as piano player rolls and projector screens that have been circulated in libraries. In addition to these items, more commonly-used non-print items have been introduced to circulation. The success of VCR loans is discussed in an article by Nyren (1985). As a service in place as far back as the 1980s, this example stands out for its ahead-of-its-time idea. VCRs were maintained between uses by cleaning and quick fixes, paid for by the \$3 rental fee. Not only did this fee help pay to take care of the system, but also put a little bit of extra responsibility on the patron to take care of it. Telescopes have also recently been included in library circulation, particularly due to the Library Telescope organization. Their website discusses their efforts to

make telescopes available in public libraries and putting a staff member in charge of maintaining it (Library Telescope, 2020). Despite its non-print nature, the telescope is rented out just like a book.

Laptops have also become popular for circulations. Summey and Gutiérrez (2012) perform a study to judge patron satisfaction with laptop circulation within an academic library. Where this example does not allow for patrons to take the laptop home, it still offers patrons access to something they otherwise might not have. Evaluating the satisfaction of patrons with this service can see whether or not it is effectively doing its job. For my own study, depending on what gaming option is preferred by patrons, I can study the satisfaction later on to see if it is sufficiently pleasing to members of the community. Similar to this example, Power (2008) discusses laptop circulation within an academic library, as well. Again, these laptops were required to stay within the building, but had a two hour limit. A \$10 fee was incurred for every extra hour, though a 15 minute grace period was permitted. The library also circulated DVD players to be used within the library, in exchange for an ID being held at the desk, while MP3 players could be rented out like books. Laptop circulation brought several points to attention, including the difficulty of accounting for add-ons. In the case of game consoles, this could be compared to controllers and wires that would need to be rented with the system.

These articles highlight several points that cross over with game console circulation. Some ideas that could be useful include a potential maintenance fee, an overdue fee, and a replacement fee. In addition, effort will need to be made to ensure all the add-on items stay with

the console itself. A case or bag of some sort for travel could include pockets for each item, and a list of what needs to be included upon return.

Gaming

In recent years, gaming has worked its way into the library scene. Some libraries have put together rooms with gaming setups for patrons to play collaboratively or competitively. Levine (2006) lays out a variety of different setups for various different systems. The article offers insight into what setups and systems are most appropriate based on the space, games, and purpose of the gaming room within the library. Given that this will be one of the options available to patrons, it is valuable to see how other libraries have integrated gaming rooms into their buildings. In a similar vein, McCann (2009) goes through several different gaming consoles, noting the good and the bad of each. Most noteworthy in the analysis are the price and patron appeal, so as to choose the consoles most appropriate to each library.

Because my study will offer the choice of a game room as an alternative to console circulation, these articles present helpful information to guide the selection of a system as well as the setup of a game room. Noting the difference in price in comparison to the appeal to patrons is particularly worthwhile, in order to ensure the biggest bang for our buck in purchasing consoles.

Circulation and Gaming

There have been a few examples of overlap between gaming and circulation, though not all are in terms of video games. Robson, Phillips and Guerrero (2018) offer a fascinating study on the durability of circulating tabletop games. They compare the time and cost of upkeep

against the use of the games, utilizing several different preservation methods for the games. Results of the study showed that only minimal upkeep was necessary, and the time and effort was far outweighed by the popularity of the games. For circulating game consoles, it will be useful to evaluate the popularity against the maintenance of the systems. Another article hits closer to my topic by discussing early efforts to implement circulating video game collections into the library setting (Bishoff, Farrell and Neeser, 2015). The main takeaway from this article is the importance of collaboration with the target audience to find out what is working and what needs improvement. Including patron feedback is key to any service.

