

**Purpose:** This article explores the entrepreneurship resources patrons can discover and/or access on the web pages of the largest 46 U.S. public libraries in order to assess the strength of public libraries' current support to their entrepreneur-patrons, and where, and by what means, public libraries may wish to expand, or further promote, their support.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The author completed a website analysis of the largest 46 U.S. public libraries, as defined by the criteria in the ALA publication *The Nation's Largest Public Libraries*. Website analysis was completed via a standardized checklist assessment of each library website.

**Findings:** Public libraries often have print and electronic resources, meeting spaces, and programming that could be of use to entrepreneur-patrons, but these resources are sometimes difficult to discover on library websites. Libraries have strong partnering relationships with other government and nonprofit organizations, but may wish to expand these partnerships further.

**Practical implications:** Public libraries in the U.S. often have multiple support services to offer entrepreneur-patrons. However, if libraries would like to reach entrepreneur-patrons beyond their walls, as well as within them, they may wish to consider further refining the resources both accessible via their website, and promoted on it.

**Originality/value:** While there are research articles exploring how both academic and public libraries support entrepreneur-patrons, as yet, there has been no in-depth research into how public libraries support their entrepreneur-patrons through not only their in-library offerings, but through the materials highlighted and/or available via their website. This research addresses this gap in the literature.

## **Entrepreneurship Resources in U.S. Public Libraries: Website Analysis**

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship has been long ingrained in the fabric of the American consciousness and is often portrayed as a potential path to achieving the 'American dream' (Harrington, 2017). Yet this cornerstone of the American dream, and the American economy, has struggled in the past decade. There are positive indicators for entrepreneurship in the United States: The Kauffman Startup Activity Index (a respected measure of new venture creation in the U.S.) has been positive since 2015, and the U.S. continues to hold a top 10 ranking in the World Bank's *Doing Business* series (Kauffman, 2017; World Bank, 2016). Unfortunately, there are also distressing signs: Job creation from establishments less than one year old has failed to return to pre-recession levels, and the share of private sector employment for companies with fewer than 250 employees continues to decrease (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). New business 'deaths' have repeatedly outpaced 'births' as part of an overall worrying decline in business dynamism over the last thirty years, according to the Brookings Institute (Hathaway and Litan, 2014). Potentially the most worrying indicator though, is that the rate of new entrepreneurship amongst the Millennial generation is the lowest of any age cohort in the U.S. (Kauffman, 2016).

Perhaps it was these mixed metrics that encouraged public libraries to increase their support of entrepreneur-patrons. No doubt, public libraries have long been supporting business reference services, and even a separate business reference section, center, or entirely separate business library is not a new phenomenon in this sphere, but, more recently, libraries have begun to focus particularly on serving entrepreneurs, as a distinct subset served by business reference services. A modern measure of business reference success in public libraries "...has been defined as the business community identifying and using the public library as a partner in community economic development" (Macdonald, 2015). Few people will argue the importance of entrepreneurship to the health of the U.S. economy, and there is a small but increasing number of research articles exploring how both academic and public libraries have begun to support entrepreneur-patrons, but, as yet, there has been no in-depth research into how public libraries support their entrepreneur-patrons through not only their in-library offerings, but through the materials highlighted and/or available via their websites. This article explores the entrepreneurship resources patrons can discover and/or access on the web pages of the largest 46 U.S. public libraries using a website analysis checklist method in an attempt to assess the strength of libraries' current support to their entrepreneur-patrons, and where, and by what means, public libraries may wish to expand their support.

## **Literature Review**

While much has been explored regarding both the assessment of library websites and the support libraries may provide to entrepreneurs, as separate research areas, there appears to be little overlap in the literature, aka. the assessment of libraries' support for entrepreneurs as provided, and/or assessed, by their websites. This article is unique in that it assesses the support public libraries provide to entrepreneurs through what resources are available, and/or promoted, on their websites. While the entrepreneur-related resources assessed herein include in-person resources such as physical spaces and in-library workshops, all resources were discovered and assessed by means of the library website.

