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A study of video services in Iowa public libraries

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A study of video services in Iowa public libraries

Abstract

One of the ongoing concerns of public libraries today has been the selection of materials and services that best meets the diverse needs and interests of their communities. Library boards have established selection policies and committees, and interlibrary loan networks to fulfill the needs of their customers. Nevertheless, the problems of audiovisual selection and services have been amplified due to incompatible formats. Careless selection has resulted in obsolete equipment and idle software.

A STUDY OF VIDEO SERVICES

IN IOWA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Robert Philip Moore

March 1984

This Research Paper by: Robert Philip Moore

Entitled: A Study of Video Services in Iowa Public Libraries

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the

degree of Master of Arts

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

One of the ongoing concerns of public libraries today has been the selection of materials and services that best meets the diverse needs and interests of their communities. Library boards have established selection policies and committees, and interlibrary loan networks to fulfill the needs of their customers. Nevertheless, the problems of audiovisual selection and services have been amplified due to incompatible formats. Careless selection has resulted in obsolete equipment and idle software.

The public libraries interest has been to maintain and improve existing services, and if possible, initiate new services. The technological advantages that video has to offer in terms of cost, information storage and retrieval, and the ability to share materials with other libraries should not be ignored. In addition to the technological advantages, the public's interest in video production facilities and public access channels has been growing. Jeffery (1982) stated libraries must start to think of television outside the family room and as part of library services as much as an encyclopedia. It was the purpose of this study to investigate libraries existing audiovisual services and their plans for future video involvement. The objective of the paper was to make recommendations to help libraries in the implementation of video services.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries that have considered involvement in video services have been faced with the problems of selecting equipment from incompatible formats and defining how video services are to be utilized. Choosing a format that would work well with existing audiovisual services has been a problem that has required serious consideration. The current state of library audiovisual service was investigated and recommendations were made that could help libraries identify potential video users and how video service will be utilized.

Procedures

After a thorough search and review of the literature, it was discovered that little has been done in the area of video services in Iowa public libraries. The lack of information indicated that research needed to be done in order to examine the future of video services in Iowa public libraries. A survey was distributed to the directors of Iowa's major libraries. They were responsible for completing and returning the questionnaire. The survey instrument was field tested in the Waterloo Public Library. The results from that survey indicated that the instrument measured the desired information. The libraries surveyed all had reciprocal borrowing agreements, and all had circulated 16 mm films. The survey divided all of the participating libraries into three main groups (a) libraries with no video services, (b) libraries with some video services, and (c) libraries with extensive video services. Comparisons of selected characteristics were made between and among these three groups.

Limitations

1. Only the major libraries in the state of Iowa were utilized in this study. The findings in this study might not be applicable for all libraries in Iowa.

2. Questionnaires were employed as a method of collecting data, which in themselves could have caused limitations due to a natural reticence of respondence that indicated attitudes concerning controversial issues.

Assumptions

1. The libraries questioned, all had staff capable of managing video services.

2. The libraries questioned were located in cities where there was an existing cable television franchise, and the libraries had access to a broadcast channel.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research studying the subject of video services in Iowa public libraries has been virtually nonexistent. Although there has been very little written on the subject, public library involvement in the use of video and cable television has been growing steadily since the early 1970's. While growth was documented, it was observed that libraries have been skeptical and hesitant in accepting the new technologies of the nonprint media into existing collections.

Studies by Genova (1978) observed that video and cable have been the most recent forms of nonprint media that the public libraries have now absorbed and applied in their operation. Phonorecords, films, and tapes were all innovations that first impacted on consumers, entered the educational system, and then found a place in libraries. Today, video and cable television have already entered the consumer market. Developments in videodiscs, satellites, and fiber optics have accelerated. As video technology became a part of our daily lives, corresponding demand on public libraries was to be expected. Apprehension of public library involvement in video and cable television has been understandable. Implementation of any new service requires long hours of planning, along with the problem of funding.