One article came to light during my research for this project that hit the closest to home. Buller (2017) talks about the circulation of video game consoles through an academic library. The major difference is that my focus is from a public library standpoint. Again, there will still be the option for a gaming room, but a significant point of this research is to see how realistically game console rentals would be in a public library. Buller's (2017) discussion mentions the use of grant money to afford the systems, and emphasizes the importance of hardware upkeep and maintenance between uses. It highlights the debate between dedicating library space to the use of game systems and letting consoles be taken home. This also poses a debate in my research, though the preferences of the library will be taken into consideration. In this study, circulation was the chosen option. 'Game environments,' which include a portable screen and speakers, encased in hard plastic, were used to house consoles. Paired with an additional case for cords and controllers, the environments allowed for secure, waterproof storage and safe transportation of each console and its parts, while also providing a screen in case the patron is unable to afford or access a television. Pictures and serial numbers for every part ensured everything was accounted

for without patron replacement. The article discusses a few other challenges and how they were overcome, offering useful ideas that could be referred to for implementing video game console circulation in the Logan Library.

These studies offer valuable information to help determine the best course of action for the Logan Library. Whether popularity rules in favor of a gaming room or console circulation, several obstacles will have to be overcome. Referring to these articles can address issues posed by durability, transportation, and maintenance. Particularly Buller's (2017) study proves useful due to it being so closely related to my topic. Major challenges are addressed, and these can be mirrored to reduce the amount of trial and error for Logan Library.

Research Method

Introduction

For this study, because it deals primarily with numbers of people interested in different options, as well as cost amounts for consoles, a quantitative method is the most appropriate. Where follow-up studies could utilize qualitative methods to evaluate the opinions of patrons toward the option of circulation or toward the inclusion of a game room, this study is more focused on the numbers relating to interest and cost for the options presented (game room, console circulation, or no change).

Sample/Population

Patrons of the Logan Library make up the population of this study, particularly young adults (18-30) and teens (13-17). Efforts will be made to reach as many patrons of the library as

possible, but the survey will be particularly emphasized among teens and young adults, as these groups are generally more interested in the use of game consoles (Brown, 2017). To best understand as many patrons as possible, this study will use all the complete surveys turned in.

Data Collection

Physical copies of the survey (included in the Appendix) will be available in the library for those without computer access, and a link will be provided on the website for those with access. It will also be emailed to patrons in the system in an effort to reach everyone. For participants under the age of 18, parental consent or a by-proxy survey will be required. Data from the surveys will be stored in Qualtrics, accessible only with a secure password. Physical copies of surveys will be entered into Qualtrics by hand by one of the members of my team, then kept in a binder in my locked office. To preserve anonymity, no names or identifying information will be listed on any surveys. Research about the costs of different consoles and how to maintain them will be paired with the final results to weigh the costs and benefits of various systems.

Data Prep Before Analysis

For the question about a potential fee, answers will need to be edited to be uniform in format. In other words, making sure there is no dollar sign and eliminating unnecessary decimal points. Physical copies of surveys will also be entered into Qualtrics by a team member.

Data Analysis

Data will be transformed into percentages of the population interested in a game room, circulation of consoles, or no change. Percentages will also indicate interest for different

consoles. Costs of consoles and accompanying controls and devices will be added with the cost of maintaining them. This information will come from searching the web and referring to literature about maintenance in game room and circulation settings. Descriptive statistics will highlight key points about the potential fee, including the highest and lowest points, as well as the average. A narrative will describe aspects about how many participants play video games, how they would use game rooms, and whether or not they would reserve the rooms or go to events.

Report Findings

Statistics about the interest of patrons in each option (game room, circulation, or no change) will be indicated with pie charts. Bar graphs will compare interest with the cost of buying and maintaining different consoles to help indicate a cost-benefit model. High and low values will be indicated for how high a fee patrons would be willing to pay, along with a mean value. This can then be weighed against the costs of different consoles with the most interest, helping to determine what consoles would be best to buy.

Limitations

This study will only indicate the interest and feasibility of a game room or console circulation for Logan Library. Surveys may not reach everyone, as they may not reach those who do not use the library currently, but who would with this service available. Because of the campus library at the nearby university, many college students do not use the public library and may not encounter the survey. It will primarily reach those already utilizing library services. A

future study could reach out to students at Utah State University to find out their perspectives on these potential services.

