



# Best Practices for the Customer Focused Library

Results of the Customer Focused Library Grant

July 22, 2008



# Agenda

- Introduction to the Project
- What was it like to be studied?
- Brief Findings
- Best Practices and Applications
- Looking Forward



# Introduction

Background and Methodology



# Research Objectives

- ✓ Explore the dynamics of visitor behavior at four Chicago area libraries, including both public and academic libraries
- ✓ Measure visitor interactions at touch points in the library
- ✓ Generate information on how public and academic libraries in the Chicago area can better service and educate their visitors, thereby creating a more satisfying library visit

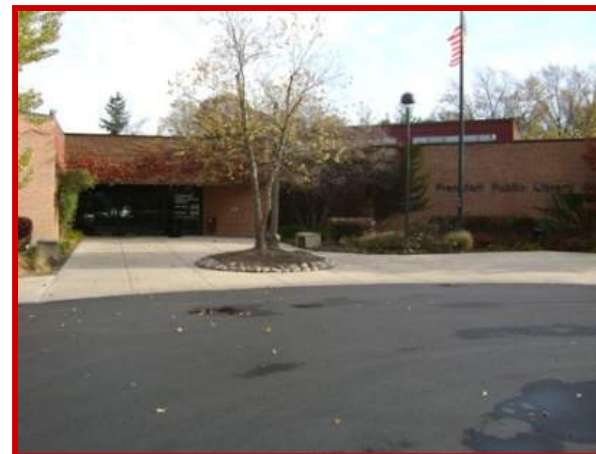
# Participants



Indian Prairie

Tuesday, November 13, 2007- Hours 12-8

Wednesday, November 14, 2007- Hours 9-5



Frankfort

Tuesday, November 13, 2007- Hours 12-8

Wednesday, November 14, 2007- Hours 9-5



Acorn

Thursday, November 15, 2007- Hours 12-8

Friday, November 16, 2007- Hours 9-5



North Park

Thursday, November 15, 2007- Hours 12-8

Friday, November 16, 2007- Hours 9-5



# Research Methodology

## Observational

Tracking: Researchers used mapping programs to track and time customers' movements and interactions within the library.

- ➔ *424 visitor groups were observed in four Chicago area libraries*



## Attitudinal

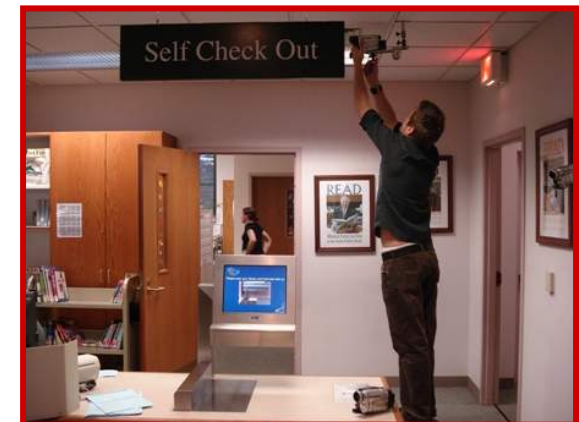
Questionnaires: Library patrons were intercepted after their visit to the library to inquire about their experience in the library and the services which they regularly use. Patrons were offered a five dollar gift card to complete the questionnaire.

- ➔ *267 patrons were interviewed after their library visit*

## Video

Small video cameras were installed in key areas of the libraries in order to capture behavioral patterns, traffic flow, wait and transaction times.

- ➔ *Over 750 hours of video footage were generated for analysis*





# Being Studied

Why we participated, and what it was like to be studied.



# Brief Findings

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# Visitor Profile

- 95% visited once per month, over half visited once per week, and the majority visited alone.
- 56% spent less than 10 minutes in the library, a surprising finding more typically associated with bookstores and grocery stores.
- Two-thirds did not know what they wanted before they arrived. Since patrons may not come to the library with a specific “need,” we have an opportunity to appeal to their “wants.”



# Visitor Behavior

- One-third of patrons visited a desk as their first destination.
- Age impacted the sections of the library visited by patrons. Younger patrons used the computers and seldom visited sections with circulating materials. Older patrons were less likely to use the computers and self-check.
- Highest impact services were circulation (60%), internet access (18%), online library catalog use (15%) and reference services (15%).



