

San Francisco Public Library/Social Outreach Infographic

INFO 210: Reference and Information Services

Summer 2021, Professor Jose Aguiñaga

Assignment 4: Outreach Artifact and Reflections

July 25, 2021

Social Outreach Infographic

Vida Yeung

San Francisco Public Library
presents:

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Let's get through 2021
TOGETHER!

IT'S BEEN A BIT MUCH, HASN'T IT?

The COVID-19 pandemic and other collectively traumatic events worldwide weighing you down? Need a safe space to remember and celebrate the good that has also been going on?



THEN LET'S CHAT!

Join us this August at participating SF Public Library branches to read, comment, then ask a librarian to learn more about what we've all been going through.

COME AS YOU ARE

... with a friend, your family, or yourself. All ages are welcome. Our exhibits of the past year's highs and lows are ready for everyone's thoughts. There'll be index cards for your well-wishes, hopes, or anything more you'd like to say.



LEARN MORE AT SFPL.ORG

... for participating branches, which events they'll present, possible trigger warnings (it's been a rough year; some subject matters could get heavy), and ready research guides for visitors who wish to read up before attending.

HEALING BEGINS WITH UNDERSTANDING,
AND LANGUAGE IS STILL THE MOST
ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY TOWARDS
THAT END
- BHAIRAVI SHERA

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Statement of Purpose and Setting

This is an infographic to promote a social outreach program the San Francisco Public Library could implement –once it becomes safe enough to serve the public again- that can both soothe the city's collective traumas of recent years and reacquaint users to the community-building powers of their neighborhood branches.

Introduction

San Franciscan lives have come under enormous strain since the local government implemented public health safety measures against the global COVID-19 pandemic that have been more stringent than directives enacted at the state and federal level (Whitcomb & Chiacu, 2020). The stress had mounted to such heights that there was only one U.S. city that saw a larger exodus; Baltimore shrank by 1.42% to San Francisco's 1.39% (Echeverria, 2021). Throughout, local businesses hung on by a thread (Reed, 2021), most schoolchildren had to adapt to distance learning (sfgov.org, n.d.), and with people working remotely for so long companies like Twitter and Dropbox may end their leases on their office spaces in the city (Li, 2021). Added up, these changes to workers, their families, and businesses who'd tailored routines to these citizens' everyday lives will make recovery to pre-pandemic times difficult, to a point where it's likely impossible.

The fictional outreach program (Yeung, 2021) the infographic was designed to promote is based on the power of stories. Throughout one month, each branch will choose from 5-7 (wall space permitting) collectively traumatic world events in the past years to present alongside an equal number of blessings that'd signaled triumph for the international community, and invite users to reply on the events' poster boards or others' comments by attaching their index card(s) with a string. Through this round robin story-building method where contributors can remain anonymous, users will have the opportunity for cathartic release in a way that is tactile, unlike merely commenting to something on a social media website.

While this is happening, staff can rove, start conversations, remake acquaintances with the neighborhood regulars, and provide a united, stable front to users who've had to go through so much uncertainty in the past years. Inevitably, the events presented will elicit reference and/or

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reader advisory inquiries. Then, not only will the library help with processing heavy, perspective-shifting emotions, but can now also recommend any number of sources for users to follow up on what they've realized.

Reflection on Appropriate Planning, Design Process, and Technology Best Practices

The San Francisco Public Library –with its 27 branches, robust presence on social media (Facebook and Twitter), and an easily navigable website- is well-placed as a benign, trusted, and effective organization to help alleviate all this mental and emotional strain. With a minimalist infographic that can easily be scaled for both a webpage or on paper, the SFPL can reach it's online users (30k+ Facebook and 20.8k+ on Twitter), while also sending flyers to schools, universities, community centers, and supportive businesses.

