Saluda and Richland Counties, SC

Information and Cultural Resources

Access Issues and Solutions

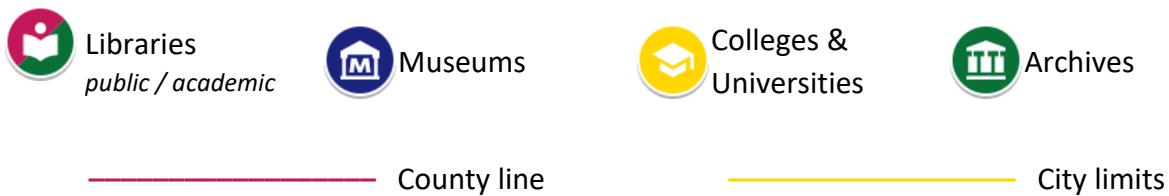Martha Bailey, Justin Barnett, Claudia Crowe

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Section I: Community Maps

The following maps are flattened versions of interactive digital maps, available for viewing online, of two South Carolina counties, Richland and Saluda. The same legend is used for both maps; on these flattened versions, multiple buildings of the same type within a short distance are compressed to a single icon and numbered instead of showing each icon overlapping. Likewise, in order to best fit the available information, outlying edges of each region have been cropped; full versions can be viewed at the provided online link, but as little information was lost as possible.

Maps were created using Google Maps and the My Maps function, using data from the US Census cartographic boundary files and publicly available data.
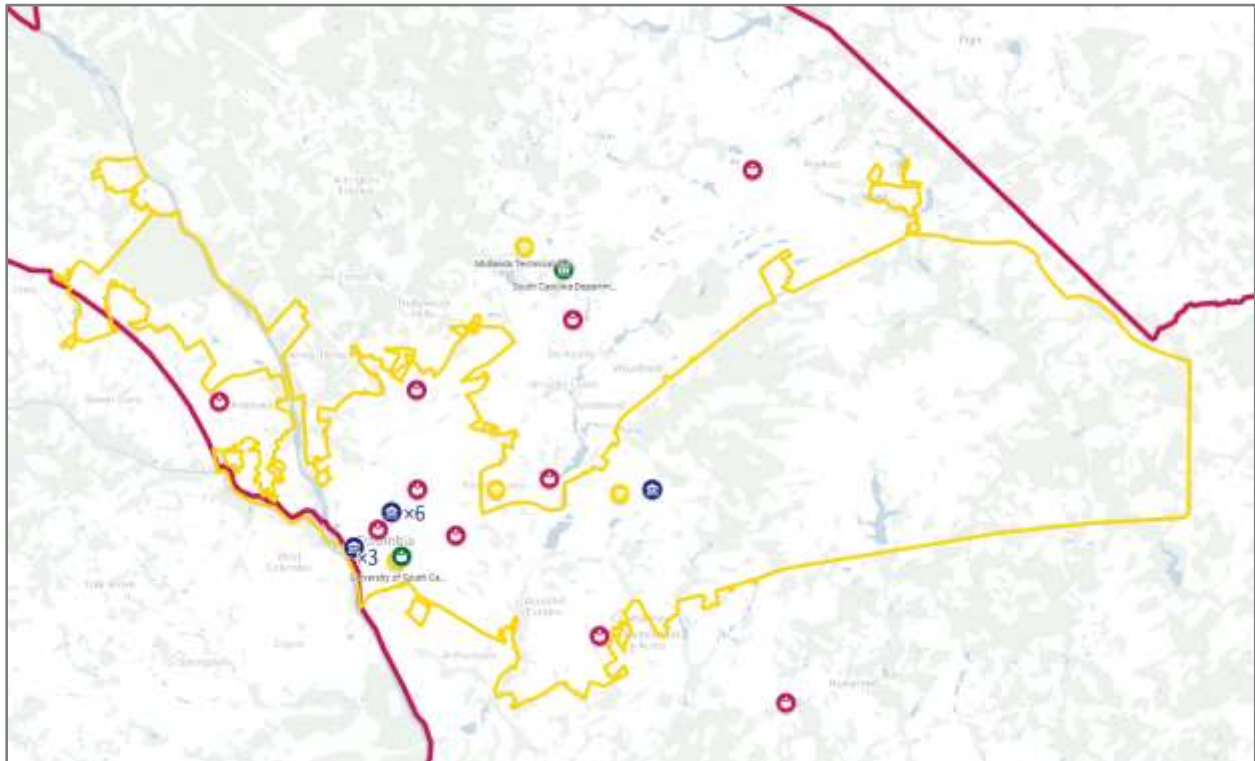
Legend

