

american libraries

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PLUS

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CONTENTS

AMERICAN LIBRARIES | NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011 | VOLUME 42 #11/12 | ISSN 0002-9769

34 COVER STORY GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY: PUTTING YOURSELF OUT THERE

Fresh ways to energize
support for libraries

BY LAUREN COMITO, ALIQA
GERACI, AND CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE



Features

38 HELPING WARRIORS UNLEASH THE POWER OF THE PEN

A library writing workshop helps veterans
share their experiences

BY AMY HARTMAN AND HOLLY BAUMGARTNER

42 ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED Finding, archiving, and creating games in libraries

43 SERVING PLAYERS THROUGH SELECTION

BY ERIK BOBILIN AND NICOLE PAGOWSKY

44 SUMMER READING LEVELS UP

BY GREG LANDGRAF

45 PRESERVING BITS

BY GREG LANDGRAF

Updates and Trends

12 ALA

16 PERSPECTIVES

27 NEWSMAKER: Philip Levine

Departments

4 AMERICANLIBRARIESMAGAZINE.ORG

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

30 DISPATCHES FROM THE FIELD

A Guide to Buying Ebooks BY SUE POLANKA

31 INTERNET LIBRARIAN

Readers Are Fundamental BY JOSEPH JANES

32 IN PRACTICE

Information Literacy 2.0 BY MEREDITH FARKAS

PEOPLE

46 CURRENTS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

48 YOUTH MATTERS

Reach Out through Outreach BY ABBY JOHNSON

49 NEXT STEPS

A Competitive Advantage BY BRIAN MATHEWS

50 LIBRARIAN'S LIBRARY

Occupying Technology BY KAREN MULLER

51 ROUSING READS

Hard-Boiled Mysteries and Soft-Boiled Poets

BY BILL OTT

52 SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES

New Products and a Case Study

OPINION AND COMMENTARY

6 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Display of Strength BY MOLLY RAPHAEL

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Transforming ALA BY KEITH MICHAEL FIELS

10 COMMENT ENABLED

Letters and Comments

28 PUBLIC PERCEPTION

How the World Sees Us

29 ON MY MIND

An Unplugged Space BY AMANDA WAKARUK

AND MARC TRUITT

56 WILL'S WORLD

No More Kidding Around BY WILL MANLEY

JOBS

54 CAREER LEADS FROM JOBLIST

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advertisers | page

All-Tag | 13 • American Psychological Association | 3 • BioMed Central | 17 • Drexel E-Learning, Inc. | cover 2 •
Geico | 24 • Innovative Interfaces | cover 4 • Learning Express LLC | 18 • Mango | 7 • Midwest Tape | 5 •
Recorded Books | cover 3 • Rutgers | 15 • San José State University | 23 • VTLS, Inc. | 9
American Library Association • Buyers' Guide | 2 • Conference Services | 33, 37 • JobLIST | 55

Cuyahoga County Checks Out Boopsie's Checkout App

When the library/vendor relationship is one of open communication, respect, and mutual desire for excellent customer service, everyone wins—the library, the vendor, and most importantly, library users. Both libraries and vendors bring something valuable to the table: libraries, a deep ground-level knowledge of their customers' needs, and vendors the know-how to help libraries realize solutions to meet those needs.

Take the collaboration between Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library and Boopsie, Inc. They launched the CCPL Mobile smartphone app and the Boopsie BookCheck feature—an example of how libraries and vendors can achieve win-win-win solutions through open dialogue and an exchange of ideas.

Customized service

CCPL's vision is to be the most convenient public library in the nation. To realize that vision, CCPL staff members have dedicated significant time and effort to understanding their customers' needs and finding innovative ways to deliver service, particularly in the rapidly growing realm of mobile technology.

Americans are increasingly relying on mobile devices as their primary tool for accessing the internet and digital media, and this trend shows no signs of slowing down. According to Pew Research Center, 82% of American adults are now active cellphone users, and approximately 24% use mobile apps.

"We have to meet our customers on their own terms," said Jim Hapri-

an, information technology director for CCPL. "We decided to pursue a mobile app for our library because we feel mobile technologies present an excellent opportunity to expand our reach to new and existing customers.

"We spend a lot of time thinking about how we can deliver better service, and we feel that nobody knows our customers as well as we do," added Haprian. "We wanted to work with a vendor that understood and respected our knowledge as library professionals. I think we found that in the Boopsie team."

Birth of BookCheck

CCPL and Boopsie's initial conversations focused on convenience, attractive aesthetics, and value-added functionality, specifically a feature that would allow customers to check out materials with their smartphones. "We felt our customers would see added value in having the ability to use their smartphones to check out our materials," said Haprian, "and the team at Boopsie wholeheartedly agreed it was an enhancement to the convenience of mobile worth developing."

Conversations between CCPL and Boopsie eventually led to the birth of BookCheck, an app feature that allows users to check out library materials by scanning items' barcodes with their smartphones.

"Boopsie BookCheck is the first feature to really demonstrate the power of the mobile platform in the library setting," Boopsie CEO Greg

Carpenter said. "The CCPL team's focus on efficiency and convenience made them ideal collaborators in the development and delivery of this game-changing functionality."

Libraries and vendors can achieve win-win-win solutions through open dialogue and exchange of ideas.

The collaboration resulted in Cuyahoga County Public Library becoming the first library to feature BookCheck in CCPL's Boopsie-developed app, CCPL Mobile,

and the response has been tremendous. The app has been downloaded by more than 4,500 customers and more than 3,900 items have been checked out using the BookCheck feature. The more it is used, the more CCPL Mobile will reduce waits at checkout lines and enable staff to focus on helping customers find materials and access other library services.

Libraries across the country have since contacted CCPL and Boopsie to seek guidance in developing their own mobile strategies; Los Angeles Public Library now offers the app branded as LAPL to Go.

"From my perspective, our collaboration was a total win-win-win," said Haprian. "Our customers love CCPL Mobile, and I have no doubt that many libraries will adopt the BookCheck feature."

"We are committed to maximizing the reach and utility of libraries around the world," added Carpenter. "Our customers play an important role in helping us deliver against this goal."

—*Pamela Kahl, president, verbal800 Communications, and Robert Rua, assistant marketing director, Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library*