Libraries have been reluctant to add video services to their audiovisual departments, and have argued they have filled the audiovisual needs of their community through 16 mm film. Libraries

have also observed a tremendous demand for film and have not yet seen that demand for television services. That may have been true, but at the same time it must be remembered that film appeared in the affluent post war years. Video, on the other hand, emerged at a time when libraries began contending with serious financial problems (Genova, 1980). Even though some library administrators have ignored the presence of video, library use of cable television continues to grow, as did the whole video industry, quietly and unspectacularly in small and medium sized communities (Sirkin, 1980).

Librarians reluctant to acknowledge video and cable services have ignored the library's role as the community's information and resource center. Russell (1979) observed that there are television sets in 73 million households, and those homes account for 204 million Americans. That is about 97 percent of the population and is as close as you can come to a universal system of public communication. Libraries promoted themselves as the community's information center and as pleasing places to visit for all ages and segments of the communities they serve. As a high profile service agency, the public library has been, nonetheless, a logical catalyst for coordinating community cable affairs.

While no means problem-free, increasing use of video and cable is the strongest tool for public outreach and service extension available today (Genova, 1978). Not only is cable television the way to reach and communicate with the community serviced by its public library, it is observed that cable television will become

perhaps the most important means for interconnecting libraries, as well as connecting users to libraries (Cherry, 1981). Librarians are in the information business and cable television should be thought of first as a mechanism for exchanging information (Boyle, 1977).

The video technology has been the wave of the future for libraries currently using film for their information services. One reason has been video's versatility. The videodisc has a far greater storage capacity than microfilm, thus has offered an alternative means of preserving archival materials. The videodisc can also be programmed to give speed and accuracy to the retrieval and storage of information. With ever improving projection equipment, video holds as a cost-effective technical equal to film (Bahr, 1980). It has been argued that the videodisc format has been too unstable for libraries to get involved with the technology until the industry has agreed upon one standardized format. This should not have been a concern of the libraries if they had formulated the objectives for the type of service the videodisc was to perform.

We may find that the stylus verses the laser war is irrelevant as different markets develop uses for both (Markuson, 1981). The videodisc technology was developed primarily to supply the consumer or institutional customer with an inexpensive source of stored television programming (Sigel, 1980). What better type of storage and retrieval system could an information librarian desire, especially, when one thinks of all the time that has been spent threading microfilm readers, changing burned out light bulbs, and

repairing damaged film. In time, as the home videodisc and 1/2 inch
cassette market grows, libraries may be purchasing videodisc and
cassettes as readily as phonograph records and books. They may find
video recordings preferable to print sources, particularly for
how-to-do-it information (Bahr, 1980).

The advantages of the videodisc and videotape have slowly but
steadily found their way into the public library along with the
increasing popularity and demand for cable television. Libraries
have found themselves involved rather suddenly by the cable
companies wishing to obtain the cities franchise. During the
competitive bidding, cable companies have actively solicited the
support of local institutions, including the library, by offering
them channels, production equipment, and even part ownership in the
cable system (Smith, 1981). This has been an opportunity that
libraries may not see again for a long time, as many library
services to the public could be enhanced immediately with the
availability of cable television (Unabashed Librarian, 1980).

The content of library produced video programs is determined by
the interests and concerns of the community. In this way, the video
services of the library meet the informational needs of the viewers
in much the same way that the subject matter of the library's print
collection meets the needs of its readers (Russell, 1979).

The demand for local programming has been well documented in
the communities that have operating access cable facilities. The
requests for local programming has been very much in demand as

witnessed in the Monroe County Public Library. Smith (1982) found

the following:

> In 1980, Channel Three had 2,820 program requests. Forty-nine
> percent were for locally-produced programs. Fifty percent of
> the 9,000 subscribers on cable watch programs on Channel Three,
> one hundred percent of the children watch. Thirty-five percent
> of the audience watch city council meetings on a regular
> basis. Thirty-eight percent of the subscribers give "to get
> local programming" as a reason for subscribing to cable. (pp.
> 122-124)

The communities use and appreciation of video and cable

services have been observed closer to home. The Iowa City Public

Library has developed cable services and found that it has reached a

wide variety of customers each with their own special interests.