Libraries
public / academic   Museums   Colleges & Universities   Archives

———————————— County line   ———————————— City limits

Richland County

In the following map, three public libraries were present in outlying regions cropped in order to

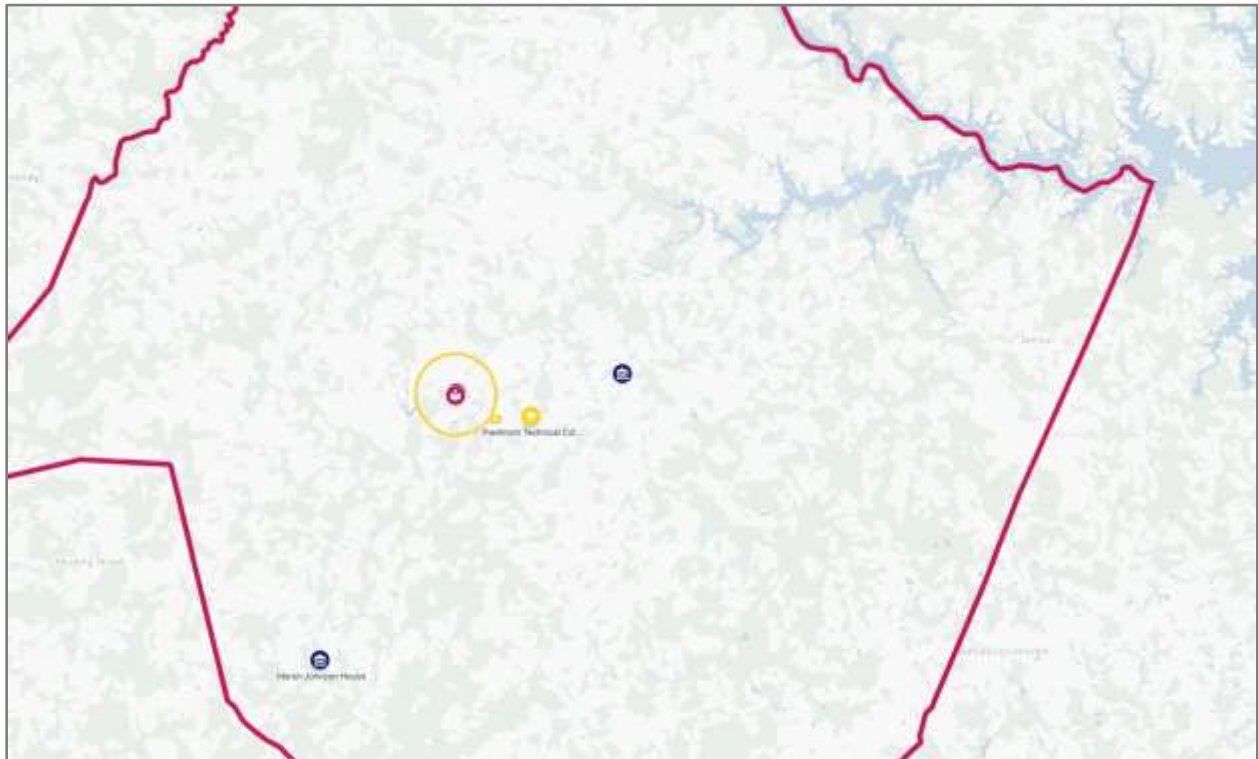make the primary region more identifiable. Digital version available at:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1UvEaOLbd55MAMNJEBE449db2cv91iNGp

&ll=34.00741916627598%2C-80.97080885000001&z=11

Saluda County

While the borders of the county have been trimmed, no sites were in the cropped regions,

though the Saluda Historical Society icon has been mostly hidden behind the public library one.

