



Library in a Box



Cameron Glymph, Savannah Lebedeker, Vashalice Kaaba

Department of Information Studies at Florida State University

Background

The "Library in a Box" initiative is a groundbreaking project specifically designed to tackle the digital divide, literacy gaps, and information inequities in underprivileged areas, notably in the Global South and rural regions of the Southern United States. There are three main focuses of the project:

- Providing low-digital resources for communities to access the internet/ database resources.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility to ensure that everyone has an equal and fair ability to use the Library in a Box.
- Providing diverse materials that are not limited to books, including technology and educational resources.

Methods

To gauge the types of materials needed to make "Library in a Box" successful, we compiled previous studies done on mobile libraries into our shared database in Google Drive. The literature was focused on four categories:

- **Case studies** of previous mobile libraries,
- **Technology** used to supplement traditional libraries,
- **Conventions** and contents of mobile libraries,
- The importance of having **diverse, accessible, equitable literature**.

We then determined the best types of technology to include in our "Library in a Box" to ensure that the libraries would have both traditional print media and easy access to the internet to expand their resources. Finally, we crafted a survey that collected both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected from rural communities in our pilot program in rural Florida. The survey asked questions about the impact of technology on learning, the type of materials that would be most beneficial to the specific community, and the materials needed for children vs. the materials needed for adults in the library.

Results

Literature Review Results

- **The case studies** emphasized the importance of advertising the mobile library and ensuring that a trained librarian was put in control of the library. They also stressed the importance of long-term funding and up-keep to ensure that the communities would make use of the "Library in a Box" for years to come.
- **The library technology** literature emphasized the importance of having technology to supplement education, and also the importance of having organized digital archival materials for rural communities to use.
- The literature on **conventions and constraints** informed us of the impact of previous mobile libraries, which have almost exclusively been facilitated through vehicles. The literature revealed that having diverse materials in libraries is important to ensure that mobile libraries come as close to traditional libraries as possible.
- Lastly, the literature about **diversity and accessibility** in library materials revealed the importance of having literature that reflects the demographic of people in an area.

Preliminary Findings

- After doing research on the types of technology that would be good for "Library in a Box" and keeping our literature in mind, we decided on lightweight e-readers that have internet access and the ability to form digital archives so that people can utilize them both on and offline. They also have accessibility features like text to speech for people with different abilities.
- The survey is being piloted within rural communities in Florida and based off of the results of the survey, we will tailor the library to fit the specific needs of those communities.

Conclusion

- The results of the literature review yielded four primary findings. The first is the importance of providing accurate representation in literature for diverse communities. Even if literature is considered non-canonical, having different perspectives for communities to engage and relate to makes libraries so much more effective. In conjunction with the first finding is the second finding, which is the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for all communities that are influenced by the Library in the Box initiative. Making the Library in a box non-excludable and easily usable by people with diverse abilities ensures that the library is a benefit for all members of the community. The research on the conventions and strategies of implementing mobile libraries and mobile library technology revealed the importance of ensuring the communities are equipped with the resources needed to sustain libraries on their own. Adequate funding, training of librarians, and continuous effort to ensure the longevity of the Library in a Box project are crucial to its success.
- The decision to use lightweight e-reader technology in the Library in a Box project ensures that communities have access to a broader range of resources. Because lots of library resources are now digital, the e-reader technology provides diversity in content and materials akin to a physical, traditional library.
- The surveys are expected to be piloted in communities in rural Florida this semester, and after gaining our information we will implement the first Library in a Box. After we have success in Florida, the initiative will be expanded to Kenya and Uganda.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our UROP leaders: Sophia Gannaoui, Sean Faletti, Lily Childers and Olivia Martin. We also extend gratitude to our UROP mentor Vashalice Kaaba, for her leadership during this process. Finally, we would like to thank CRE leadership Kris Ryan and Alicia Batailles for their help and guidance.

References

- Anderson, Tammy. "E-readers make a Difference for Diverse Readers." *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science* 2.1 (2018): 40-56.
- Bikos, Georgios, and Panagiota Papadimitriou. "Mobile libraries: defining the phenomenon." *International Journal of Library and Information Science* 10.3 (2018): 35-40