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The Information Resources for the Homeless website was created and designed by the

researcher to satisfy the information needs of the homeless, homeless advocates and

librarians. This evaluation project aims to determine which online resources are most

helpful – and most hope-inspiring -- in empowering the homeless. The resource site was

created for this study to make lifelong learning possible for the homeless. A review of

the literature on library services to the homeless from the perspective of the homeless

patron and of the librarian is included. The causes of homelessness, sources of hope and

diversity, getting the homeless off the streets, the homeless and the internet, and

communication with the homeless are all important issues that can be addressed by

library resources.

Headings:

      Libraries and Communities

      Libraries and the Homeless

      Public Libraries - - North Carolina

INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR THE HOMELESS

by
Margaret E. Murray

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
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Approved by

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David Carr

Table of Contents

Introduction

"Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good."

Vaclav Havel

The Information Resources for the Homeless website was created by this researcher and designed to satisfy the information needs of the homeless, homeless advocates and librarians. This project is a research inquiry which aims to determine which online resources are most helpful in empowering the homeless to accomplish tasks and whether a sense of hope can be inspired through viewing the site. The resource site was created for this study to make lifelong learning possible for the homeless.

Understanding the background of both library services and homelessness is crucial to knowing how to provide information to the homeless, therefore a review of the literature on the role of libraries in society from the perspective of the homeless patron and of the librarian begins the paper. Library services to the homeless are then discussed. An analysis of homelessness is made through a discussion of the literature on the causes of homelessness, the role of hope, the diversity of the homeless population and how to emancipate homeless people from the street. The frequent use of the internet by the homeless population is discussed as well as communication with the homeless.

The format of the internet was chosen because it is an information medium which allows social equality and temporary anonymity for oppressed segments of society. (Eng, 1994) The homeless are people who have no permanent abode or home and are disconnected from social support systems they would require in times of hardship or crisis. (Partis, 2003) Hope – defined as "A positive feeling that included some kind of activity and involved the expectation of attaining realistic goals." (Partis, 2003) -- has been a central concept for the online resource created in conjunction with this paper. Empowerment here refers to the ability to transition to a more healthy and safe lifestyle. (MacKnee, Mervyn, 2002) Lifelong learning refers to individuals whose education was interrupted and who are able to resume learning with guidance from the library.

The public library can offer homeless users a new way of seeing themselves. Self worth is a feeling imparted by compassionate and respectful treatment by others. For most of us, a piece of glass is not the only way we see our reflection. We see it in the faces of others. Often this is a distortion caused by circumstances and lack of empathy. (Walters, 1992) For example, Michael Brennan was a homeless person whose life was changed by the use of a public library. "One of the most crucial elements of his recovery, Brennan says, was being treated with respect and compassion…Grace,' he explains, "wears a human face.'" (Davis, 1993)

The Information Resources for the Homeless can be seen at the following web address. *http://pages.ivillage.com/homeless_information/*

Relevant Literature

The Role of the Library

The role of the library has become blurred as the educational process has changed. (Library and Information Commission, 1998) As community institutions libraries play a role in shaping towns. (Fulton, 1998) "Libraries are about people, and care should be taken to ensure that services are people oriented." (Library and Information Commission, 1998) Civic institutions have suffered as community culture has diminished. They are now on the rise again and are reinventing themselves. Local businesses have caused them to re examine how they connect with the communities. Many libraries now have programs and activities with which to draw and involve patrons. (Fulton, 1998) "Good libraries have always asked the same questions: Who lives in the community? What are their needs? How do we best meet them? Should the library be reaching out to others in the community?" (Mason, 1997)

Libraries also have a role in a learning society to develop programs to improve lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and literacy programs focus on individuals whose education was interrupted and who are able to resume learning with guidance from the library. This is not new: an example of such a program was developed by the Oregon State Library during the Depression to aid those who had to quit school to support their families. (Johnson, 2000) "Concern for poor people dates back to the very beginnings of

