Public Library Programming in the Pandemic

BACKGROUND

The pandemic affected programming in public libraries because it such a public facing service. We wanted to see what programming was successful during the pandemic, how librarians coped with such a drastic change in their job function and what the short & long-term impacts for libraries will be.
PARTICIPANTS

20 public librarians across Washington State who focused on programming. This study has a fairly equivalent rural and urban representation.

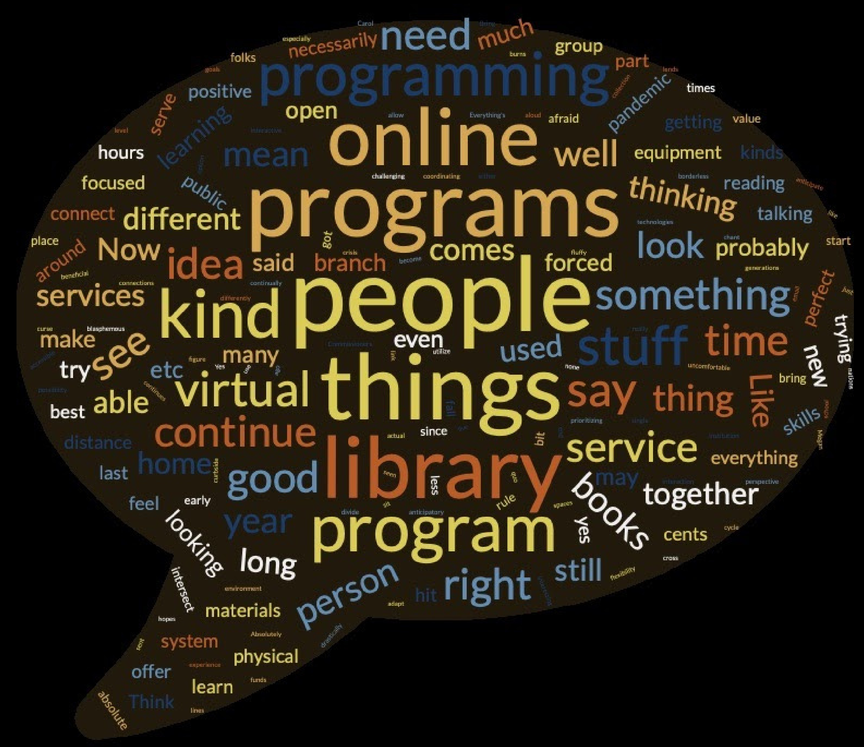
METHODS

1. Collected qualitative data from public librarians focused on programming in Washington State.
2. Qualitative data was analyzed with a mixed-methods application. A code book was created within the application and applied to over 30 librarian transcriptions.
3. Future research can focus on the short and long-term impacts of the pandemic on library programming, rural and urban libraries demonstrate significant differences in the data and did the pandemic shed light on the digital divide in communities?

WASHINGTON LIBRARIES

RETURNING TO NORMAL OR SHAPING A NEW NORMAL?

LONGITUDINAL STUDY 2020



ANNA GIBSON &
BRANDYN BOYD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TASCHA

THEMES IN DATA ANALYSIS

Job Satisfaction
- Marked shift in duties from programming to services.
- Noticeable effort to increase collaboration within districts.
- Public librarians miss their patrons.

Changes in library programming
- Blend of virtual and analog
- Less is more

Rethinking the profession
- Online meetings are good; centralization should be handled thoughtfully.
- Re-prioritize staff time between programming and services.
- New awareness of community needs.

QUOTES

- "Technology...one of our biggest assets and our biggest challenges at the same time"
- "With all our programs online...clearly there's a big digital divide."
- "Its like people are kind of almost grieving their jobs, ...their jobs are so different now"
- "I think the big thing for us is it feels like we are starting a brand new job on a weekly basis...that has been stressful"