Particular themes in the literature related to libraries' support for entrepreneurs have thus far included: the importance of entrepreneurs to the economy (and therefore the importance of supporting them), in-person library offerings including providing meeting spaces, networking opportunities and workshops, and working with other community and governmental organizations to support these patrons. In "Engaging with entrepreneurs in academic and public libraries", Jared Hoppenfeld and Elizabeth Malafi (2015) note that the "current entrepreneurial environment is quite active, and startups are moving quicker than ever to reach their paydays" which impacts both the types of resources needed and how quickly entrepreneurs need these resources (p. 383). Hoppenfeld and Malafi used a paired case study method to explore the entrepreneurship support offerings in one academic and one public library, and focused on networking opportunities, supporting entrepreneurs' intellectual property research, classroom instruction, and individual consultations.

In "Dedicated business centers in public libraries," Anne Therese Macdonald focuses in on public libraries' support for entrepreneurs, particularly through the use of dedicated business centers located in-library. This was a survey study that explored how libraries market their business centers, support offerings in these centers, and common collaboration partners (2015). Louise Mort Feldmann focused even more specifically in her survey study the same year on the

relationship between Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and libraries in the mountain west region of the U.S., concluding that SBDC offices are more likely to be hosted on college or university campuses, but are more likely to work with public rather than academic librarians.

Assessment of libraries' websites in reference to their ability to support entrepreneurship specifically is a little-explored area in the literature; instead articles tend to focus on 'business research' and 'business assistance' rather than particularly entrepreneurial resources; thus far assessment of websites has been mainly of academic library or government/nonprofit websites. One major article stands out in this context: John C. Gottfried's 2010 article, "Access to Business Research Resources Through Academic Library Websites: A Survey". Gottfried focuses on academic library websites and a broad range of business research resources including databases, catalog offerings, research guides and access to business librarians. Gottfried's *Protocol for Business Website Survey* checklist was used as an initial model upon which to develop this article's website evaluation tool.

While Ryan L. Phillips focused more specifically on online *entrepreneurial* resources in his 2014 article "An Analysis of Small Business Assistance Websites: Content and Delivery", his assessment was carried out on the websites of the Small Business Administration (SBA) offices, SBDCs, and Senior Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) chapters. While frequent collaborators with public libraries, the websites of these organizations have differing content and a narrower user base than library websites. Thus, the current study is unique in assessing public library websites, and particularly the resources available therein for entrepreneur-patrons.

## **Methodology**

In considering the entrepreneurship resources most widely available to entrepreneurs via U.S. public libraries, the researcher for this study compiled a list of the nation's largest public libraries from the annual American Library Association (ALA) publication of the same name: *The Nation's Largest Public Libraries: Top 25 Ranking*. The ALA publication ranks the largest U.S. public libraries by four different metrics: Top 25 public libraries by size of population served with total collection expenditures, Top 25 public libraries by holdings, Top 25 public libraries by circulation, and Top 25 public libraries by library visits (American Library Association, 2014). The author combined these four 25-library lists and de-duplicated to obtain a combined list of the largest 46 public libraries in the U.S., as measured by any of the four metrics. (See Appendix A)

Research was undertaken in two phases. The first consisted of a qualitative evaluation of each library's website, as experienced by the researcher as a first-time visitor to the sites. Each initial exploration was limited to fifteen minutes, and the researcher noted general impressions of the navigation and the entrepreneurial resources ostensibly available. This process was used to refine the 'Checklist for Entrepreneurship Resources in U.S. Public Libraries', the website checklist tool the researcher used for further analysis of the sites. (See Appendix B)

Part two of the research process involved evaluating each of the 46 U.S. public library websites in depth, as guided by the questions on the 'Checklist for Entrepreneurship Resources in U.S. Public Libraries'. This evaluative checklist tool served to guide the analysis of the websites in a uniform and efficient manner. Website checklist evaluation was completed over the course of 70

days (between February 2, 2017 and March 18, 2017) in an attempt to both control for and limit any site changes over the course of the evaluation period.

