Council Bluffs Public Library serves the community of Council Bluffs and contract towns in Western Iowa with a total service population of 66,000. We started video game collections and programs in 2009, and maintain a collection of around 800 video games. We started Board Game collections in 2016 with a collection of 125 games. And we added VR equipment to our Makerspace in 2018 with the purchase of an Oculus Rift system and 360 degree cameras.

Lied Public Library serves the community of Clarinda, Iowa and Page County Iowa with a total service population of around 7,500. We started offering game nights at the library in 2015 and began circulation board games in 2018. Our board game collection consists of 60 games and grows a little each month. Virtual Reality and our gaming PCs were also added in 2018.
We hope you’ll leave today with a better understanding of how you might be able to incorporate or improve your library’s services and programming with board games, video games and virtual reality, by exploring how a large and small public library offer these services. We hope that you also learn from our successes and our mistakes.

We’ll look at the why, and how of programming and other issues we’ve dealt with you so you don’t have to! SO, hopefully you’ll be prepared when you return to your library or classroom to know if any of these will work in your environment.

We will discuss funding at the end of the presentation, but first we would like to talk about why we have games in our libraries, how we do it, and lessons learned.
Board Games
Why we do it

- Destination
- Education
- Circulation
- Outreach
- Programming

When we talk about board games we’re talking about traditional gaming: board games, puzzles or card games. Reasons why we include these in our library collections and programs...

1: Maybe you are doing it already anyway, and if you are, doing it is worth doing well. We have had board games at Council Bluffs for many years, and this was a way to formalize and expand something that was already taking place.

2: Destination: Libraries are community space, 3rd space. Bringing BG into the library provides an on-demand activity for the community that is positive and prosocial. Inclusive communities can come together around gaming, as can transcend economic and social barriers.

3: Education: Games can teach spatial reasoning, math, critical thinking, group work and cooperation. There is plenty of literature out that says playing games is beneficial to raising IQ and making learning enjoyable. New core standards have decreased the amount of time dedicated to for student play in schools. Schools and business now see the value of play-based learning, and are exploring “gamification” as components of their curriculum.

   Example: The collection is popular with social workers doing family visitations, with people serving adults with learning disabilities, and with youth mentorship programs. Some of these people have expressed that games are a fun way to teach social skills and regulating emotions.

4: Circulation Games will check out regularly, but not enough to impact your circ report, so circulation shouldn’t be the primary consideration.

   For example: Since CBPL added board games in 2016, they have circulated 2,000
times. On its own, this is not a significant number, until you consider one check may be 5 program participants.

5: Outreach - games are portable. You can take them to assisted living facilities, for example, again building on your existing outreach programs or learning objectives.

6: Program opportunities: With a collection you can rely on some regular, recurring attendance not unlike a book club or after school club

   At Council Bluffs we have an informal Board Game Night event twice a month.
A
One of the biggest draws is the number of possibilities that traditional board gaming brings to the library and community.

Often these programs are:
- Easy and inexpensive to run, need limited footprint (just tables and chairs) (Patrons can bring own supplies and games)
- Can often be patron-led or passive/asynchronous programs
  - Our Bridge and Domino Clubs have all been started by patrons with the library only promoting and having the coffee, chocolate and space (Cribbage, Mah Jongg, Puzzles or chess on tables).
- Offer tables or games for those with different skill levels or pair advanced players with beginners so they can teach.
- Are you better than a Librarian? - Winter program held weekly that had people drop in to try to beat a librarian at one of their favorite games - rotated staff each week.
  - Allowed a personal connection between patron and staff.
  - Allowed staff to teach a game to patrons.
- BYOBBG - Bring Your Own Board Game - share a personal favorite
- Make Your Own Board Game program - use miscellaneous pieces
and/or 3D printer.
**Cataloging.** We are librarians, so our Board Games collection should be cataloged. If your “collection” is a stack of games tossed in a corner of your teen area, you lose librarian points. There are often records for Board Games in OCLC, but it is nice to include extra data. For example:

- Include links to instruction documents & “how to play” videos
- Include important data about # of players, ages, and duration
- Include links to PDF copies of consumables - things like score sheets or other forms that may need to be reprinted

**Policies & Procedures.** Determine who the collection is for? Will the collection circulate? How will you account for lost pieces? What about fines for lost pieces?