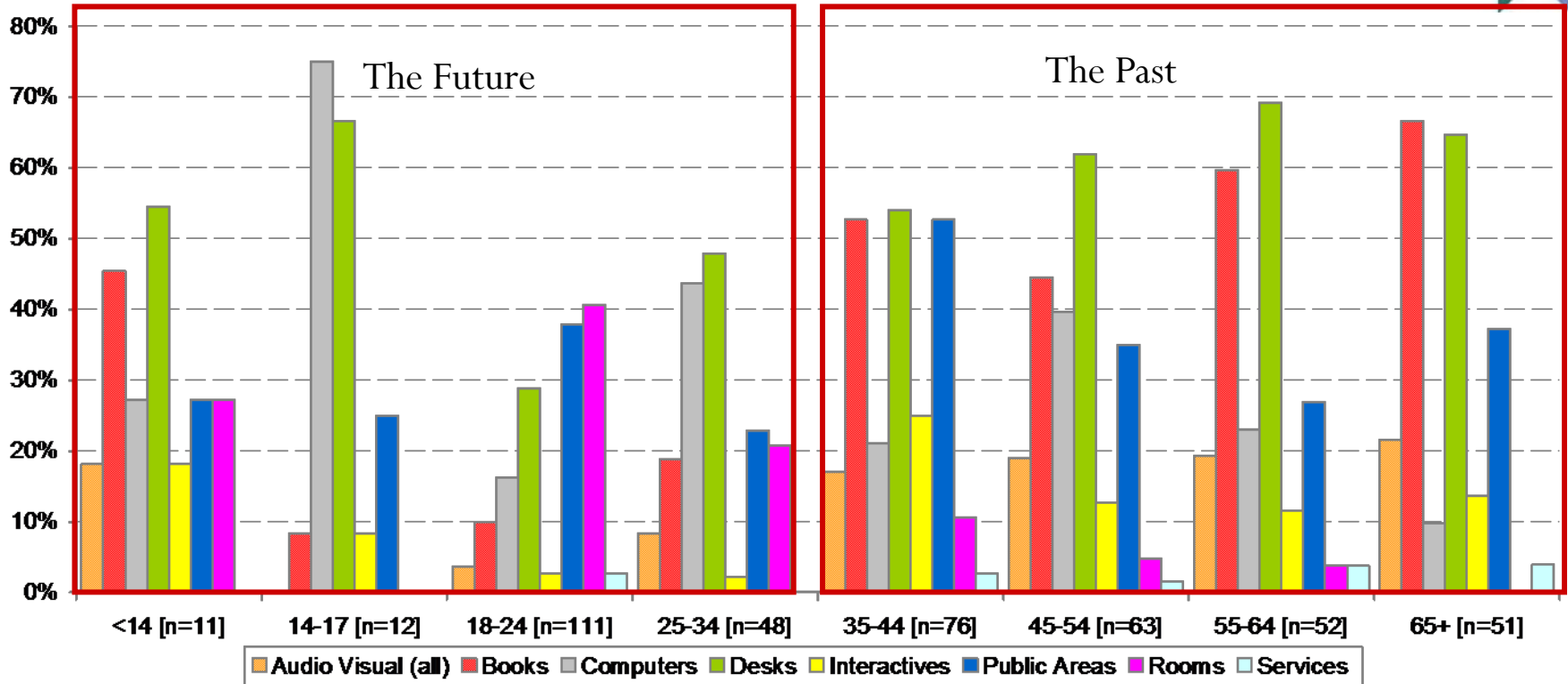
# Visitor Behavior

- Two-thirds of patrons were using the library for reading or conversation, and 15% of weekly visitors never borrow from the library.
- Half of patrons pulled an item off the shelf while browsing, with more items pulled in AV collections.
- 70% of patrons checked out books, 51% checked out AV materials.