America's public library movement. Traditionally, the role of libraries toward the poor was seen as providing a means of self-improvement." (Flagg, 2000)

"Libraries, perhaps naively, were envisioned as a 'people's University' that would enable the underclass to 'better themselves' by lifting themselves out of poverty and fulfilling their roles as productive members of society. " (Flagg, 2000)   In 1999 a study titled *Falling through the net: Defining the digital divide* reported that minorities, the poor, less educated and single parent households are risk groups. This report recommends the expansion of affordable access to critical information resources. (McConnaughey et al., 1999) Data gathered in 1998 indicates clearly that American public libraries and other community centers are well used by groups who lack access to the internet at home. Unemployed people used the library three times as often as other user groups. (Ryynanen, 1999) Libraries are places for user groups such as immigrants to overcome insecurities, gain empowerment and learn. (Mason, 1997)

According to a study done in 1993, minority groups were much more likely to see the public library as having an important role in society as a formal education support center, preschooler's door to learning, and independent learning center than non-minority groups. All groups thought the same amount of money should be allocated to fund libraries. One might conclude from this that socially diverse communities are more likely to need the use of the library. As individuals with such diversity it follows that the homeless are actually a greater part of the libraries appreciative patronage than others. (D'Elia, 1993) According to The American Library Association policy on services and roles, libraries should recognize their role in enabling poor people to participate fully in a democratic society through using a variety of resources. (American Libraries

Association) "The time has come for library boards to become organized around the issue of poverty…" (Martin, 2002)

<div align="center">The Homeless Person's Perspective</div>

It is important to understand the perspective of the homeless library patron. Positive examples of homeless patrons thriving on life skills learned in the library are numerous. Probably the best known homeless success story is that of Michael Brennan, the author of "All I really need to know I learned in the library". Brennan used how-to books and computers from the local library to become a free lance journalist. His first published article earned him $1,000 and put a roof over his head. He explains his success: "Three elements that come to mind are the grace of God, the kindness of strangers, and hard work. And again, the resources of the Boston Public Library; without them I simply couldn't have done what I did." (Brennan, 1992) After his success and emancipation from the streets Brennan returned to the public library to do research. This time he experienced a negative encounter with a homeless patron, a woman in a pea coat. His initial reaction was of annoyance until he wandered outside to smoke. He began to reflect on his former problem of finding a place to wash between his part time manual labor job and his study time in the library. Studying near and being rejected by other patrons while in such a condition was a problem he remembered well and did not have a ready solution for.

> "I thought of the lady in the raggedy pea coat, and wondered what surcease she found within this public house, and I wondered at my indifference in the face of her pain so clearly articulated. I snuffed out my butt and wandered back inside, determined to… what exactly? Speak to this woman? Hold her hand? Offer her money? Intervene somehow and make it better? Or rather, to simply allow some compassion to replace the callousness that had so quickly grown in my heart as the yawning loneliness of the streets dimmed from my memory? This, at least

was within my means. But the chance for even a small gesture was lost; when I returned to my table the woman was gone, like a scrap in the wind, and only the sound of rustling pages filled the air. Like so many others I had wished this problem- this human being - would somehow go away. And to my convenience, she had. Strange then, that in having my wish granted I felt only a little emptier, a little cheaper, and a little less human." (Brennan, 1992)

A good example of life long learning is Johny Jay Johnson. Mr. Johnson became homeless following the breakup of a relationship. He subsequently lost his job in retail. After several suicide attempts he "regained his will to live at the free library of Philadelphia, where a librarian helped him find books on investing and self help that turned his life around." (Miller, 2001) During his 6 months spent in shelters he began visiting a library near a soup kitchen he frequented. Johnson's transition from homelessness entailed therapy and jobs skills lessons, welfare, menial jobs and help from a shelter. His continued success relies on a routine daily diet of information on business, health, psychology, meditation and self-improvement. "This is something anybody can do," he said. Johnson is now married, lives in a two-bedroom house and sells cleaning supplies earning $570 a week. (Miller, 2001) He now preaches positive thinking and self-discipline.