Assumptions had to be made in certain cases regarding the answers to checklist questions, and there are limitations to this study that must be addressed. Any necessary assumptions were made systematically throughout the assessment of all websites to maintain equivalent comparison. For example, if no community partner was listed explicitly in program descriptions, it was assumed these programs were led by library staff. Likewise, systematic rules were imposed regarding what did or did not 'count' under certain categories in the checklist. Two main systematic rules were necessary:

- Regarding databases of potential use to entrepreneurs, all databases were counted as long as the library in question had some filter term by which to designate these databases as particularly for entrepreneur and/or business patron use. Four libraries did not have any means by which to filter their overall database listings, and thus these were excluded from this analysis. Many libraries integrated links to government and open web resources within their list of databases; these were not counted as databases. Libraries' linking to other government and local organization websites was included in analysis elsewhere. (See the 'Other community/government resources & unique offerings' section of this article.)
- Only calendar events that were shown in the main library calendar were included in the counting of in-person entrepreneurship tutorials/workshops in consideration of what web design literature sometimes calls 'the law of surfing', which "predicts that typical user trails are short and web pages that are deep within the web site topology receive fewer visits" (Huntington, P., et. al., 2007). An often-cited statistic in this literature is that approximately three-quarters of all website visits feature three or fewer page views, and better than a third of visits view only one page (Nicholas, D. et. al., 2004). While main library event calendars were universally 1-2 clicks into library sites, examples wherein entrepreneurship events were listed only on a separate subject-specific calendar (2 instances) were 4 or more clicks into a site. Majority of site visitors would likely miss these subject-specific calendar listings. In addition, individual counselling being offered to entrepreneurs, either by library staff or in partnership with other community organizations such as SCORE, were not counted as events as these were often scheduled out on a regular basis indefinitely and would have skewed the count of non-counselling events. Instead, individual counselling was considered an offering separate from group learning 'events' and analyzed elsewhere on the checklist.

One major limitation of this study is the choice of keyword used as the basis for searching and evaluating these public library websites. In choosing to use the term 'entrepreneurship' as the basis for evaluation, the researcher deviated from the more commonly-used terms of 'small business' and 'business', both terms more in line with the Dewey classification system. This choice was made in an effort to focus more narrowly on libraries' assistance to 'entrepreneurs' rather than overall business reference offerings, or even offerings geared towards 'small business owners'. While the terms 'entrepreneur' and 'small business owner' are often used synonymously in casual conversation, they are not considered precisely synonymous in business literature, classically being distinguished by "articulated venture strategies, personality, cognitive orientation and behavior preferences" (Stewart, W., et. al, 1998, citing Carland, J.W., et. al.,

1988). This being said, it is a rich area for future research to explore the use of these various terms in public perception and in public libraries, and perhaps to conduct a comparative analysis of public libraries' offerings to entrepreneurs as dictated by the use of the more commonly-used terms 'business' and/or 'small business'.

This research is also limited in two main ways regarding the particular libraries studied: this study's geographic limitation to public libraries in the United States, and the limitation inherent in studying only the 46 largest public libraries therein. Future research might expand analysis into other countries and/or provide a comparative view of entrepreneurship support in U.S. public libraries vs. public libraries in other countries, as the model of U.S. public library support in no way speaks to how public libraries are supporting entrepreneurship around the world. It is also worth noting that the largest public libraries in the United States are not necessarily those providing the best or most innovative support to their entrepreneur-patrons within this nation. This study fails to capture all of the smaller libraries in the United States that may be piloting new services to support entrepreneurs, or continuing long-standing offerings that may have, as yet, not made it into general practice. Recently the Public Library Association (PLA) and the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy have been focusing on building relationship with national small business and entrepreneur support organizations "to develop mutually beneficial collaborations that positively position libraries and advance entrepreneurship and economic opportunity in local communities" and are supporting their library promotion and positioning efforts in part by soliciting "library patron/entrepreneur success stories" from libraries across the U.S. (Clark and Delgado, 2017). It may be that this, amongst other collections of stories of public libraries' support for entrepreneurs, may provide an area for further study of innovative entrepreneur-patron support.