Digital version available at: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1MgnwfrhI_-e-

KovH0XTrUoWd8s-2ngDE&ll=34.00119515705929%2C-81.74103620000001&z=11

Site List

The following locations were included on the maps, listed in order of the legend:

R I C H L A N D
- Richland County Library System (13 sites)
- The US Army Chaplain Museum
- Columbia Museum of Art
- Robert Mills House and Garden
- Hampton-Preston Mansion and Gardens
- Woodrow Wilson Family Home
- Seibels House & Garden
- Mann-Simons Site
- EdVenture Children's Museum
- South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum
- South Carolina State Museum
- Midlands Technical College (three campuses)
- The University of South Carolina
- South Carolina Department of Archives
- Thomas Cooper Library

S A L U D A
- Saluda County Library System
- The Bonham House
- The Marsh-Johnson House
- Piedmont Technical College
- Saluda Historical Society

Section II: Access Barriers

Cultural and informational resources – in the form of libraries, museums, archives, and similar institutions – are, according to the American Library Association, "an American value… free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, and self-government" (2006). The institutions serve not only to enrich our society, but provide critical services to their communities, serving as hubs for legal and governmental forms and instructions (many Americans access tax documents or community regulations through their local library) as well as employment seeking, community-involvement,

and understanding local history. Despite their importance, however, not all communities have

equal access to these services and establishments. Innumerable factors can serve as barriers to

accessing information and cultural resources, from the simple and overt – simple limited

existence – to more subtle, such as language or socioeconomic barriers. Identifying the barriers

preventing a community from making good use of their information resources is the first step

to overcoming them. Looking at the provided community maps, it is immediately clear that

there are different barriers to information access in Richland and Saluda counties.

While Richland is filled with dozens of museums, libraries, and archives (due to

Columbia), Saluda has a single library and limited additional repositories and outlets for access.

Table 1, assembled from data in the 2017 Public Libraries Survey, provides a simple breakdown

of what the library systems for the two counties have directly available for their citizenry.

While this leaves out the museums and similar institutions, it quickly shows that Saluda's library service is significantly underfunded

TABLE 1: POPULATION, BUDGETS, AND MATERIALS

	Richland	Saluda
POPULATION SERVED	384,504	19,875
OPERATING INCOME	$26,883,763	$209,749
per capita	$69.92	$10.55
PRINT MATERIALS (#)	747,263	19,203
per capita	1.94	0.97

Data from Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2017

compared to Richland's, and has less than 3% of the books available (half as many per person,

but since books can be shared, the total access is greater than a per-capita number shows.)

Budgets clearly play a role in materials access then, and while Richland looks much better-off

here, compared to other county systems (such as the NY Public Library, who own 6.5 books per

capita) it also suffers. Funds are clearly *always* a concern when it comes to materials access, but

unfortunately one that cannot easily be changed.

Leaving aside funds and the specific amounts of materials available, other major

considerations include transportation, physical accessibility (impairments that may prevent

utilizing resources technically available), materials suitability (in the form of age or language

appropriate), and technological comfort (for accessing digital services), as well as numerous

other, less visible barriers (that are no less concerning).

Transportation	When materials are only available physically, users must be able to reach the institutions to make use of them. Driving is common, but not assured – both young and elderly users often cannot drive themselves, for instance. Public transportation can fill in gaps, but often increases the monetary or time cost to access materials.
Physical Access	Buildings must be accessible to those with motor disabilities, or many users cannot experience them. Materials inside may be inaccessible to the sensory impaired, requiring specialized tools or accommodations to be usable.
Language Suitability	While many Americans speak and read English, a sizable minority either do not, or do not do so well. Providing materials in languages common to the community enables greater access across multiple groups.
Technology	Digital resources require users to either have their own means of accessing them, or tools provided on-site. In addition, usage of digital materials may be intimidating to inexperienced users, requiring clear instructions and training to access.
Costs	While public libraries are generally free, additional costs and fees (overdue fines, rental fees for specialized equipment, etc.) can make using the materials a hardship for some users. Other institutions that require entry, usage, or membership fees likewise restrict a portion of the population from accessing them.

Within our two communities, all of these barriers show up in some form or another.

Saluda is only a medium-sized county, but the population is spread over some 450 square miles;

while the library is centrally located, it can still be nearly 20 miles for some users to reach it,

and public transport is extremely limited (Google Maps, 2020). In Richland, the greater number

of libraries helps, but some of the population is likewise distanced from nearby services

(Richland Library, 2020). Public transit is available throughout Richland via the Comet system,

which helps to mitigate physical access to sites further.

