

Cooperation Technology, Books and Community

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Abstract:

We will describe a new initiative between two public library research centers, the Seattle Public School System, the University of Washington, and the neighborhood community. The focus of this project is to create a community-based, exciting learning environment using technology to emphasize the book and, in general, the creation of literature.

The Centers:

The Center for the Book, a state affiliate of the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, was established to promote the joys of reading, to emphasize the importance of books and libraries, and to nurture an environment in which books and reading are valued and enjoyed. The Center for the Book brings together individuals--readers, librarians, writers and organizations--throughout the state of Washington.

The Center for Technology functions as a catalyst and linking agent, bringing together the needs of the public, the skills of information professionals, and the products of high technology companies. Research and development efforts emphasize projects which are not only of special interest to Seattle, but which can also be replicated in other libraries. All library services and modes of service delivery are impacted by these technological advances, as are the community institutions and groups that use library services.

Project description:

This project, although in its infancy, will initially focus its attention on two Seattle neighborhoods, Rainier Beach (through the library branch), and West Seattle (through the High School). In both instances, technology will be used to support the overall team in stimulating particular children into more active reading and writing.

We believe that a new collaborative approach between all traditional community organizations is required to achieve our goals of increasing the interest in reading books. However, we do not yet fully understand such a paradigm, and we want to use these experiments to further our knowledge in this area, with the ultimate goal of creating a new model for community learning.

In this project, we will closely cooperate with a multi-disciplinary team from the University of Washington, consisting of partners from the School of Education, and the Departments of Political Science, Library Science and Computer Science. Members of the Public School administration, principals and educators, technologists and curriculum developers will also work with us on these issues.

This complete team will look at the issues from different perspectives, conduct various experiments, and utilize a variety of methodologies.

We will also explore such ideas as an on-line poetry writing workshop, virtual community learning, on-line creative writing, and on-line readings of literature brought to you by local writers as well as real live impersonators of famous American literary figures.

As we hurtle down the information superhighway, it is necessary to remember that, while information access has always been an important function of the public library, it has never been, nor will it ever be, the most important aspect of what a library means to a community. The library is a place for a lifetime of growth, a place to attain self-understanding, to experience beauty, to gain wisdom, to enlarge our horizons, and, ultimately, for the pure excitement of learning.

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