## **Results**

### *SITE & CATALOG SEARCH*

One of the first things the researcher explored was the result of a keyword search both in the search-all box often found on public library homepages, and within the search box in the libraries' online catalogs; the term 'entrepreneurship' was searched with no other limiters or filters. Most search-all boxes on library homepages had multiple drop-down menu options, which tended to include some combination of the following: the catalog, the library website, FAQs, events and/or an associated government webpage (such as a county government site). In nine instances, the search-all box on the library homepage did not include an option to search the whole of the library website, often for one of two reasons: either the only search option was a catalog search (six instances) or the only search options were a catalog and/or the associated county government website(s) (three instances). Of the 37 websites that allowed for site-wide searching, a keyword search for 'entrepreneurship' returned an average of 73 results, with a full range from zero (nine instances) to 1,800 results. Removing the one high-end outlier library (mostly blog posts in the results list), provides a more accurate average of 26 results, though of these results a large number tended to be descriptions of past events related to entrepreneurship. While the page descriptions of these past events might be mined by entrepreneur-patrons for potential contacts and an abstract of a relevant learning topic, these results are likely less ideal than subject pages or upcoming events. Only eight of the overall 46 library websites had a search-all box on the homepage that resulted in what the researcher considered a highly-relevant

link within the first ten results of a search for ‘entrepreneurship’ (upcoming events, a business department in the library, or a business LibGuide). (See Appendix C)

It was possible on all library websites to do a basic catalog search for the keyword ‘entrepreneurship’. The number of results from this search ranged from 36 to 4,186 with an average of 1,144 results. In further exploring the first twenty-five results of these catalog searches, most books had a date range somewhere from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, though two libraries had resources dated back as far as 1971. Thirteen libraries had a current year resource in the first twenty-five search results, and all but fourteen libraries had at least one search result published in the past two years. While older texts may be business literature classics, and/or still relevant to the modern entrepreneur, it is encouraging to see that there are also modern texts available, which might cover emerging industries, etc. Eighteen libraries had a newsletter, RSS feed, or other means (such as a New Books list filtered by subject ‘business’) by which a patron could be notified, or easily view, all new resources potentially relevant to entrepreneurs. (See Appendix D)

### *PHYSICAL SPACE(S)*

As regards physical spaces devoted to assisting entrepreneur-patrons, the author assessed four main issues: Is there a separate physical library or departmental space devoted to business/ entrepreneurship reference and resources? Is there any way entrepreneurs can use library spaces for administrative meetings etc., whether for free or through rental options? Is there a makerspace in the library? Is the makerspace explicitly associated with entrepreneurship?

As to the first question, the libraries in this study were split roughly 60/40 between those that did not have a separate physical space for business reference (27) and those that did (20). Only two libraries had an entirely separate business library, and only one of these exists in an entirely separate building as a standalone business library. Fifteen of the twenty separate business reference departments existed somewhere within the central library.

The issue of meeting spaces for entrepreneurs in public libraries proved to be complex. All potentially useful spaces were counted, from free use of library meeting rooms (as long as meeting room use guidelines did not explicitly prohibit closed meetings, for-profit, or organization administrative use) to rental spaces ranging from small meeting spaces to ballrooms and auditoriums. Twenty-three libraries of the forty-six studied (50%) had some sort of physical space that could be of use to entrepreneurs. Of these twenty-three libraries with potential entrepreneurial space, five had space available for free, either specifying in their general meeting room use policies that their freely available meeting rooms could be used by ‘for profit businesses’ or ‘local businesses’, or they had free space available in their business centers. If libraries want their meeting rooms to be available to entrepreneurs, they will likely need to explicitly state this in their use guidelines as most libraries explicitly do *not* allow their free meeting rooms to be used by for-profit ventures, or for closed meetings, and thus many entrepreneur-patrons may make this assumption without use guidelines that state otherwise.

