

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIANS

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Public libraries and their employees have a unique set of challenges they face on a daily basis. While earning an MLS degree, students learn skills that allow them to master almost any electronic resource they encounter, however only one in five employees of libraries hold an MLS degree. For this reason, the electronic resources utilized by public libraries must be user-friendly and intuitive so that every employee is capable of using them. Below we present ten technologies that aid public library employees in their daily duties.

Open Broadcaster Software

<https://obsproject.com>



Open Broadcaster Software is a community created Windows, Apple, and Linux-compatible program that captures and records webcams and screens. Users can create instructional videos, stream themselves using software for creative or entertainment purposes, or record a live presentation to an internet streaming service, such as YouTube or Facebook. OBS is free to use and available for download at the provided website.

Cinematographer Mark W. Gray recommends the use of OBS in his live streaming video instructional, and gives an overview of how to use the program. The video series can be accessed with a Lynda.com account, listed as Learning Video Live Streaming (Lynda, 2017).

Freshdesk

<https://freshdesk.com>



Freshdesk is a web-based software that serves as an assistance ticketing system and collaboration resource. Users can view the customer service or IT tickets filed by patrons and employees and respond quickly. Freshdesk also offers an information repository to store troubleshooting advice, as well as a tagging system to monitor problems. It comes with a mobile app to facilitate immediate access, and can be viewed on any browser. The program is free-to-use for a small organization.

Ireland's national public library service, Libraries Ireland, uses the program to answer patron customer service questions and concerns. Any patron with an account can easily file a support ticket and receive a prompt response (Libraries Ireland Support, n.d.).

Trello

<http://trello.com>



Trello is a web-based project management application. Users can break down projects into stages or steps, create tasks that need to be done in order to complete the project, and track the development or progress by moving the tasks between stages. Trello's open format makes it useful for many branches of the library, including departmental planning, marketing campaigns, website projects, and training.

Kennesaw State University uses Trello for collection development, virtual services, and organizing their promotional campaigns (Li & Xueying, 2017). Loyola Marymount uses Trello for event planning and meeting agendas (Jackson, 2016).

Canva

<http://canva.com>



Canva is a web-based graphic design site. Users can create designs from over 50,000 templates, such as posters, photos collages, bookmarks, or advertisements. The Young Adult Library Services Association featured Canva in 2014 and the American Library Association links to the service from their Marketing Strategies page.

The Indiana State Library created a Youtube tutorial about how to use Canva for libraries (2017).

Gimlet

<https://gimlet.us>



Gimlet is a reference tracking tool by Sidecar Publications'. This is a resource which allows library staff to build a searchable knowledge base. The tracking form is customizable and permits storage of full-text Q & As for search and retrieval. There is also a tagging feature to identify trends and patterns. Once recorded, full-text answers are searchable by text or tags through customized filters. The *starring* feature boosts answers to the top of the results list. The reports tab provides useful data for scheduling by tracking the time of day that the reference desk is busiest. A study by Shen (2014) was performed at the reference desk of a joint academic and public library using Gimlet. Their reports were used to determine the essential knowledge and skills required by reference employees serving academic and public library patrons. Gimlet is free for the first site and additional sites are \$20 per month.

Cliq

<http://zoho.com/cliq>



ZOHO has a large suite of business applications similar to that of Google or Microsoft. They recently rebranded their chat tool as ZOHOO Cliq which rivals messaging services from Slack and Microsoft Teams (Finnegan, 2017). Like most messaging tools, it offers the ability to embed a widget to any website. Utilizing this feature enables librarians to offer real-time assistance with their patrons. The dashboard maintains a searchable history log and the ability to send a chat transcript to the patron. Cliq supports file sharing in addition to sending and receiving text based messages. Library staff can utilize this tool to communicate with patrons and for internal collaboration as well. There is a free version and a paid tier which varies from \$1-\$3 per month, depending on the size of the institution.

Libraries Transform

<http://ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/>



Libraries Transform is an initiative through the American Library Association (ALA) created in 2015 as a response to public opinion and budget cuts. A growing majority of people believe libraries and librarians are no longer relevant in today's age of instant internet information. Public opinion often has a direct impact on budgets. In 2002 alone, library budgets in Colorado were slashed by almost \$4.5 million in a line-item veto (Lietzau, 2005). "Designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact and services

provided by libraries and library professionals” (para. 1), Libraries Transform pushes back against the idea that libraries are no longer needed in modern society.

Libraries Transform has a marketing strategy based around the word “because.” They have produced hundreds of “because” statements to answer the questions “Why are libraries needed?” On their website, library professionals will find marketing resources such as posters, bookmarks, and social media graphics to help advocate for their profession.

Remind

<http://remind.com>



Remind is an online contact service that allows users to add themselves to large contact groups for classes, sports teams, study groups, and anything else that requires contacting dozens of people at once. Using Remind allows users to send mass text messages, emails, meeting invites, and documents to mass groups. The sender can then see who has read their message. Public library librarians need a tool to contact their regular patrons when it comes to program announcements and reminders. Remind allows librarians to do this.

WordPress

<https://wordpress.com/>



WordPress is a free website builder and content management which uses HTML and PHP coding to design websites. It is also used as a blogsite for many professional and non-professional users. WordPress is a useful tool for public libraries that have a small staff, a low budget, or little experience with website building. Though there are other free website building sites such as Drupal (2000) and Joomla (2005), WordPress has the appeal of endless plugins and a large community of users to ask for help (2011, Patel, Rathod, & Prajapati, p. 30). It is easy to use, users do not need to have extensive coding knowledge, and it is automatically backed up and maintained. John DeLooper of Hudson Community College created a short handout for the Parsippany Public Library that did a technology speed-dating piece on WordPress which gives a short explanation on what it is, why people use it, gives a list of libraries currently using WordPress, and gives a list of sources to get people started (2013).

Podcasts

<http://publiclibrariesonline.org/category/media/podcast/>



Podcasts became popular with the emergence of iTunes in 2004. As information agencies invested in this up-and-coming technology, public librarians became part of the conversation by simultaneously using podcasts as a tool to improve themselves and their organizations. Podcasts are an ideal tool because they are typically free, can be listened to anywhere at any time, encourage interlibrary communication, and are educational, informal, and entertaining. Many public libraries have their own podcasts including The New York Public Library and The Seattle Public Library. Podcasts are a good way to inform librarians about the different ways to complete tasks in libraries. By sharing information, public libraries can be better prepared for the many possibilities out there. In an article from American Libraries called “Hearing Voices: Librarian-Produced Podcasts” it is noted that podcasts help, “facilitate conversations about training, leadership, and management” (2016, Thomas, p. 16). All topics that are beneficial in the public library environment.

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