Both library systems, as well as a number of the museums in Richland (those operated

by Historic Columbia), are both ADA-compliant regarding physical space and provide

accessibility services for those with disabilities, and some offer customized accommodations

with prior notification; it is clear that many of the institutions looked at here are committed to

limiting the impact of disabilities on usage. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of linguistic

barriers; while Saluda county has a substantial Hispanic population (estimated at 16% as of the

last census), with nearly 21% of residents primarily speaking Spanish at home (Census Reporter,

2019), the library's collection contains less than 2% of their works in languages other than

English. In Richland, less than 10% of residents speak a language other than English at home,

but the library system has a larger proportion of non-English materials, as well as offering

bilingual reading sessions and similar events. The de facto status of English as the only language

information services are available in Saluda potentially creates a hard barrier for a significant

number of people, a fact that is explored in a paper by Heather VanDyne (2018). "If librarians

want the Spanish-speaking population to be a part of the library community, the library must

be willing to make itself part of the Hispanic community," she writes, looking at Lexington, SC

(which is immediately between Saluda and Richland) and their Bilingual Parent Program

partnership with local schools and libraries as an example of a means of a good method for

involving the Hispanic community.

One popular method of addressing physical access to materials, which has only become more prevalent in the Covid-era, is through digital services and resources. When users can access materials remotely, using their own computer, phone, or similar device, physical distance becomes irrelevant, and those with specialized access needs may be able to rely on their own dedicated tools. "Electronic distribution has clear benefits for certain users… these technologies provide a basic level of access that is not available in print documents without conversion," one article notes (Thompson, 2009), also mentioning that "individuals with physical disabilities [may] lack the fine motor ability needed to efficiently turn the pages in a print document. However, they can often operate computers more effectively…" It is important, though, to ensure that digital distribution methods use accessible formats and delivery means, which can be as much work as physically preparing a space.

In addition to digital format requirements, a key concern with digital resource access supplementing or replacing physical access to information resources is that it places much of the onus for access onto the patron, who needs not only a device able to access the material, but, generally, a reliable and consistent internet connection. Many libraries provide public access computers, but when those computers are in the library, we find ourselves back at the transportation barrier. Some provide equipment for check-out, the same way they would books, but computers are substantially more expensive (and fragile), making this a difficult proposition. And even then, when users have limited internet access at home—as is true for 35.4% of Saluda residents, and 20.1% of Richland (US Census Bureau, 2019)—devices can be little more than dead weight. Both Saluda and Richland county libraries have been testing out wireless hotspot rentals, sending home portable internet to users.

They are not alone in exploring hotspots as a solution; numerous libraries across the country are likewise experimenting in the same way, and seeing strong demand and significant results, even while others are advocating for more extensive solutions like the Detroit Community Technology Project, which sees mesh wireless rolled out to provide permanent broadband to an entire low-income neighborhood (Ayre, 2020). Solutions like this have their place, but they suffer in more rural areas; in Saluda, the wait-list is months long (The Library Corporation, 2020), and in Richland, the library system is relying on donations to fund their availability (Richland Library, 2020). In addition, looking at cellular coverage maps (which hotspots rely on), the majority of Saluda county does not have high-speed cell access available at all, and in Richland county, T-Mobile (who provides the hotspots used) only services the western side of the county (OpenSignal, 2020). Thus, while both library systems are working on overcoming the technological access barrier, it still remains, at best, incompletely solved.

One final barrier that stands out is cost of services. While public libraries are free, fines from misuse, misunderstandings, or miscommunications can turn an otherwise happy, dedicated user into someone afraid to return. "Some teens don't check out materials at the library as they know they may not be able to return them on time, and some have blocked library cards due to accumulated fines and fees they can't afford to pay," say Crist and DePriest, writing about fines as an access barrier (2018). The traditional role of fees, they write, is to teach responsibility; however, "the truth of the matter is that most children, and many teens, cannot get to the library on their own in order to return books on time, yet they're the ones penalized for situations beyond their control." Fines also serve as a significantly greater barrier to usage by low-income populations—who otherwise can most benefit from public resources—

because they represent a disproportionately large cost to them. In addition to library fines and

fees, access to many cultural repositories, like museums and art galleries, require admission

paid, which disincentivizes poorer or larger families from attending, limiting the information in

them to only a portion of society. Of course, running and managing information and cultural

institutions is not free, but placing additional burdens on those least able to shoulder them is

far from an equitable means of ensuring access.