Taking Kathleen Mayo's (2002) advice to 'listen to your users and potential users', I chose a program from my portfolio that both San Francisco and the SFPL can benefit from, the former seeking community anew, and the latter reacquainting with their city after a lengthy lockdown. Then from Nancy Dowd's (2015) first strategy in promoting databases, to 'use eye-catching images', I decided on a design that could hold someone's gaze in soothing blue tones, in line with how Japan's train companies have been, since the late 2000s, bathing their platforms in blue light, and thereby was able to lower the suicide rate on their tracks by 84% (Baraniuk, 2019). If a color scheme can hold people from a terrible decision, then the same will most likely put viewers at ease and amenable to seeking more information about the proposed event.

I kept the language colloquial, and used words that promoted goodwill, self-love, and an all-welcoming vibe, with the 'We're here for you' in large letters at the top. Each panel begins with a brief compassionate message, each followed by further explanations expressed in gentle terms that promise an easygoing, choose-your-own-level-of-involvement visit.

Did the Artifact address Diverse Needs?

The infographic was kept uncomplicated to be easily sized for online or paper posters and flyers, so the message can reach more people than if the artifact was a video or an over-stylized graphic that wouldn't be cost effective to print enough copies for thorough circulation.

I took into account the city's diverse levels of English comprehension, and kept the syntax and sentence structure simple and as close to natural language as I could. And though I'm no authority in the study of Psychology, I can still understand how wording each line to remind viewers of the healing their fellow citizens/peers can offer if they gave each other the chance would encourage them to attend, or at least go to sfpl.org for more information. Because as Chris Staley (2016) wrote, users need to find closure by being encouraged to understand their feelings are worth consideration.

Takeaway on Assignment, and how it could prove proficiency in one or more iSchool core competencies

In the beginning, I let my natural design and copywriting inclinations take over choosing the Canva template, naming the event, and deciding on each panels' headings, because as a former regular user of the SFPL I have a firm grasp of the styles and language visitors now may find easiest to accept. However, forming the first heading and every panels' subtext had me twisted between wanting the event to be taken seriously, but not set up the Library as exclusively gatekeepers, all stuffy with their knowledge brokering and void of compassion. I thumbed through an Alan Watts book, then read some passages from Thich Nhat Hanh to put myself into the SFPL's mindset of wanting to support their community, really considering what empathy and tenderness on the scale of serving a city the size of San Francisco could mean. That was when I decided to word everything like how someone would write a personal blog or text message; the key takeaway I wanted for the viewers was an extension of the comfort and familiarity an institution like the SFPL has been providing for generations.

This brought me to thinking about how this could be a strength for my future as an information professional, my want of providing warmth and enjoyment. Should I continue on my path to a career of taxonomies and indexes, or lean in –at least while selecting courses during my time in iSchool- to reference services and/or readers advisory? I'll surely discuss this with an advisor soon.

These are the core competencies (SJSU, n.d.) I feel I've demonstrated proficiency in through creating this infographic:

A. In speaking for the hypothetical librarians who would be staffing this program, I've shown I understand how important gentle and open customer service is to library users. Because

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even those who are courageous enough to ask for help –or in context of the event, secure enough in their feelings to attend- may not know exactly what they need/want, so it takes an approach brimming in soft skills such as deep listening and empathy to successfully complete a reference/advisory transaction.

C. I've taken into account how emotionally and mentally devastating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are, and worded the infographic accordingly to appeal to what I felt is the widest common denominator of distress. Also, I asked interested viewers (towards the bottom of the infographic) to visit the website for more information, thereby freeing up some of the SF public librarians' time from explaining the event's logistics the day of so they can focus more on reconnecting and/or incoming reference inquiries.

H. I formatted the infographic to be amenable to both paper and online presentation in a wide range of scales, thereby proving I understand how images would be rendered in both printing and digital technologies.

J. I understand how people in distress would seek outlets for catharsis, and so worded the infographic in a way that showed the program is meant to ease users' minds. I also explained succinctly what to expect while participating in the program –age range, writing things on index cards, trigger warnings-, so those interested can decide for themselves if attending would help or be appropriate for them.

O. San Francisco has been a burgeoning multicultural community since before it was officially recognized as a city. Thus, in keeping the design and language of the infographic accessible in promoting a program that'd teach/explain/let many come together over events from around the world, I've shown a sensitivity and understanding in how to reach out to an internationally diverse population and offer back perspectives of similar scope.

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