Of those libraries with rental space available, base costs ranged from \$10 to \$7,500 for spaces seating between 5 and 1,000 people. It was common that these rental spaces might include audiovisual equipment (either included with the cost of rental, or for an extra fee). Less

commonly, rental spaces might require paying for services such as equipment or dining set up and takedown and/or security.

The author explored whether or not the studied libraries had makerspaces as well, as these spaces are sometimes associated with entrepreneurship ('innovation' spaces etc.). However, in this study, though 50% of libraries had makerspaces, only three explicitly associated this space with entrepreneurs. One library linked to their makerspace page from their 'Entrepreneurship Resources' page, while two physically located their makerspaces within their separate business reference centers. This association between makerspaces and entrepreneurial resources may be an area libraries wish to explore further. While the association between makerspaces and teen programming makes instinctive sense, there is also an argument to be made for an association between a space for creation and innovation and entrepreneur-patrons. (See Appendix E)

### *DATABASES & SUBJECT GUIDE(S)*

Databases and subject guides are some of the most well-known online library offerings. In the exploration of the forty-six websites for this study, the author found entrepreneur-relevant guides and databases were listed almost exclusively under some variation of the term 'business' ('Business', 'Business & Investments', 'Business & Money', 'Business & Finance', etc.) and very rarely did the term 'entrepreneurship' appear. Only three of the forty-six libraries used the term 'entrepreneurship' to filter out relevant databases from their overall list. Thirty-five of the forty-six libraries filtered their databases by the term 'business' or 'business and...'. On average, the number of databases filtered by subject/category was seventeen, ranging from two to 110 results. Considering the wide range of results, and especially in library systems where there are a particularly high number of databases resulting from the broader terms 'business' etc., or in library systems where entrepreneur-patrons are particularly present, a more specified category term may be worth considering. The majority of the databases were accessible online, so databases are one resource patrons can use even if they can't or don't physically visit the library.

Subject guides were slightly more likely to use the term 'entrepreneurship' or the variant 'small business' to specify relevant guide(s). Ten guides were found under the term 'small business' across various sites, while some variant of the term 'entrepreneurship' was used to break out relevant LibGuides or other library-created guides on five sites. There were also a few further variations on terms to clarify that guides were for entrepreneur-patrons, such as 'Start Up Guide', 'Start Your Own Business' and 'Using Library Resources to Target Your Market'. Of the forty-six libraries, thirty-one had at least one subject guide relevant to entrepreneur-patrons, and seven had more than one relevant guide (ranging from two to nineteen guides). These guides ranged widely regarding depth, from single-page listings of resources to multiple-tab LibGuides. These guides also ranged widely regarding the specific topics covered by any one guide, from guides for 'Business' to guides focusing in on particular entrepreneur-research needs like 'Researching an Industry' etc.

The researcher also explored whether a business librarian was highlighted as a library resource for entrepreneurs. Though this would be a resource patrons might discover in-library as well, the knowledge that there is a person in the library ready to assist entrepreneurs would be spread further via inclusion on the website. Only nine websites included some mention of a business librarian, however, and only six of these nine included some form of contact information for this

individual. This is one strategy libraries may wish to consider to expand their assistance to entrepreneurs: If there is a business librarian, or any member of the library staff that feels comfortable answering relevant reference questions, this should be a highlighted resource on the website. If there isn't such an individual, libraries may wish to explore if this is an unmet reference need. (See Appendix F)

### *PROGRAMMING*

For the purposes of this article, programming included online course offerings, as well as in-person library programming. The researcher also looked separately at whether or not the library offered individual counselling to entrepreneurs, and, if so, which community partner(s) they were working with to provide this counselling, if any. There were eight libraries that did not offer either online courses relevant to entrepreneurs, nor in-library programming. Twenty-seven libraries offered online courses relevant to entrepreneurs. Thirty-five offered in-library programming relevant to entrepreneurs. Twenty-four offered both online and in-library programming relevant to entrepreneurs. 'Online course offerings' refers to the online courses offered by: GALE, Universal Class, Lynda.com, and Peer-to-Peer University. The most popular provider of online course offerings in the public libraries studied was Lynda.com, with twenty libraries using this service. Lynda.com's course library is extremely large; a search for 'entrepreneur' brings up 475 results.