  While there are other barriers—barriers that change based on individual locations,

users, and staff—these five are those we find most concerning when it comes to accessing

informational materials in the areas we studied. Not all of them are solvable, especially with

two project proposals, but they are aspects we endeavored to keep in mind while working and

planning during the remainder of the assignment.

Section III: Sharing Activities

While a number of cultural and informational sites are available, the two county library systems

not only share a fundamental mission but can also benefit from working together to spread out

costs and maximize viewers. Both work from a similar base statement: Richland County's

missions statement is "we help our customers learn, create, and share," and Saluda's

"connecting Saluda County to literacy, information, technology, and learning" is similar

(Richland Library, 2020; The Library Corporation, 2020). There is less direct emphasis on

creation—as opposed to consumption—in Saluda's, but speaking to a librarian who works

there, that is part of the goal.

  By looking at and proposing partnerships between these two organizations, we are able

to suggest means of serving both of their goals and reaching a broader base. Moreover, by

sharing the resources generated by these cooperative activities, they are able to provide

additional services to constituents and patrons that might otherwise be more locationally

limited; in short, learn and connect to materials outside of the local space. Digital services—

recognizing the technological barriers discussed in the previous section—make for programs

that can be shared across county or even state lines easily, which is an advantage in the current

climate, where the Covid pandemic has undeniably changed the American lifestyle. Libraries

and librarianship are not exceptions.

As nearly all in-person contact halted, librarians have had to creatively entice their

patrons' attention virtually. Events that were once held in group conference rooms now stream

online; shelves browsed by patrons are replaced by holding requests and curbside pickup. Even

though many libraries reopened to the public after a few months into the pandemic, many

others keep their doors closed, or limit usage, and many patrons still appreciate the

convenience of streaming and remote access. By focusing on two activities that partner with

regional institutions while delivering their information digitally, the libraries are able to not only

continue engaging patrons and directing attention to local services but fit solidly into this new

safety paradigm. Both activities are explained briefly below, and planned in detail in the

following section.

Historical Tours, Virtually

The Virtual Historical Tours program, proposed as a joint venture between Richland and Saluda

county libraries, brings local physical sites of historical or cultural impact to the library for

digital viewing. This virtual educational event links the local history sections of the libraries to

the actual physical locations, all while entertaining patrons in the safe, exposure-free

environment of their own home. These provide educational instruction and contribute to life-

long learning. Even elementary students will enjoy seeing historical figures as more than names

in a textbook, but as characters dressed in period clothing and displaying what life was life

decades ago. Characters coming to life are much more memorable than options on a multiple-

choice test for social studies class. It is our hope that these tours will spark interest in history

for our young patrons, and for our older patrons, supplement their existing knowledge.

Cooking, Recipes, and Food

As an expansion of the Richland library's in-person cooking classes (currently on hold) and

Saluda's occasional partnerships with food banks and local farmers, the Cooking, Recipes, and

Food program is a shared activity involving curating and posting low-cost, multi-ethnic or

historical recipes through blog posts on their websites every month. The overarching goal is to

utilize existing connections, partnership, and knowledge to provide low-cost recipes utilizing

ingredients that are available cheaply or from the local food bank for an underserved

community. Different recipes each month from volunteers and the Richland County's historical

cookbook collection (The Walker Local and Family History Center, 2020) provide variety of

interest, and it marries local connections, service, and community health with information

delivery.

<div align="center">

Section IVa: Historical Tours, Virtually

</div>

Our goal is to provide a view of stepping back into history, but virtually. The set-up of the

activity would require planning, scheduling, and coordinating between the library branch and

the volunteers at the historical sites. Richland County has several locations appropriate for this

activity, including the childhood home of Woodrow Wilson and the Robert Mills House &

Gardens. Likewise, Saluda County also has historic locations appropriate for virtual tours. While being a county of about 20,000 people (US Census Bureau, 2019), Saluda's claim to fame is the two American veterans who died at the Alamo. American hero William Travis penned a letter "To the People of Texas and All the Americans in the World" when he realized he was surrounded by the enemy and would bravely face death. Travis' second cousin, John Bonham, also died in the attack. John Bonham's family home was built in 1780 and still stands in Saluda today (Mike Sigalas, 2009; SC Picture Project, 2010). These initial sites with low foot-traffic (especially in the Covid-era) are ideal first partnerships for a program such as this.

