

Top Trends and Libraries – 2015 is Our Year

Lori Bowen Ayre (lori.ayre@galecia.com)
The Galecia Group

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I always enjoy those end-of-year activities that provide a synopsis of important things that happened, important people who died, and the endless lists of top ten songs, books, movies, and of course, trends. I particularly enjoyed the “10 trends shaping consumerism in 2015” put out by trendwatching.com. Although the title may be off-putting for some librarians, there are plenty of good ideas for libraries in that document. In fact, many of these new trends have been trends in libraries for decades, and it’s the rest of the world that appears to be catching up!

Number one on the list is “instant skills” which refers to the increasing desire for people to *do* and *create* instead of *have* or *buy*. Libraries are all over this one with digital media, sound, and creative labs that turn regular folks into artists, historians, and producers. Libraries with color printers, large format printers and 3D printers allow people to build and create professional quality output. And more and more libraries are building computer labs so they can offer computer classes in addition to their public access computers. Many people are already building their instant skills in libraries.

Another trend mentioned is the “internet of sharing things.” The idea is that more and more people will choose to share their assets because it’s fun, useful, and sometimes profitable. This is an example of a trend that is old news in libraryland. We’re all about sharing. But maybe we can go even further. Berkeley Public Library’s Tool Lending Library comes to mind as a great example. And, lots of libraries are now lending mobile devices of various kinds. What else could we be sharing? Trendwatching.com describes an app called “Breather” which helps people find “unused urban spaces for rent for as little as 30 minutes, to recharge or work in.” I’m

pretty sure all libraries need to be listed in that app!

Evidently 2015 is the year for “branded government” in “which progressive brands initiate, undertake and support meaningful civic engagement.” This trend is all about the movement we’ve already seen in libraries under the heading of community engagement, community conversations, and librarians as facilitators. One noteworthy example is Omaha Public Library that partnered with the Center for Public Research on an IMLS grant to create an ongoing collaboration between library staff, community members and community organizations. Their work is documented at <http://communityengagement.us/>. It’s inspiring and most definitely an example of meaningful civic engagement.

“Robolove” is my favorite trend of those mentioned in this top ten list. The authors suggest that people will be engaging more and more with robots of some kind, and they’ll be happy about it because of the way these robots improve the customer experience. I see this in my work with automated materials handling. People are really quite happy to handle their own library returns if it means their items are checked in immediately and library staff are more available to help them with stuff that really matters. I’m also hoping that 2015 is my year to get a bite on my Library Inventory Robot idea (if interested, inquire within).

A couple of other 2015 trends that are old news in libraries include “currencies of change” in which companies begin providing incentives for good behavior and “sympathetic pricing.” Summer Reading Clubs are a great example of providing incentives (stickers and glory) for good behavior (reading lots of great books).



And our pricing model can't get much more sympathetic than free!

So 2015 is our year! If these are the top trends for the year, it's our chance to catch the wave and give our communities a great ride! Now, we just have to let them know what we're doing....