In looking at terms used to filter the overall library events calendar to entrepreneur-relevant events, the terms 'business' and 'small business' again dominated, with only two libraries using the term 'entrepreneur'. A number of libraries did not provide an events calendar filter mechanism at all. On average, libraries that were offering in-person events potentially relevant to entrepreneurs had nine events currently scheduled out on their calendars anywhere from one full week out, to forty-two full weeks into the future. The most popular time to schedule these events was weekday evenings and it was more likely that these courses would be taught by library partners than by librarians or library staff. Partners often included local economic development offices, local chambers of commerce, SBA offices, SCORE volunteers, local experts or nearby university affiliates, and local non-profits such as legal aid centers or women's centers. Course topics ranged widely, but there was a notable emphasis on business plans, marketing (especially social media considerations), legal considerations, taxes, finance and accounting, networking and franchising.

Similar to in-library programming, individual counselling for entrepreneurs was provided almost exclusively by library partners. Twenty-two of the forty-six libraries offered some form of individual counselling to entrepreneurs, but only two had counselling provided by librarians/library staff. These were one-on-one sessions on using library resources or doing research particular to entrepreneurs. SCORE was the most common partner in offering one-on-one counselling, with thirteen libraries utilizing this partnership. Other than SCORE, popular partners were SBA, SBDC, and local economic development offices and nonprofits. This is an area where libraries should continue to develop partnerships, as business advice counselling is beyond the role of librarians. (See Appendix G)

### *OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENT RESOURCES & UNIQUE OFFERINGS*



As well as programming, libraries also highlighted their community partnerships, and other community institutions, as additional resources for their entrepreneur-patrons. Thirty libraries particularly highlighted other governmental or non-profit resources, either in their guides, or intermingled on their database lists. Again, SCORE, SBA, SBDC, and local economic development offices were the most commonly linked resources. Nearby universities, city departments relevant to various regulatory or licensing concerns, Better Business Bureau offices, local nonprofits, chamber of commerce offices, and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) were also highlighted on some sites. The USPTO was even more intimately entwined with seventeen of the forty-six libraries, as these libraries were Patent and Trademark Resource Centers (PTRCs). Sometimes these libraries highlighted their PTRC status in conjunction with their business and entrepreneurship resources, but sometimes they did not. This is a prime area for further support for entrepreneurs, as PTRCs are a critical resource for entrepreneurs with intellectual property considerations. Most immediately, intellectual property protection may give an entrepreneur's business plan an advantage over competitors for venture capital or private equity funding, and in the longer term, intellectual property protection gives entrepreneurs assurance that competitors cannot impinge their intellectual property for the time the patent is valid (Cole and Lysiak, 2017). If a library is a PTRC, they should closely associate this status with their business resources, and even if the library itself is not a PTRC, this resource offering is one that should be highlighted, amongst other resources provided by the USPTO.

Thirteen of the forty-six libraries also had other unique entrepreneurship-related resources or programs the researcher thought worth noting. These included business plan competitions, startup incubators (either partnering with the library or actually physically located within a library building), pitch clubs, participation in the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups program, a startup weekend boot camp for entrepreneurs, a programming series particularly for artist-entrepreneurs, and library-created guides or templates walking entrepreneurs through the process of writing their first business plan, or even walking entrepreneurs through the thought process of considering opening a business at all. These libraries showed creativity and particular consideration for their entrepreneur-patrons. (See Appendix H)

## **Recommendations**

Nine of the forty-six public library websites did not have a way for users to keyword search the website as a whole; if possible, this should be a feature of all library websites as a place to start for a patron with no previous experience with the site. That said, the accuracy of keyword search results is also important; 1,800 results is too many, especially if search results cannot be further filtered by result type (blog posts, upcoming events, etc.). There is definitely room to improve on this aspect of library sites. In contrast, search results for the keyword 'entrepreneurship' in library catalogs were generally relevant and almost always included at least one work published in the past two years. One small area of improvement as regards the catalog and new materials might be the inclusion on the site of some means by which patrons can be updated regarding new resources relevant to entrepreneurs, as only twelve of the forty-six studied libraries currently provided this amenity via RSS feed, newsletter, etc.