Preparatory Steps and Partnerships

Staff need to identify relevant local history books or biographies relating to the chosen site. If these items are lacking, the library staff needs to order books relevant: including biographies, history books, and lifestyle books about the time period. Next, the library should create a display (both on-site and digitally) informing the public about the collaboration with the local historical place.

Secondly, the library staff and the historical volunteers need to work together to decide on a date to film the tour. Details such as time of day to film, which volunteers to speak, and who will film must be decided. While smartphones have a video option, the staff may want to find a video device that creates a more polished look. Historic Columbia, a Richland county non-profit, already has several virtual tours available that may be good places to start or use as preliminary examples (Historic Columbia, 2020).

Finally, the library's website and social media pages should promote and inform patrons of the virtual historical tour. Appropriate staff—library or site, depending on the specific

partnership—can edit and prepare the completed videos, and the library should make it available through both promoted program pages as well as within their catalog search system, if media entries are supported.

Project Evaluation

The success of the program can be evaluated through patron surveys located in person, over the website and social media, and even over circulation statistics of related books. There is potential for this activity to become a statewide initiative to educate the citizens in local history. Also, educators from elementary school to college level could tie these visits into school curricula. Further partnerships with reenactor groups or volunteers willing to dress in period costumes could enhance and draw more attention to the activity.

Section IVb: Cooking, Recipes, and Food

The Richland County Library and Saluda County Library in South Carolina will partner to share low-cost recipes through blog posts on their websites every month. The short-term goal is to overcome the potential access barriers in the two communities. The partnership of the Richland County Library with the Saluda County Library will greatly benefit part of the community who experiences access barriers — low income, little to no transportation, and lack of education and technology. This shared activity is crafted to allow individuals to fulfill family responsibilities, such as supporting younger siblings and children, as well as meeting the needs of the individual. By partnering with local food banks to create recipes based on foods that will be available, the program supports their missions and enhances the assistance the food bank can provide, while supporting everyone, both those who need assistance from the bank or not. Working with local

chefs or promoting family recipes promotes community involvement and can direct some attention to local businesses at the same time.

Preparatory Steps and Partnerships

The first requirement is a librarian, or library worker, willingly to create or find recipes and share on the library's website via blog posts. One librarian can take on the role of creating and posting the recipe for the library for the month that is designated or the librarians at the library can rotate the responsibility. Said individual coordinates with the local food bank or chef partners to craft recipes based on ingredients found within the food bank. The library worker(s) needs to at least be knowledgeable of what food the food bank carries, what is always in stock, the most requested food items, and when donations, such as large donations, take place.

When it comes to chef assistance, the program benefits from locals willing to donate some of their time; in theory, their assistance is both valuable to the community and free exposure, though it should be remember that this is still volunteer effort, and respected as such. The top-rated restaurants in Saluda, SC on TripAdvisor are possible restaurants that can offer a local chef and/or potential recipes to share that are already loved by the community: Mig's of Saluda, Lunch 'N Treats, Marquita's of Saluda, Matthew's Oak and Hickory Barbecue House, China House, and La Providencia (TripAdvisor, 2020). This allows the recipes to be a variety of styles and the community's influence will be represented.

Additionally, when possible, recipes should be posted in both English and Spanish (the two most common languages spoken in both counties), which may require aid from a community translator.

Project Evaluation

The partnership between the Richland Library and the Saluda County Library allows both public

libraries to benefit and serve their two communities. The Richland Library already shares blog

posts from their librarians on their website and has at least one blog post with a local chef

showcasing dishes to make for date night (2020). The Saluda County Library does not have

anything similar. It introduces residents to computer technology of online blogs, and teaches

patrons to learn healthy eating habits, meal preparation and production, self-sufficiency, and

the ability to create these meals from home (an important lifelong skill). Together the two

libraries will use these community partnerships to—metaphorically—"teach their patrons to

fish".

<center>Section V: Program Value</center>

The 2011 global seminar in Salzburg issued a report that provides strong recommendations for

developing informational connections between libraries, museums, and their patrons, as well as

a series of guidelines for evaluating partnerships and programs (The Institute of Museum and

Library Services, 2011). The recommendations focus on five general questions, and they serve

as a good means of evaluating our proposed programs. Each question is quoted from the report

and then addressed, below.

