



Reflection Blog #2

Hyperlinked Environments & Issues
The Hyperlinked Public Library




Memphis Public Library System

An Epitome of a Hyperlinked Public Library

- Memphis, Tennessee is one of the poorest cities in the nation, yet its budget increased from \$15 million in 2007 to \$23 million today (Grant, 2021).
- The only public library system in the nation with its own radio and television stations (Grant, 2021)
- Recipient of the National Medal (highest honor for libraries) for being an “oases of care, civility, activity, and opportunity” in a “city with a very high poverty rate” (Kemper, as quoted in Grant, 2021).
- Thrived under the visionary leadership of the director, McCloy (Grant, 2021)

Director McCloy- Visionary Leader

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- No library background, but learned from library directors across the nation (Grant 2021).
 - An innovative leadership approach aimed at improving the patron's total library experience (Grant, 2021).
 - Hired a “design thinking” agency and a marketing firm that embedded researchers in all the library branches for 6 months -researching patrons, former patrons, and non-library users (Grant, 2021).
 - Findings revealed that most people weren't aware of the services provided by the library (Grant, 2021)
 - Marketing firm “rebranded” the library as “vibrant” community centers(Grant 2021)
 - Designing neighborhood-specific websites
 - A “Start Here” media campaign prominently displayed at the library branches, on websites, and on television ads.
 - Readbox Campaign- a play on “redbox”, 42,000 of the signature red kiosks placed in prominent location around the community and filled with information about library services.



Think like a Start-up - Cloud901

Don't Just expand Services; Solve problems (Matthews, 2012)

- People cited too many teens hanging out at the Memphis Central Problem as a major problem (Grant, 2021)
- McCloy's response was to redirect the teens' energy- culminating in the creation of a Teen Learning Lab, [Cloud901](#) (Grant, 2021)
- [Cloud901](#) is an 8300 sq ft teenage learning facility that houses a state-of-the-art recording studio, a robotics lab with a highly competitive team, a video lab that has produced award-winning films, an art studio for painting, sketching, and sculpting, a maker lab with high tech tools such as laser cutters to printers, a performance stage and hangout areas (Grant 2021).



Think Like a Start up-

Focus on relationship building (Matthews, 2012)

McCloy's focus on **building relationships** with those in the community allowed her *to raise funds, recruit sponsors, and hire the best experts* (Grant, 2021).

- A professional quality recording studio was designed by the renowned Memphis Music producer and supporter of libraries, Lawrence “Boo Mitchell” (Grant, 2021).
- The maker space was designed and equipped by another Memphian (who had overseen similar projects in the Bay Area), who in turn, secured sponsorship from FedEx, a Memphis-based corporation (Grant, 2021).
- McCloy consulted with the Memphis Library Foundation, a volunteer organization with connections to the business community and the social elite, to raise funds for the project (Grant, 2021)

Hyperlinked Environments and Transforming Lives (*Calhoun and Felix*)

Calhoun (Audio Engineer at CLOUD901) & Felix (Up-and coming rapper and singer, a patron at Cloud901)

"It's changed everything for me. Sometimes I have to stop myself and say, 'Wait a minute, this is all happening at the library? And it's all free?'"
(Felix)

- Both grew up a generation apart" in high-crime, low -opportunity neighborhoods in South Memphis"
- Felix was looking for a way to record his songs when he ran across Cloud901 and met Calhoun who became his mentor and expert producer/engineer.
- By recording his music and giving him insights about the music industry, Calhoun and Cloud901 make it possible for Felix's music to reach a much wider audience, hyperlinking him to the community.

Hyperlinked Libraries and Transforming Lives (*Willoughby and Kelley*)

Willoughby (Video instructor at Cloud901) and Kelley (18 year old poet, writer, filmmaker, and patron at Cloud901).

"The library has given me confidence and access to the resources I needed to make films....In a place where you are traditionally supposed to be as quiet as possible, I have found my voice." (Kelley)

- Willoughby taught Kelley how to use the camera, lighting and editing software to produce her own videos(Grant, 2021).
- At Willoughby's insistence, Kelley enter her first video- *a spoken word performance that used hip-hop metaphors as an "allegory for the struggles of black youth"* - in the Indie Memphis Youth Film Festival, and was awarded the Grand Jury Prize (Grant, 2021).
- Her second film, *Kinfolk*, also a Grand Jury Prize Winner, tells the story of *the Memphis Massacre of 1866*, through the real-life recollections of her grandmother, who grew up during Jim Crow (Grant, 2021).
- Her motivation for making *Kinfolk* was to give a voice to "our history, which is still present, is not being told. Our stories are being lost" (Grant, 2021).
- Cloud901 brought Willoughby and Kelley together and gave Kelley the resources to enable her to tell her family's "stories" and to have that reach a wider audience in her community.

Cloud901- HyperLinked Environment

- **Participatory**- the users are co-creating and co- producing content (as Felix & Kelley each did in the recording studio and video lab). The library is a safe space to “collaborate and exchange ideas”, and “providing participatory services to promote learning and well being” (Stephens, 2022, p. 237).
- **Democratic, Inclusive and Equitable**- Created for the users, by the users and with the users. Free resources and mentorship allows marginalized groups to create and amplifies diverse voices within the community.
- **Disruptive, transformative leadership** with a focus on *design thinking* to enhance patron’s user experience, solve complex problems, and *rebrand* the library as a vibrant community center. Reaches the huge group of non-users, known as the “*long tail*”, through the inclusion of non-users and former patrons in the research (Casey & Savastinuk, 2007).
- **Human-Centered**- A focus on human relationships in all aspects of service creation and implementation.
- **Transcendent**- The music and films produced in the recording studio and the video labs reach the users everywhere, not just in the physical library, demonstrating that the “**library is everywhere**” (Stephens, 2022).
- **Transformative**- User’s lives are transformed by the resources and mentorship provided by the library.

“Libraries are such an integral part of creating community and equitable access to creative works”.

(Lindsey-Walker, Edmonton Based singer/songwriter as quoted in Moayeri, 2024)



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