Anne Therese Macdonald's 2015 article "Dedicated business centers in public libraries" asserted that a dedicated business space within the public library is an essential component to a successful integration of the public library within the local business development milieu. "When a

dedicated business center is in place,” she concluded, “it appears to be highly used, serves as a focus of collaborations and partnerships, is marketed through those collaborations and partnerships and provides a dedicated space for workshops, classes and seminars...” (p. 359). As slightly less than half of the libraries in this study had a separate physical space reserved for business reference services, this may be an issue public libraries wish to consider in more depth. Additionally, libraries might consider that, in exploring whether or not entrepreneurs could make use of any sort of meeting space within the public libraries studied herein, it was often very difficult for the researcher to determine whether meeting room use policies allowed for free access to meeting spaces, or whether entrepreneurs would need to rent facilities. This might be discouraging to entrepreneur-patrons that might otherwise make use of meeting spaces. If public libraries want to be clear in allowing the use of their meeting rooms for entrepreneurial purposes, they should state so explicitly in their meeting use guidelines.

Many libraries offer both online and in-person programming relevant to their entrepreneur-patrons. As regards online programming, those libraries that do not offer access to online tutorial sites might consider that these learning opportunities can extend to far more patrons, and likely cover far more breadth, than in-library programming. As regards in-library programming, this research would indicate that partnering with other local non-profit and governmental organizations is crucial. Partners to consider include local economic development offices, local chambers of commerce, SBA offices, SCORE chapters, local experts or nearby university affiliates, and local non-profits. Bearing in mind that some entrepreneurs start their ventures while still traditionally employed, holding at least some of this programming on weekday evenings, or over the weekend, is probably ideal. Individual counselling is one popular type of programming that libraries might want to consider expanding into, if they haven't already. This is almost exclusively undertaken in partnership with other local organizations and should require minimal time commitment from library staff once an ongoing program is established.

## **Conclusion**

This study has assessed the support an entrepreneur-patron in the U.S. might be most likely to discover on his/her/their public library website. While this is a limited-scope study, assessing web-publicized resources examines at least one major access point to library support. In assessing the entrepreneurship resources available and/or promoted on the websites of the forty-six largest U.S. public libraries, a number of trends and best practices have emerged, as well as a few areas where libraries might consider improving their services to these particular patrons.

Site search-all box results could likely be improved, but catalog search results is an area of strength. Most public libraries have some sort of physical space that could be of use to entrepreneurs, but more clearly delineating the use of free meeting space vs. rental facilities might invite further use of all of these spaces. Overall, almost all libraries are partnering with other local community organizations to some greater or lesser extent in order to provide programming and/or individual counselling services to entrepreneurs, but this is an area that could see even more growth and possibly an increased variety of partnerships. Lastly, having a strongly-promoted business librarian within these large libraries, or at least a reference librarian who agrees to answer these types of business reference queries, would likely be a boon to services for entrepreneur-patrons.

Overall, it appears that public libraries in the United States are providing strong support to entrepreneurs in their communities. A majority of libraries are providing plentiful print and digital resources to these patrons, including databases, online research guides, and online courses, and a significant minority are further providing the particular expertise of business librarians and/or PTRC services. That said, service vitality is directly proportionate to service promotion. If libraries would like to reach entrepreneur-patrons beyond their walls, as well as within them, they may wish to consider further refining the resources both accessible via their website, and promoted on it. Libraries should consider the accuracy of the search features on their sites, how deep into website topography different resources are located, and whether there are any unique offerings their library provides that could be more prominently displayed.