- **In House Use.** At CBPL games are checked out for in-house use. It is like an “on demand” program that doesn’t require much for staff involvement. We check the game out, it is used in the building, and we give it a quick inspection when it is returned.

**Collection Development.** Plan on weeding and adding just like you would any collection - something to consider if you are buying with a one-time
grant. You may start a collection using a pool of grant or memorial money, but keep in mind that once the collection is established, you need to maintain and grow the collection.

**Books.** The Council Bluffs Library has a circulating collection of tabletop RPGs (role playing games). We have had good success with “learn to play D&D” programs, and people meet in our building every week to play through their campaigns.
A. Processing.
Use ziplock baggies & sharpie markers to label quantity and type of game pieces.
List all pieces on inside of lid as well as circulation rules.
Barcode/rfid as you would a book. Spine stickers/labels is the same as books.
Grifiti Bands are WONDERFUL to hold boxes together and they last - regular rubber bands do not.

Menus.
Print and laminate or put in a binder. Set in a conspicuous space. These help when grandparents have grandkids coming to visit and want some games to play over the weekend, help non-gaming staff find and make a recommendation.
B

**Variety** - You want to have a good variety of games. Games for different audiences, ages, and tastes. Reviews are helpful in selecting titles, but don’t rely too heavily on reviews from one source. For example, the boardgamegeek website is great, but reviews skew in favor of heavy, dense games. Our best circulating games are kids games, classic games, social/party games, and light to medium weight strategy games.

**Staffing** - Don’t just buy games. You will want someone on staff who is knowledgeable about the collection. For example, CB Library has had a lot of success with gaming programs, but these require someone who is friendly, patient and good at explaining rules. It could be a staff person or a trusted volunteer, but you definitely want a collection expert.

**Audience** - Don’t ignore your audience. Consider who your program or collection is for. I personally think Chutes and Ladders is a terrible game, but some people love it - just like some people like terrible books. Listen to requests and suggestions.

- At CBPL we have found that Party Games are especially popular. We had an after school program called Monday Funday where students were bussed to the library every week. The most requested activity for this program was Werewolf - a game that can accommodate up to 75
players

- Older players will try new games. They often like a game if the mechanics feel familiar and fair. For example, our senior gamers can’t get enough of the game Splendor. It is a newish game but the mechanics of card drafting and set collection are similar to games they know. Older players tend to not like games that involve deception or games where you undermine other players.

**Maintenance** - Accept that things will get lost and damaged. Many game companies will replace missing pieces if you contact them. We have used our 3D printer to replace a few lost, broken or damaged parts. For example, our copy of the game Forbidden Island was returned missing a piece (ironically the “Lost Lagoon” tile). I contacted the company that makes the game and the send me a replacement piece free of charge along with a nice letter.

In Clarinda, they look at the playability of the game if a piece is missing to determine if we charge the patron.

**Donations:** Ask for donations of old games - you might end up with 10 copies of Monopoly, but you can use those copies to replace lost pieces from your circulating copy. At CBPL we have a big box of miscellaneous dice, pawns, timers, and other game pieces.
The discussion about “should we allow” video gaming in the library has shifted to “how best can we enable/facilitate gaming.”

**Destination**: Teens will want to visit the library. Libraries are a community space and bringing VG into the library provides an on-demand activity for the community that is positive and prosocial.

**Access**: Teens can experience new games on the latest game systems. We believe this creates social relevance for underprivileged teens whose parents can’t afford a console, games, and online subscriptions. Teens who feel socially relevant to their peers are less likely to drop out of school.

- Biggest draw are Teens, although the average age of a Video Gamer is 30-40. Many adults can afford the tech, teens cannot - BUT - our Gaming/Media computers are in our Lab which means anyone can access them
- Our Gaming Computers are “Media Computers” which means they have a lot of other non-gaming software such as 3D Modeling, Photo and Video Editing, Audio Editing and Mixing. This allows more use of the technology for non-gamers.
**Quality of Life:** Libraries have long been about providing access to information and entertainment. As those things become interactive, they become a logical extension of that core service.