# Fewer than one in ten patrons age 14-24 visited the Books section



The Percentage of Patrons in Each Age Group Who Visit Each Section Type



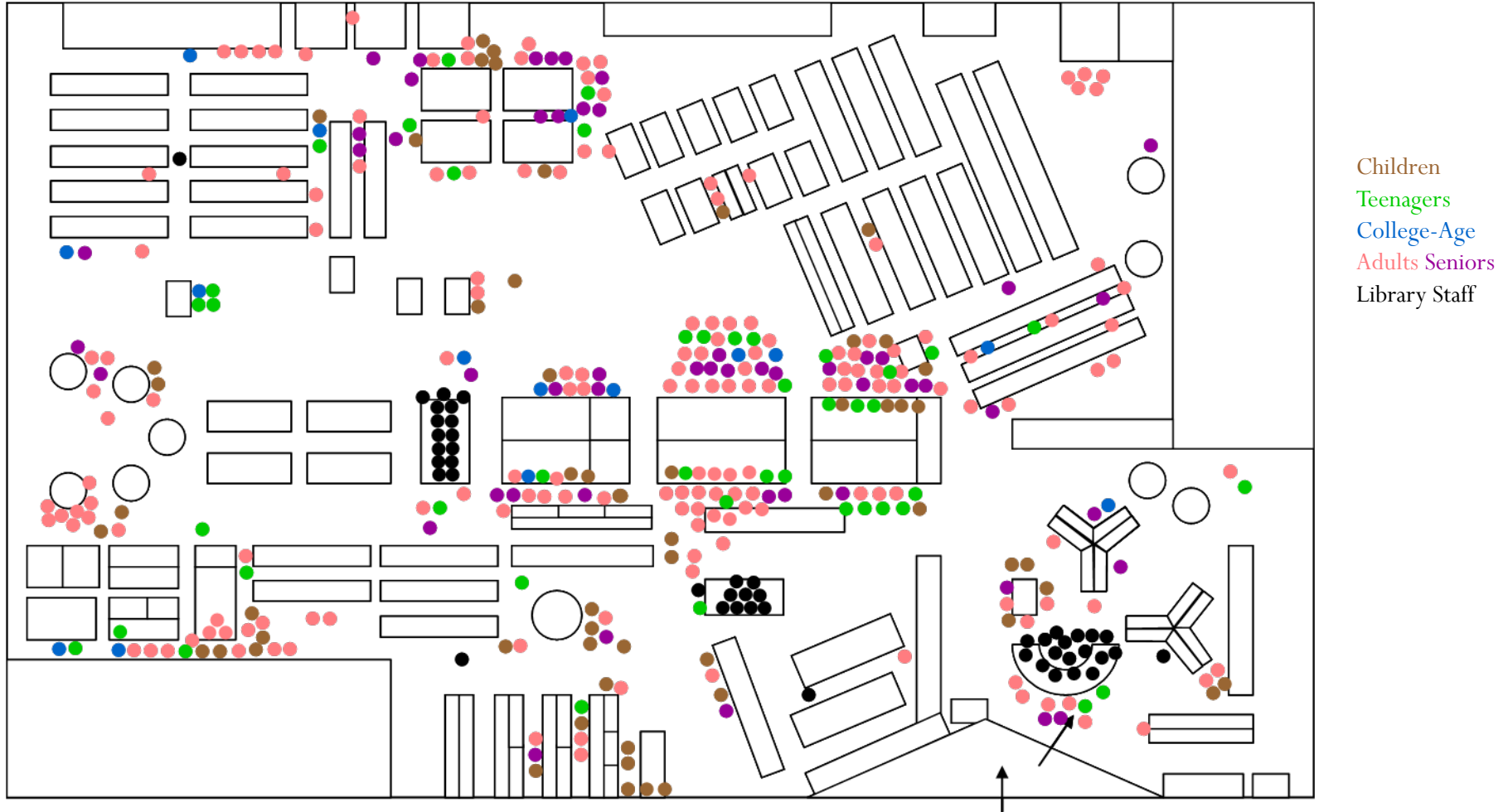
- Age often factors into the types of sections a patron visits while at the library.
  - While 45% children (patrons under the age of 14) tended to visit the Books section of the library, teens, college age visitors and young adults seldom visited the Books section (14-17, 8% and 18-24, 10%, 25-34 19%).
  - Three-quarters of Teen patrons visited the Computers during their visit. Young adults tended to visit the public areas and rooms to read or study during their library visit.
    - *Increasing these patrons' interest in the Books section is essential for the future of the library, as the main offering is, at present, Books. However, one could also argue the library offering needs to change dramatically to accommodate the patron of the future, or there will be no customer base to serve.*
    - *Offering a class on how to use the computers at the library may help connect the older patrons to the library's technological tools.*
- Interest in the Books section type increased as patron age increased, with the exception of visitors ages 45-54 (44%).
  - Over half of visitors 35-44 (53%), browsed Books. 60% of patrons age 55-64 and 67% over the age of 65 browsed Books.