Tiffany (1981) stated:

> The benefits are just beginning to emerge; some of these
> include the video archive of the new building; the new "line"
> and taped dedication, with frequent requests for play back for
> those who couldn't attend; the elderly homebound woman who
> called to praise our refreshing alternative programming; the
> woman and child who learned about our computer catalog on cable
> and came in to try it out; the parents who called to see the
> story hour their child attended; the enthusiastic younger and
> older and in-between people who volunteer; the number and kinds
> of people who are learning to interact and influence their
> community. (pp. 50-51)

Interactive video looms on the horizon just waiting for

librarians to grasp it and make their services more accessible to

the public (Donaldson, 1982). Video involvement in Iowa's public

libraries has just begun to emerge. The literature has supported

this observation.

Chapter Three

DATA ASSEMBLY AND ANALYSIS

Data Assembly

Because of the interest in examining the status of video services offered in the public library, only the larger public libraries in Iowa were chosen. On September 29, 1983 those library directors were first solicited for information dealing with their current and future involvement in video services (Appendix A).

Questionnaires consisted of three, 8 1/2" x 11" pages. A number of questions allowed for more than one answer. This provided for a more comprehensive examination of responses. A list of Iowa's public libraries that were members of a film co-op was used to personally address letters to the directors of those libraries. A stamped self-addressed envelope was enclosed to ensure prompt returns. Thirteen out of fourteen questionnaires were returned. Two libraries were classified as not planning any video services, but planned services in the future. Nine Iowa libraries were classified as offering some form of video services.

Data Analysis

The first research question asked was, which types of audiovisual formats does your library offer in its collection? This question was asked to find out how much standardization of formats there was between libraries. All of the responding libraries offered 16 mm film service. LP records, filmstrips, and Super 8 film were very popular formats in most libraries. Nine of the libraries reported owning 1/2" VHS, while only three reported having the 3/4" videotape format.

It appeared that libraries were not strict in purchasing formats to coincide with other libraries. As shown in Table 1, the 1/2" VHS was the libraries choice for video services (See Table 1).

Table 1

Audiovisual Formats in Iowa Public Libraries

Formats	Number of Libraries
16 mm film	13
Super 8 film	11
Filmstrips	12
LP Records	12
Audio tapes	11
3/4" videotape	3
1/2" cassette (VHS)	9
1/2" cassette (BETA)	0
Videodisc (LASER)	2
Videodisc (CED)	1

In order to find out which video format individual libraries offered, the second question was asked; which of the following services does your library offer? The circulation of commercially produced videotape, hardware and software was the video service

offered most by libraries. Libraries freely circulated software but were reluctant to circulate hardware as demonstrated in Table 2 (See Table 2).

Table 2

Television Services Offered in Iowa

Services	Number of Libraries
No television service	4
Television for major network programs	4
Cable	3
Videotape	7
Videodisc	2
Circulation of library produced videotape	3
Circulation of commercially produced videotape	7
Circulation of commercially produced videodisc	2
Circulation of videocassette recorders	2
Circulation of videodisc players	1

The third and fourth questions asked, if the libraries that didn't offer any video services were planning to begin services in the future and if not planning or offering any services which best described their attitude toward television? This question was asked to find out libraries attitude towards video services. Of the four

responding libraries only two were not planning use of this service. The two libraries stated they would like to start television services, but monies were not available. Funding has been the major obstacle for libraries in planning video services.

The fifth question investigated type of format libraries would use if planning television services. The question was asked to find out which video format libraries planned to use in the future. The accepted format for future library applications was the 1/2" VHS tape. All libraries agreed on this format which indicated compatibility among libraries.

When asked how long libraries offered television services, question six, all but two had offered services for less than four years. This showed video services in Iowa are still in their infancy.

