

DIRECTOR'S BRIEF

Infinite Learning at Coast Community Library

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**INFO 287 - THE
HYPERLINKED LIBRARY**

**SAN JOSE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

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Objective

TO SERVE THE POINT
ARENA, CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY WITH
THE OPPORTUNITY
FOR EVOLVING
EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS, EMPOWERING
MENDOCINO COUNTY
PATRONS TO
COMMUNICATE WITH
LIBRARY STAFF
ABOUT WHAT AND
HOW THEY WISH TO
LEARN.

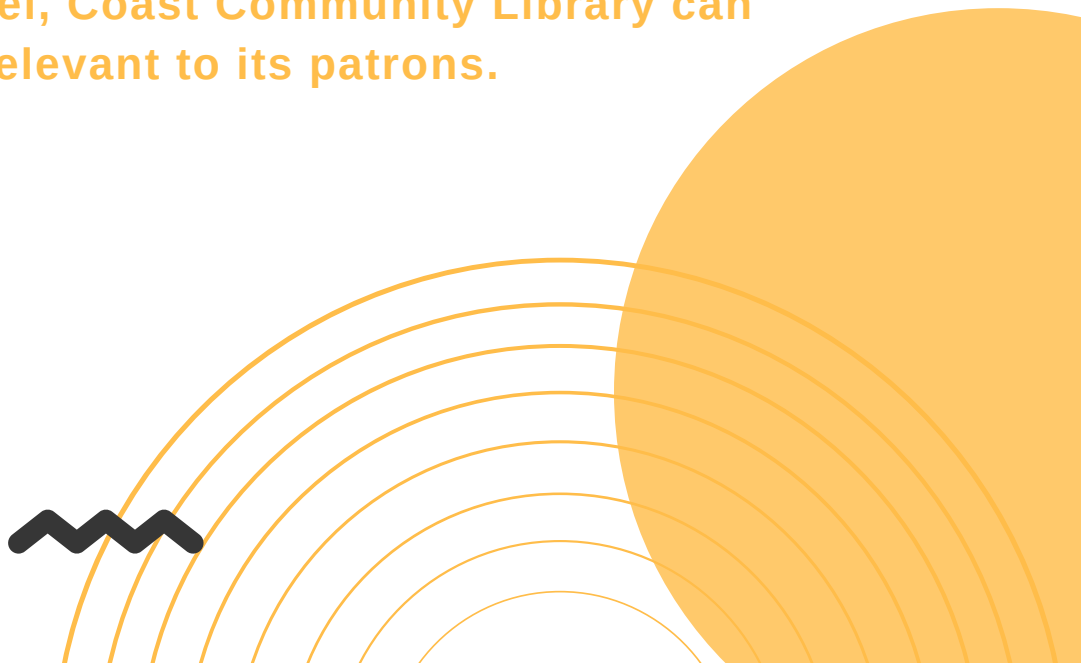


Executive Summary



PATRON PARTICIPATION

With the potential of Mendocino County library programming once again being offered at the beginning of 2022, the opportunity to not only address the needs of the community but also get their participation in the planning process recommends a revamp of how that programming is offered. An infinite learning model is proposed, one in which the educational options shift as the needs and interests of the community evolve. Through requesting patron feedback, library staff can focus their efforts on programming that the population has shown interest in, which has the potential for greater buy-in and attendance from the people of Point Arena and the surrounding areas. Specific needs in the realms of technology, language, home improvement, cooking, and more can be addressed, and because of that specificity, gaps in knowledge can be pinpointed. Through this new learning model, Coast Community Library can stay vibrant and relevant to its patrons.



Introduction

Coast Community Library is a branch of the Mendocino County public library system located in the heart of downtown Point Arena in the old Mercantile building. Coast Community serves the small coastal towns of Manchester, Stornetta, Flumeville, Point Arena, Gallaway, Anchor Bay, and Gualala. Though small, the community serves a healthy tourist population each year and is home to a wide range of ages, Spanish and English-speakers, and the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester Rancheria. With such diversity, a library programming model that can ebb and flow—much like the Pacific Ocean itself—has the adaptability needed to keep library patrons engaged and their needs met. Using The Seattle Public Library’s (n.d.) Your Next Skill format, this brief proposes the learning model of programming requested by patrons with those requests being filled by library staff and/or community members and agencies.