# Assistance

- Over half of patrons, excluding circulation transactions, were observed receiving assistance of some kind.
- Finding items on the shelf caused the greatest need for assistance, followed by finding the right section. Less than 15% of patrons needed help with guiding research, explaining services, and recommending items.
- Better directional/explanatory signage would alleviate observed need for finding sections and free staff time.

# Frankfort—Density Map





# Signage

- Only 12% of patrons viewed library signage. Patrons aged 45-64 were most likely to view signs, with 34 and under least likely.
- Stacks signage was viewed the most, by 45% of patrons.





# Best Practices and Applications

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## Best Practice #1

Market Resources  
Effectively



# Market Resources Effectively

**Indian Prairie Public Library**  
1988-2008

*Come explore, connect, and be inspired*

## Find It Here!

Home

### Search The Catalog

Home | New Search | Login | Help

#### SWAN Online Catalog

**Keyword** | Title | Author | Advanced

Type the keyword(s) in the box below then press Enter or click the Submit button.

Sorted By:

Indian Prairie

Type the keywords you want to find. For example:

- good to great
- Indian cooking

**Other Searches:**

- ▶ Author and Title Search
- ▶ Subject Headings
- ▶ ISBN/ISSN
- ▶ Government Documents
- ▶ Call Number

**NOW PAY FINES ONLINE!** Click "My Account" and log in

- ▶ My Account  
*Log in to check your account, renew items and place holds*
- ▶ Popular Searches  
*Need some suggestions? Try these links!*
- ▶ About Member Libraries  
*Click here for library names, addresses, phone numbers and web sites*
- ▶ Fasy Cat

**Navigation Menu (circled):**

- My Account
- Search Other Catalogs
- Recently Added Materials
- Suggest A Purchase
- Online Resources
- Staff Recommendations



# Market Resources Effectively





# Market Resources Effectively





# Market Resources Effectively





## Best Practice #2

# Orient Yourself to Patron Convenience



# Orient Yourself to Patron Convenience





# Orient Yourself to Patron Convenience





# Orient Yourself to Patron Convenience





# Orient Yourself to Patron Convenience





## Best Practice #3

Use Space Creatively



# Use Space Creatively





# Use Space Creatively





# Use Space Creatively





# Use Space Creatively





# Use Space Creatively





## Best Practice #4

# Use Signs Effectively



# Use Signs Effectively





# Use Signs Effectively





# Use Signs Effectively





# Looking Forward

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# Gather Information

- Gain insight into patron wants through multiple means.
- Look for small wins while breaking down larger projects. Track your success through an overall building plan.
- Involve new eyes: people outside of the library can give you incredible insights. Pick people carefully to not be restricted by traditional views of library services.



# Assess and Involve Staff

- Prepare staff for change.
- Use density maps to gather information on space use and areas for improvement.
- If our focus is service, make sure staff are service focused.
- If circulation is your primary point of human contact, train circulation staff to be ambassadors for other services.
- Analyze service at your first point of contact, often the desk closest to the door.



# Think Outside the Box

- Don't try to change people's behavior: identify it and design for it.
- Let go of sacred cows, including materials, furniture and beliefs.



The most pointed lessons we learn from retail are in examining our staff behavior, updating our marketing practices, and offering patron-oriented services. With our libraries demonstrated dedication to meeting patron's wants and needs, the Customer Focused Library is achievable.



Questions?