The seventh question in the questionnaire was, which types of video equipment do you own? As concluded in question one and two the 1/2" VHS was the most popular piece of hardware among libraries. Only three of the responding libraries indicated having owned 3/4" videotape, which is the accepted format for broadcast applications. Only four of the responding libraries owned television cameras, and only two had portable taping equipment. Libraries have not planned for video production. For a summary of the types of library owned video equipment see Table 3.

Table 3

Types of Video Equipment Owned by Libraries

Equipment	Number of Libraries
3/4" videotape	3
1/2" videocassette (VHS)	7
1/2" videocassette (BETA)	0
Videodisc (LASER)	1
Videodisc (CED)	0
Television camera	4
Portapac system	2
Projection television	3
Lighting equipment	2

Questions eight, nine, and ten asked which types of production facilities were available, how much mechanical trouble has been experienced, and how were the repairs handled? These questions were asked to see how much sophisticated equipment was in the libraries, to see if there has been a lot of mechanical trouble maintaining that equipment, and to see who repaired that equipment. Only one library possessed a two camera production studio. This finding showed libraries in Iowa were not geared for in-house production, and have experienced frequent problems. Some of these problems have been repaired by the audiovisual staff which shows minor repairs have been handled within the library.

The last three questions of the questionnaire dealt with promotion and community interest in video services. This was asked to see how libraries advertise their services and to see which individuals were most interested in video. Most libraries relied on brochures and verbal communication within the library for promoting video services. All libraries rated their communities as having formidable interest in video, with adult customers having the greatest interest.

Chapter Four

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the current and future status of video services in Iowa's major public libraries as defined in Chapter One. It was discovered through data gathered by a questionnaire that libraries possessed different attitudes and goals toward the type and scope of video involvement and service. The varied responses tend to support the position that libraries were serving their customers according to their particular wants and needs.

The data gathered from the libraries indicated a variety of answers. They were most diverse on which format they have used for their video services. The majority of libraries questioned have applied the 1/2" VHS format. This indicated that libraries using the 1/2" VHS format were planning to purchase commercially produced videotapes, and circulating them as they have books and phonograph records. Cable television utilization and in-house production have not yet found their place in the majority of libraries questioned.

The observation in the review of the literature that funding has been a major obstacle for libraries implementing video programs, has been supported by evidence gathered in this study. The libraries questioned which do not have video services have indicated an interest to initiate video services, but the monies were not available. This indicated that there was interest in public library video services and the libraries were willing to provide it.

According to the data gathered on how long libraries have been offering video services, of the nine libraries responding, seven have offered video services for three years or less. Two libraries have offered video services for at least four years or more. The responses have indicated that video services have just been discovered by the libraries and their involvement has been both hesitant and cautious.

Libraries with production facilities have produced and broadcasted programs over local cable channels. Libraries not yet geared for production have planned to purchase production equipment to broadcast their productions over the cable channel. This implied that libraries have investigated the community access channels and have encouraged individuals, businesses, and community groups to use their production facilities.

Libraries with videotape programs have indicated they did not circulate videotape to other libraries. Circulation of videotape has been an area that could be developed into the existing interlibrary loan network. Circulation among libraries has been possible due to the VHS format.

The long term success of libraries involvement in video services has been dependent upon their staff. Of the responding libraries most have employed a full-time audiovisual person, and those libraries that did not, have planned to create the position in the future. This has seemed to be the best direction to take because the problems encountered with video production have required a person with expertise in the area.

The promotion of the libraries video services has been an area which should not be overlooked. Most of the libraries surveyed relied upon brochures within the library or verbal communication to promote services. This was an effective form of advertising for people already using the library, but individuals, organizations, and community groups that have not been regular library users might not have been reached by verbal and in-house advertising. It was speculated that other forms of creative advertising could have been used to reach those groups.

Interest in video services was judged high by library communities. The group that showed the highest interest was the adult customer. This implied that there has been a genuine interest for video services and the public library has been the most accessible facility to the general public. The lack of response in the business and professional segments of the community indicated that they may not have been aware of the benefits video services offered and how they might have used video to promote their ideas.

