

SC 6 – Open Self-Serve Library Feasibility Assessment



Project Lead:

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Description: Building on recommendations coming out of Scott County’s Community Services Division business plan, this project will explore resident interest in, and technical and operational requirements for, operating an “open library” facility in the Scott County Library system. An open library leverages self-service technology to provide library users with unstaffed open hours as a supplement to staffed open hours.

This concept has been widely and successfully used in Scandinavian libraries since 2004, but libraries in the United States are only beginning to explore this service model. Traditional library service models make the customer adapt to fit the life of the library; the open library model moves toward making the library adapt to fit the life of the customer. The open library model not only makes it easier for customers to use the library, but it also allows the role of library staff to be redefined and realigned to meet community needs and priorities.

Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas for Exploration:

- Use a World Café event, an intercept survey conducted at County libraries, and/or some other outreach method to gauge community interest in, ideas for, and concerns or questions about after-hours library service
- Based on the Scandinavian open library model, existing open libraries in the United States in Hennepin County (MN) and Gwinnett County (GA), and the experience of open library vendors such as Bibliotecha:
 - What are best models and practices for providing this type of service?
 - Are there successful public-private models for this type of service? If so, how were these partnerships forged, and what accounts for their success?
 - What are some of the benefits or impacts of providing this type of service to library users?
- How would the physical design of an open library differ from the designs of traditional libraries? Provide concepts/renderings showing how current library locations could be redesigned to accommodate this new approach.
- Conduct an observational study of current library customer habits to understand potential impact of an open library model on staffing demand and resources.

(continued)

How Will Student Work Be Used to Build Resiliency?

Students will have ample opportunity to engage with stakeholders, community members, and decision makers around this topic, which will help generate further discussion of the concept among the public and decision makers. Any identified best practices, models, conceptual plans, or other information will directly inform future planning for adopting an open library service model in Scott County, ranging from engaging the community around the idea of an open library to drafting potential plans for an open library and securing additional funding to support the model.

Existing Plans and Reports:

- Community Services and Transportation, 2017–2018 Business Plan
- Regional Library Digital Access Survey (2015)
- City–County library branch space agreements

Potential Stakeholders and Partners:

- Current library users and non-users
- Scott County Library staff (especially Library Technology staff)
- City staff (cities own the buildings in which [Scott County Library Branches](#) are located)

To learn more about this project or discuss how to integrate it into a UMN course or an individual student project (such as a culminating experience, capstone, master's project, or independent study), please contact Sarah Tschida or Mike Greco with the Resilient Communities Project at rcp@umn.edu.