Digital Media Workshop Assessment Plan

As stated, the initial pilot period for the Digital Media Workshop at Humboldt Park LIbrary is six months from opening to the public. One of the goals of having a pilot program is to assess a baseline level of community interest in and desire for the services being provided.program So the main focus of our assessment activities during this period will be gathering data, for the purpose of having a realistic understanding of what is succeeding and failing and how we can best structure the Workshop project to meet assessed needs going forward.

There are three main metrics that we will collect during the first six months of the project: First and most simply, time usage statistics for Workshop. We would expect and hope for these numbers to increase gradually over time, as more community members become aware of the existence of the Workshop and the available services. If some other pattern is observed, for instance an initial surge of usage followed by a decline, that would obviously be of concern and would require a rethinking of priorities for the next phase of the Workshop projects. Six months was chosen as the length of the pilot period because that seemed like a reasonable length of time for usage patterns to become stable and predictable, so that a fair judgement could be passed on the success of the project.

A second metric would be the amount of media output generated and shared by users, and the amount of community attention it receives. This is a more intangible and qualitative measure, and will rely on both formal and informal communication with community members to be useful and informative. One thing that will help this metric will be to encourage Workshop users to give credit to the DMW when sharing content on the internet, although I don't think we should outright require attribution. Although this kind of assessment technique is not data-driven, it is still useful and should not be overlooked.

The third assessment tool will be to give brief surveys to DMW users about their use of the Workshop. This will allow us to collect direct quantitative data about what is working and what is not. This should not be too long; some sample questions that I would include on the survey are:

- What projects did you work on today at the DMW?
- Were you able to get done everything you wanted to get done?
- If not, what were the reasons you didn't succeed? (Not enough instructions, wrong equipment, not enough time, other limitations)
- Was there a project you would like to do at the DMW, but you don't know how?
- Is there a program or piece of equipment you would like to have access to that we don't have?
- Do you think you will use the DMW again in the future?

Five or six questions is about as long as we would want to make the survey - as long as we make it clear that users who have more to say are welcome to contact us and share their thoughts. Survey distribution could be on paper, at the DMW station, or we could follow up with users via email collected as part of the signup process.

The assessment data collected during the six month pilot period will be used to create a report that will help us to determine how to assign resources to the project going forward from that point. For instance, if we determine that user interest is high, but there is a lot of frustration with users not being able to accomplish their goals, we might want to consider assigning more staff resources to technical support. If interest is low, perhaps the project is not a useful one for the library. Since we are starting the project in a space that will eventually be used for other purposes, the first decision to be made post-pilot is whether to secure a permanent location in the library for the DMW.