Recommendations

The most pressing issue concerning the ability of the public libraries in implementing video services is funding. Money that libraries could have used to start video services has been used for automated circulation and technical services, surveillance systems, and other equipment to update existing library services. Applying for and obtaining grants to start or maintain video activities is one way, but this route yields to the problem of how the library will sustain its video program once funding has ended. It is

recommended that the library work with the local cable commission, city council, and use the franchise fee that the local cable company pays the city to start and maintain a video program. If this is not possible, the library should reallocate its budget to fund the video project. This method of funding would be slower and budgets meager, but would be more stable than grant money.

Whatever route the funding of video services take, all involved participants should have clear perceptions of how and who will use video services. It is recommended that the library conduct a study of the community it serves in order to anticipate the scope of interest in video services. The purpose of the study would be to develop concrete ideas of how video services would be used and supported. The study would also be used to develop goals and objectives on how the program will be developed. The study would survey community service agencies, educational institutions, municipal departments, business and industry, art and cultural groups, union and professional associations, hospitals and medical groups, and ecumenical religious organizations to determine how they might use video to provide services and information to their constituencies.

It is recommended that the library investigate the local cable franchise to find out which formats and types of equipment have been used for cable broadcasting within the community. When purchasing equipment, the library should look to see which is the acceptable format with the local broadcasting cable franchise.

The success of library video services will depend upon library personnel. The staff will have to become knowledgeable about the new service. It is recommended that the library add an audiovisual specialist to oversee the library's involvement and also to serve as a liaison between the library, the community, and the local cable franchise. Future study is recommended to investigate the use of video and community access channels with the library's information services and online catalogs.

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

1. Audiovisual Services: A method or system using training or educational materials that are directed at both sense of hearing and sense of sight.

2. Cable Television: The broadcasting of a still or moving image via coaxial cable to receivers that project it on a picture tube for viewing at a distance from the point of origin.

3. Community Access Channel: A designated frequency in a television transmitting station used for broadcasting groups or individual programs.

4. Formats: Any of the different types of audiovisual hardware and software.

5. Hardware: Audiovisual devices as distinct from program material suitable for those devices termed software (Rosenberg, Doskey, 1976).

6. Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement: An understanding in mutual sharing of materials between and among libraries.

7. Software: Any of the written audio, visual, audiovisual recordings or programs that may be inserted, played, or broadcast on various types of players.

8. Television/Video Services: A method or system of providing the broadcasting of a still or moving object to receivers that project it on a picture tube for viewing at a distance from the point of origin.

9. Videocassette: A plastic container that houses electromagnetic
    tape on which electronic impulses produced by the video and
    audio portions of a television program, motion picture are
    produced (Rosenberg, Doskey, 1976).

10. Videodisc: An electromagnetic disc on which electronic
    impulses are recorded.

Appendix B

<u>Cover Letter</u>

Robert P. Moore
3911 Bradley Rd.
Waterloo, Iowa 50701

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire concerning the current state
and future of video services regarding your library. Your
responses, compiled with other libraries throughout the state, will
give some information on the existing services now offered and the
direction of future video services. The information gathered may
also make it possible to make recommendations for the selection of
the best formats for immediate and future needs.

I am conducting a survey of the use of video services in Iowa's
public libraries. This survey is the method I am using to collect
data for my research paper in Communications Media.

You, along with other libraries in the state, are being asked to
complete the information check list questionnaire and return it to
me in the stamped self-addressed envelope as soon as possible.
Strict anonymity will be observed and the names of persons and
libraries will not be used in any way.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your
time and effort.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Moore

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Name of library_____

VIDEO USE IN IOWA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Please check the most appropriate answers.