**Programming** With a collection and equipment you can rely on some regular, recurring attendance. At Council Bluffs, gaming drives 90% of computer use by Teens - the rest is homework and social media.

**Circulation:** Last FY video game circulation at Council Bluffs was around 10,000 - flat from previous years. Even as companies move to digital distribution, and as other media discs drop off, circulation of optical game discs is mostly steady. Many in the community have a system, but games are very expensive. For games, there are more barriers to access - you generally can’t rent them online as you would a movie. Also, games take many days to play, so RedBox is unattractive.

**Connections:** (between both peers and library) Kids socialize around games. Games bring them into the library, they get cards and become lifelong patrons.

- This also means that they will want to play together and interact while playing (both online and with those seated around them).
B

**Theft:** Video games are high theft, which is not surprising when you consider a new Xbox, PS4, or Switch game sells for $60, and maintains good resale value compared to other media. At CBPL we used security strips and security cases, but games were stolen. We put out empty cases, and the cases were stolen. We currently put out color-coded laminated cards seen here. This allows people to browse available games while protecting the collection from theft. We also limit the number of games that can be checked out to mitigate potential loss.

**Consoles:** At CBPL we have all current gen consoles on carts with large, dedicated screens. We wheel these out for gaming programs. This is self-contained set up doesn’t require any set up, though consoles and games do require regular updates. The nice thing about mobile carts is that they can be put away and brought out only when needed.

**Ratings and challenges:** It is my experience that video games checked out by minors are challenged more regularly than books and movies. We don’t assume the role of parents. Guardians have the responsibility to determine their children’s—and only their children’s—access to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to specific library materials should so advise their own children. We do not use rating systems
to inhibit a minor's access to games.
  - In Clarinda they occasionally post information for parents on their facebook page about popular games - https://nationalonlinesafety.com often has some good shareable content on their social media

A
Software Updates: If you want to have gaming in a computer lab you need to consider…
  - We have a schedule of updating but also listen to patron feedback if they report issues.

Hardware: While some games will run on a standard PC, while others need more power.
  - Fortnite generally needs a good amount of computing power (we use the computer for dual purpose - media creation and gaming).
- **Tournaments** - these provide some structure to your game events. We had 3D printed trophies - for example one for a Mario Kart tournament with a turtle shell on the top.

- **Recurring events** - The Council Bluffs Library Teen Center holds a regular game series called “**Game On**” which features games on all current generation consoles and PCs. We have also offered multi-generational programs that mixes board games and video games. We have found that for programs, it is best to limit or “curate” game options - often we will structure an event around games like Smash Bros which is broadly appealing and can accommodate many players. We will only keep a few games installed on each console at once.

- **Minecraft.EDU** - Clarinda offered this for a few years, until their program changed and the changed to other coding platforms. While Minecraft was overshadowed by the rise of Fortnight, it has seen a big resurgence in the last year. As the bestselling game in the history of video games, it can be a good opportunity to teach coding in a familiar interface.

- **Retro Consoles** - these are popular with older people (people my age). Bring these out and set them up at a gaming program and they
instantly respond with nostalgia. We have a bunch of these at Council Bluffs, and have recently started circulating them. They are “plug and play” so they don’t require an account or anything other than a tv screen. We check them out in a bag along with the controls and an HDMI cable.
A

We provide the hardware and let the users sign up and create an account, they agree to the AUP

We use Deep Freeze or Reboot Restore RX Pro to reset after each user - keep their account secure and updates can be an issue

Mics and Volume - in the space where video games happen, it can get loud and interactive that's why we've added laptops for patrons outside of our lab.

Twitch - Patrons will also about streaming their games online via Twitch or saving and uploading to youtube.

Dual Purpose Machines - help offer more services at a lower cost

Gaming Computers cost a lot more - also staff time to update

**Infrastructure**: More and more games require an internet connection and can be taxing on a libraries bandwidth such as Fornite and Roblox.
- **Destination**: Again, libraries are a destination and a community space. Bringing VR into the library provides an on-demand activity for the community.