Work Plan

A team of three to five librarians will work together to make this study happen. Initially, we will need to post the survey online, with a link to it on the homepage of the library website. Then, we will need to gather emails from the system, and send out the survey. Print copies will need to be made to set out in the library, both near the entrance/exit and near the teen section. Advertisements will need to be posted around the library and on the website. This will all be done within the first week. Data will be collected for five weeks, and then a reminder email will be sent out. At week eight, a final reminder will be sent out. At the end of week ten, surveys will be concluded. Data will be anonymous and stored in Qualtrics, accessible only by a password for security. The group will then prepare the data and calculate statistics during weeks eleven through thirteen. Finally, during weeks fourteen and fifteen, results will be written up and the report produced to the Library Director, who can then approve implementation of game room or console circulation as necessary.

Appendix

Survey Questions

The Logan Library already offers a collection of video games to be rented out to patrons. Because some individuals may not have access to game consoles on which to play the games, the possibility of having a reservable game room with gaming equipment, or rentable consoles, is under consideration. To see if these ideas are viable, this survey is meant to find out if patrons

would be interested in either option and to see which, if any, would be most beneficial to the community.

CONSENT 1

This survey is designed to evaluate the opinions of patrons at the Logan Library about video game circulation and game rooms. Your participation is completely voluntary. The data collected will be used to help improve the library based on patron interest, and may be published as part of research about video game circulation in public libraries. Where the target audience is teens and young adults, input from all ages would be appreciated! All answers are anonymous. For those younger than 18, a parent or guardian is required to offer consent/fill out the survey by proxy.

The parent/guardian can also submit their own survey. Do you consent to participate?

Yes

No

CONSENT 2

I am 18 years of age or older, filling out the survey for myself OR for someone under age.

Yes

No

NONCONSENT/NOT18

Thank you for your time considering this survey.

Demographics

(DT) Demographics help us understand what groups are interested in which options.

(D1) What age category are you (or participant)?

Child (0-9)

Tween (10-12)

Teen (13-17)

Young adult (18-30)

Adult (31+)

(D2) What is your current employment status? Choose the most applicable.

Employed full time (40+ hours/week)

Employed part time (less than 40 hours/week)

Unemployed

Student

Unable to work

Retired

Video Games

(VGT) This section is about your use and comfort with video games and equipment.

(VG1) Do you own one or more of the systems the library currently has games for (Xbox One,

PS4, Wii U, or Wii)?

Yes

No

(VG2) How often do you play video games on a console (Xbox, Playstation, Wii, etc.)?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Almost never -- not interested

Almost never -- don't have access

(VG3) How comfortable do you feel you are using gaming equipment?

Extremely uncomfortable > Somewhat uncomfortable > Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable

> Somewhat comfortable > Extremely comfortable

(Likert scale)

Console

(CT) This portion of the survey concerns renting gaming consoles from the library.

(C1) How interested would you be in renting a game console from the library?

Don't want it > Don't think it's worth it > Indifferent > It could be interesting > Yes please!

(Likert scale)

(C2) What systems would you want to rent?

Wii U

Playstation 4

Xbox One

Wii

Would not rent

(C3) Why would you primarily want to rent a console?

Gaming alone

Gaming with friends

Video game design research

Other

None

(C4) How much money would you be willing to pay each time as a rental fee? Up to...

[_____] (fill in the blank)

Game Room

(GRT) This page involves the idea of being able to reserve a game room, with gaming equipment, at the library.

(GR1) Would you be interested in having a reservable room in the library with gaming equipment you could use?

Yes

No

(GR2) Would you reserve the game room primarily for gaming with friends or alone, if at all?

With friends

Alone

Would not reserve

(GR3) Would you prefer a reservable game room or the option to rent out game consoles?

Room

Rent

Neither

Indifferent

(GR4) Would you attend gaming events at the library in the game room?

Yes

No

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