1. Which types of audiovisual formats does your library have in
    it's collection?
    ___ 16 mm films
    ___ super 8 films
    ___ filmstrips
    ___ LP records
    ___ audio tapes
    ___ 3/4" videotape
    ___ 1/2" videocassette (VHS)
    ___ 1/2" videocassette (Beta)
    ___ videodisc (laser)
    ___ videodisc (CED)

2. Which of the following television services does your library
    offer?
    ___ no television service
    ___ television for major network programs
    ___ cable
    ___ videotape
    ___ videodisc
    ___ circulation of library produced videotape
    ___ circulation of commercially produced videotape
    ___ circulation of videodiscs
    ___ circulation of videocassette recorders
    ___ circulation of videodisc players

3. If your library does not offer any television services now, are
    you:
    ___ not planning any use
    ___ planning to begin some service in the near future

4. If you are not offering any television services, which of the
    following best describes your attitude toward television:
    ___ not a proper function of a library
    ___ proper for academic libraries but not public libraries
    ___ proper for public libraries but not academic libraries
    ___ would like to start television services, but monies not
        available
    ___ libraries customers would not use television services

5. If planning television use it will be:
    ___ broadcast television only
    ___ videotape (VHS)
    ___ videotape (Beta)
    ___ videodisc (laser)
    ___ videodisc (CED)

If you do not offer television services you may stop. If you do
offer television services, please answer the following:

6. How long have you offered television services?
    ___ less than a year
    ___ 1-2 years
    ___ 2-3 years
    ___ 3-4 years
    ___ more than 4 years

7. Which types of video equipment do you own?
    ___ 3/4" videotape
    ___ 1/2" videocassette (VHS)
    ___ 1/2" videocassette (Beta)
    ___ videodisc (laser)
    ___ videodisc (CED)
    ___ television camera
    ___ portapac system
    ___ projection television
    ___ lighting equipment

8. Which types of production facilities do you own? If none,
    leave blank.
    ___ 2 camera production studio
    ___ switcher
    ___ character generator
    ___ dubbing and editing capabilities

9. How much mechanical trouble have you had with your equipment?
    ___ none
    ___ occasional problems
    ___ frequent problems

10. How are your repairs handled?
    ___ repaired by AV staff person
    ___ repaired outside library

11. Do you produce your own videotapes?
    ___ yes
    ___ no
    ___ plan to in the future
    ___ do not plan to in the future

12. Do you broadcast any of your productions over cable television?
    ___ yes
    ___ no, but am planning to in the future
    ___ no, and am not planning to in the future

13. How many hours a week are your productions aired on cable?
    ___ none
    ___ less than 5
    ___ 5-10
    ___ more than 10

14. Do you use outside programming?
    ___ yes
    ___ no
    ___ if yes, do you rent?
    ___ if yes, do you purchase?

15. Do you tape programs off the air?
    ___ yes
    ___ no

16. Do you circulate videotape programs with other libraries?
    ___ yes
    ___ no

17. Do you circulate videodiscs with other libraries?
    ___ yes
    ___ no

18. How much do you spend on blank, prerecorded, and videodisc software per year?
    ___ less than $1,000.00
    ___ $1,000.00 - $2,000.00
    ___ $2,000.00 - $3,000.00
    ___ over $3,000.00

19. Do you have a full-time audiovisual person?
    ___ yes
    ___ no
    ___ no, but plan to create a position in the future
    ___ no plans for a future position

20. How do you promote video services in your library?
    ___ local advertising
    ___ direct mailings
    ___ brochures within the library
    ___ verbal communication

21. How would you rate the communities interest in your video services?
    ___ high interest
    ___ some interest
    ___ little or no interest

22. Which groups shows the greatest interest in the video services?
____ adult customers
____ young customers (teenage and under)
____ business customers
____ professional customers

Please return your responses in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your help and cooperation. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results of this study, mark the blank provided.

____

Appendix D

Follow-Up Post Card

A questionnaire was mailed to you in order to
collect data on the use of video services. As
of yet, I have not received your reply.

Would you please take the time to complete it?
Your responses, compiled with other libraries
throughout the state, will give some information
on existing and future video services.

If you have already sent the questionnaire, please
disregard this notice.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Moore