## **APPENDIX A**

- Allen County Public Library, IN
- Baltimore County Public Library, MD
- Boston Public Library, MA
- Brooklyn Public Library, NY
- Broward County Libraries Division, FL
- Chicago Public Library, IL
- Cleveland Public Library, OH
- Columbus Metropolitan Library, OH
- County of Los Angeles Public Library, CA
- Cuyahoga County Public Library, OH
- Dallas Public Library, TX
- Detroit Public Library, MI
- Fairfax County Public Library, VA
- Free Library of Philadelphia, PA
- Harris County Public Library, TX
- Hawaii State Public Library System, HI
- Hennepin County Library, MN
- Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative, FL
- Houston Public Library, TX
- Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library, IN
- Jacksonville Public Library, FL
- King County Library System, WA
- Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, NV
- Los Angeles Public Library, CA
- Miami-Dade Public Library System, FL
- Mid-Continent Public Library, MO
- Multnomah County Library, OR
- New York Public Library, The Branch Libraries, NY
- Orange County Library District, FL
- Orange County Public Libraries, CA
- Palm Beach County Library System, FL
- Phoenix Public Library, AZ

- Pima County Public Library, AZ
- Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County, OH
- Queens Borough Public Library, NY
- Riverside County Library System, CA
- Sacramento Public Library, CA
- Saint Louis County Library, MO
- Salt Lake County Library System, UT
- San Antonio Public Library, TX
- San Bernadino County Library, CA
- San Diego Public Library, CA
- San Francisco Public Library, CA
- San Jose Public Library, CA
- Seattle Public Library, WA
- Wake County Public Libraries, NC

## APPENDIX B

### Checklist for Entrepreneurship Resources in U.S. Public Libraries

Library: \_\_\_\_\_

- What happens if you type 'entrepreneurship' into the search-all box from the homepage? (Describe.)
- Is there a separate business library and/or separate physical space for business reference in a central or branch library? (Describe.)
- Does the library have a research guide or subject page for Entrepreneurship?
  - What terms are used for this guide's subject ('entrepreneurship', 'business', etc.)?
- Does the library have a business librarian or subject specialist?
  - Is their contact information readily available?
  - Ways to contact (phone, email, etc.):
- What happens when you type 'entrepreneurship' into the catalog search box with no modifications?
  - How many results total?
  - Of the first 25 results, how many items are truly relevant to entrepreneurs?
  - Date range (among first 25 results):
- Does the library offer a newsletter or other means to be updated on additions to the collection that might be of interest to entrepreneurs?

- Are there entrepreneurship tutorials/workshops available?
- Online?
  - Format(s)/Source(s):
  - Topics:
  
- In person?
  - How many currently scheduled?
    - Scheduled weekday, day:
    - Scheduled weekday, night:
    - Scheduled weekend:
    - Taught by library staff:
    - Taught by partner:
  - How far scheduled out?
  - Topics (list to end of currently viewable schedule):
  
  - List of partners (to end of currently available schedule):
  
- Does the library provide access to one-on-one counselling services (either themselves or through a partnership with SCORE, SBA, etc.)?
  
- Are there databases relevant to entrepreneurs?
- What term is used to filter these databases from the full list of all databases available?
- How many are there total?
- How do you access these databases?
  - In-Library Only:
  - Online:
- Is the list of databases annotated?
- List of databases:
  
- Is there meeting space available for entrepreneurs?
- How much does it cost to rent these facilities? (Range.)
- What sorts of equipment do the facilities have? (List.)

- Does the library link entrepreneurs to other community/local government organizations for further entrepreneurship support? List:
- Is the library a Patent & Trademark Resource Center?
- Does the library have a 'makerspace'? Do they associate this space with entrepreneurship?
- Note any other unique entrepreneurship offerings:

#### **APPENDIX C**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL Site Search.xlsx']

#### **APPENDIX D**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL Catalog Search.xlsx']

#### **APPENDIX E**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL Physical Spaces.xlsx']

#### **APPENDIX F**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL Databases Guides and Librarians.xlsx']

#### **APPENDIX G**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL Programming.xlsx']

#### **APPENDIX H**

[Insert 'Entrepreneurship PL PTRC Other and Other Gov.xlsx']

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