> How can libraries and museums use their many resources and strengths,
>
> including their collections, spaces, and people, to reflect cultural and
>
> demographic shifts and bridge cultural differences? How do they select the
>
> stories they tell and the services and experiences they offer? (2011, p. 20)

Both of our proposed activities focus on local institutions and partnerships, making use of resources already present and repurposing them to allow greater exploration of cultural space. The museum tour notably places weight on cultural monuments already deemed "historical," which might leave out things of newer or more atypical value to the community, but the food program specifically looks to work with different parts of the community, highlighting different ethnic and cultural groups each month. It is, of course, important that in practice it lives up to the plan, rather than simply working with the same recipes and partners each month. We hope to address that concern with the rotating librarians involved and library branches.

What knowledge and skills do our publics need and want, and how are museums and libraries responding to these needs? How do libraries and museums tap the knowledge and skills that their publics can bring to their institutions? (2011, p. 21)

According to the Saluda food bank and the regularity (pre-Covid) of the cooking class at the Richland Northeast Library, community engagement is high. Likewise, Historic Columbia has already begun making virtual tours available to address the limited advisability of in-person viewing during the pandemic, indicating that there is some demand. By working with community members and other institutions on these projects, we hope to community expertise into the library programs, and then in turn spread that expertise throughout the community.

How are new technological innovations changing the ways people communicate? How can the participatory nature of the new technologies

enhance the way libraries and museums and their users interact and connect?

What implications do online social media platforms and the extensive use of

digital technology and images by libraries and museums hold for the

collections, physical spaces, and architecture of these institutions? (2011, p.

23)

A decade ago, virtual tours would not have been a feasible option; with the ubiquity of

smartphones with high-quality cameras and regular, if not ubiquitous access to high-speed

internet, this is an activity enabled by changing technology. Ideally, however, this should

supplement—not replace—existing, non-technological viewing, thus opening up utilization

without closing it off to those without consistent internet access. The Richland library system is

already utilizing social media with their blog posts and promotion; the proposed Cooking,

Recipes, & Food program just expands on that to draw in more users. Additionally, both

programs should allow us to draw attention to existing collections (such as the Cookbooks and

Menu collection), and low-traffic historical sites (like the Bonham house).

What special and new skills do library and museum professionals need now

and in the future? How do library and museum professionals address such

social needs as bridging cultures and connecting to new demographics in their

communities? How do they respond to the rapidly changing nature of the

new technologies? Is professional training designed to meet these needs?

(2011, p. 25)

Staying inside our library walls and cultivating book collections—while pleasant—is no longer enough when it comes to engaging the community and ensuring that we are serving as ethical, diverse storehouses of knowledge. We need to develop programs like these, that involve the public we serve and draw on their strengths and knowledge, adding it to the materials we collect and store. In the wake of internet blogs and social media, documented knowledge is showing up in places we never would have expected. Old expectations ("Wikipedia will never be a useful source!") are, if not incorrect, at least warrant reconsideration. Vivienne Eades examines the role of fashion blogs as an information medium, noting that "in view of the vast amount of subject-specific information being created, updated, and read on a daily basis… there is a gap in the research investigating how are users are using and can use blogs to find information." (2011) The traditional concept of print-media as the storehouse for "real" information is questionable in light of these changes, and librarians need to learn to find, evaluate, store, and make use of sprouting digital resources for the benefit of their patrons. Our hope is that the Cooking, Recipes, & Food program will develop some of that behavior and increase librarian comfort with information disseminated in such a fashion.

> How can libraries and museums better understand, demonstrate, and
> articulate their social, cultural, educational, and economic value to societies
> and to their own communities? How can they measure and assess success?
> What kinds of processes for accountability do they need to have in place?
> (2011, p. 27)

The value provided by these services is—hopefully—evident by their utilization. Both communities have seen significant use of their food services; site visitation statistics are

currently unavailable, but virtual tours are trackable. Digital metrics allow library staff to

determine how effective the program and posts are, and focus on stronger or more well-

regarded areas, offering information and low-cost recipes and multiethnic style dishes to the

community in one program, and focusing on high-interest locations and related sites for the

other. Developing accountability checks for these programs is tricky when working in

hypotheticals; in theory, we want to see varied recipes and tours that focus on different areas.

In practice, however, these programs rely on community engagement and partnerships that

may not be *developed* with more varied groups. We can plan and suggest outreach and

incorporating minority groups or representation, but the participating libraries really must

police themselves, regularly evaluating their content and determining if it has become

repetitious or one-sided. All information may be valuable, but all of one selection and none of

any others makes for a poorly rounded collection.

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