- **Access**: Although cost have come down, to get many full V.R. experiences, the cost of the equipment and the knowledge of how to use it and set it up can be a barrier to access. By providing VR you are helping close the technology access gap. Libraries started offering computer access at a time when few people had home computers. In 2019, many people have computers, but likely don’t have VR. With entertainment, industry, and design moving to immersive virtual spaces, not having access to the equipment means a sizable portion of the population is missing out. Companies like Facebook are placing big bets on VR, so it is only going to be more in demand as the technology evolves.

- **Connections**: Connections can be made between different area partners such as schools, employers and even other non-profits. Imagine an employer doing job training using the library’s V.R. system, or a high school history class exploring Anne Frank’s home as it was in World War 2, or an engineering class designing and visiting a virtual
• **Creativity.** At Council Bluffs we offer not only access to experience VR but the opportunity to create content in VR. One example is 3D modeling. We also circulate special cameras for capturing 360 degree photos and videos so people can create their own V.R. experiences. This has been used extensively by our Convention and Visitors Bureau who use 360 images to create virtual tours of buildings and attractions.
A

**Equipment:** PC-connected systems offer the most immersive experience (HTC Vive and Oculus Rift) but they often require a high end computer to run. $2500 for Clarinda’s system with the laptop and experiences. All-in-One headsets like the Oculus Go/Quest are becoming more popular and portable, but have limited experiences. Smartphone powered headsets are generally the lowest cost for the V.R. equipment, but require a smartphone.

**Experiences:** Games or experiences that are downloaded or streamed to the V.R. units. Hardware can limit what is useable on the device.
- Age Appropriateness
- There are a good number of FREE ones, but I’d suggest to try to set aside some funds.
- Intensity of experience (likely do not want to do the roller coaster if it’s your first time)
  - Oculus software does a good job showing this type of information

**Use of Equipment:** The PC connected system can take up a good deal of space with the cables and sensors,
- May want staff on hand to help with experiences (walk throughs) or technical support and monitor for issues (sickness or disorientation).
- Age limitations or signed waivers.
A

**Monthly Programming:** Patrons can drop in for 10-15 minute sessions to use the equipment with staff during the event.

**Outreach:** V.R. requires a beefy computer, cables, etc. While it is tempting to set it up and leave it, it is most useful as an outreach tool. Conventions, Nursing homes, etc.

- In Clarinda we’ve taken it to other area libraries, schools and even our school’s after prom (which meant I was up until 4 am!).

**Social:** V.R. is often a solitary experience. We make it more social by outputting the image to a screen. Others enjoy watching, and the user enjoys verbalizing the experiences.

**Experiences:** Select a variety of experiences that …

**Historical Tie-ins:** Apollo 11 moon land, D-Day.

**3D Modeling Camp:** Patrons learned how to make 3D models for our 3D printer but we viewed them in 3D in the Oculus Rift prior to printing.
B

**Testing:**
Test out equipment and new experiences as you may have to help walk patrons through the experience.
Some experiences require WiFi to use so that can impact outreach locations. So test it onsite.

**Safety:**
Keep a chair handy as some require you sit down.
Keep an eye on the cords and user. Watch for signs the user might be getting dizzy or sick
Keep bystanders out of play space - I’ve been hit before it hurts and might break the controller!
Some people react strongly to what they are seeing and may run or dive
The devices and experiences have recommended ages. You should take those into consideration when designing policies and procedures

**Upkeep:**
Keep lots of extra batteries or a battery charger
Order extra masks or cleaning wipes - these things get sweaty like you wouldn’t believe!
Have a plan to add games/experiences - Collection development just like Board Games and Video Games and books!

As Mentioned earlier, make it social so encourage others to watch, help or have activities for them to do while they wait.
Finally, don’t be afraid to mix Board Games, Video Games, and VR… You can have people playing board games while they wait to try VR.
All of the collections, programs, equipment, software, and devices we talked about were initially paid for using some combination of Grant funding, Donations, and Memorials.

In seeking grant funding, it is important to tie the project to a real learning objective or outcome. There is plenty of literature out that says playing games is beneficial to raising IQ and making learning enjoyable. New core standards have decreased the amount of time dedicated to for student play in schools.
Questions?

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