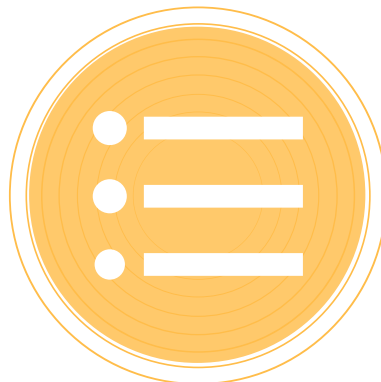
Infinite Learning

SCHEDULE A PROGRAM

The Seattle Public Library's (n.d.) Your Next Skill begins with a series of suggestions based on differing interests. From there, an online form can be filled out and submitted to the library in order to notify programming staff what the request is. The requests are not limited to in-house options since online, DVDs, ebooks, and audiobooks as formats can also be chosen (The Seattle Public Library, n.d.). Various age ranges and abilities are also choices to help focus the classes offered (The Seattle Public Library, n.d.).

While Seattle Public is located in an urban environment, this learning format can also be beneficial for an isolated, rural community. Broadband is still rare in some areas of the California coast, so the library can be an important avenue to teaching modern skills. As Breeding (2019) found, populations—like low-income middle schoolers—can be lacking in science, technology, engineering, and math skills. By partnering with other community organizations and creating STEM programming in libraries, children learned skills that are important for school and career success (Breeding, 2019).

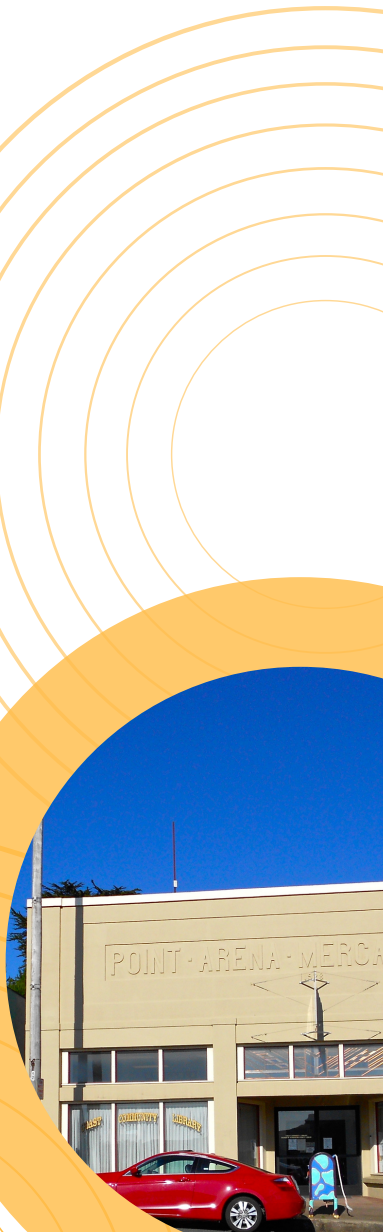
Mathews (2013) advocated for curating learning experiences in libraries. "Personalized virtual communities for teaching and research are primed to be one of *the next big things* for librarians" (Mathews, 2013). By creating a method similar to The Seattle Public Library's (n.d.) Your Next Skill, Coast Community Library could be addressing the gaps in STEM knowledge for children, teens, and adults as well as creating the virtual educational opportunities Mathews (2013) discussed.



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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

As Stephens (2016) stated, students are creators, interested in library-led lifelong learning. Options for both formal and patron-led programs could be offered, allowing for flexibility. Community partners could be brought in to help with teaching, be it the baker next door or the local telecommunications business two towns over. A banker from the credit union might offer budgeting or a “how to write a check” class. The Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers could teach a class on local history. Teens could learn how to be creative Dungeon Masters for Dungeons and Dragons thanks to the gaming community. The possibilities are endless, limited only by the imaginations of the library patrons. By embracing innovation in both what it offers as well as how it offers it, Coast Community Library will be positioning itself firmly within the community’s 21st Century access to knowledge.



Conclusion

While Coast Community Library has offered storytimes, a book club, quilting, Tai Chi, ukulele, a stamp club, and craft days for adults and teens in the past (Mendocino County, n.d.), there is the potential for so much more. The American Library Association (2020) stated that “By encouraging exploration and interaction with resources, connected learning may re-engage learners with some of the fundamental benefits of libraries, including access to a broad range of information and the freedom to learn at one’s own discretion.” By putting the control for programs offered into the hands of the library patrons, the needs of the community can be more fully addressed. The ALA (2020) explained that by engaging communities in the production of new knowledge, they “further connect and integrate the community’s role in the library.” Basing this programming model on an evolving format means that the library’s offerings diversify as the community’s demands change. By introducing a format similar to The Seattle Public Library’s (n.d.) Your Next Skill model, Coast Community will be showing openness and willingness to adjust and to continue to engage with its population.

References

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