Some of the reasons the homeless go to the library are to read about life skills, learn grammar, and because "it is a nice decent environment for somebody who is trying to get a little peace of mind ...Libraries open up a whole new world to me. I take pride in what I say to people, my grammar...conduct and principles in life. The library is a big part of that." (Harvey, 2002) At a 1989 ALA conference in Dallas Mitch Snyder, a homeless advocate from the National Coalition for the Homeless, was a guest speaker. He told a story regarding the only public bathroom in Washington DC. "I would walk in there and there would be dozens of people in the bathroom. People would be sitting up

on the stalls snoring. People would be hunched in the corners and propped up against the walls, curled up on the floor, and occasionally the police would come and they would shuffle everybody out…the alternative to being in the bathroom was to be nowhere and when the weather was bad, you might lose your limbs because of the frostbite." (Kelley, 1999) The bathroom has since been closed. Snyder ended his speech to the librarians by saying "Unless you have been outside, you have absolutely no comprehension of what it is like to be outside. You can't. It's a horror…whatever you have to do to get these folks inside, do it." (Kelley, 1999) These personal stories attest to the value the library has for homeless users to discover resources that encourage life long learning and the value of information resources.

Public libraries are unique because they tend to be:

- Accessible by all
- Safe places
- Neutral and non threatening
- Anonymous
- Caring and supportive
- Non judgmental
- Non competitive
- Built around trust and community involvement
- Client centered

These values are important in making users feel respected and valued. These are necessary conditions if homeless users are going to use books, global resources, web access and free internet training and other library tools. The "free internet training" in particular is extremely important as a critical skill for disenfranchised users. (Bundy,

2003).

<div style="text-align: center;">The Librarian's Perspective</div>

From the opposite perspective the best known example of a negative reaction to homeless patrons is the Morristown Public Library litigation with homeless man Richard Kreimer. The library claimed Kreimer was removed for staring at patrons and smelling strongly. (Kelley, 1999) The Morristown library's perspective is that "the library's rules make clear that the library is open to the public only for specific purposes: reading, studying, using the library materials...other activities need not be tolerated." (Allen, 1992) The American Library Association's Candace Morgan concludes that the challenge is "how to 'stay within Constitutional limits in striving to strike a balance between the rights of the individuals and the general public." The issue tends to be evaluated in terms of the rights of the homeless patron verses the rights of the other library patrons. Kreimer sued the library and was awarded over $200,000. The Morristown public library won the case on appeal. This case made newspaper headlines and stirred up "a huge debate in the library and homeless communities." (Kelley, 1999) Most complaints about homeless patrons center around patrons not using the library for "library purposes." Harry Tuchmayer, an assistant library director, states that "A number of homeless people visit the library to read... that's fine, he said, but there have been instances when the library has been used for purposes other than reading." (Talton, 2002) The online resource created in conjunction with this paper is designed to encourage and aid homeless patrons to make efficient and appropriate use of their time in the library.

The library is not the solution to nationwide homelessness. "While outreach is an important way of promoting literacy and education and self esteem, these things will not

keep a poor person alive." (Kelley, 1999) Regarding the idea of libraries functioning as temporary emergency shelters Patsy Hansel states that "I have never seen a library that had the facilities to handle this. Community cooperation to meet the needs of the homeless, to me, means every agency doing what it does best to meet those needs. It does not mean that every community agency should try to be a shelter." (Greiner, 1989) Michael Stoops believes libraries should not become day centers for the homeless. Mr. Stoops is an advocate at the National Coalition for the Homeless and says "if librarians want to see an end to this trend, we must get out there and lobby for more day centers and work with advocacy programs to help the homeless and the poor to have a place to go during the day. Shelters do not operate 24 hours a day and people without shelter need a place to get out of the elements and clean up a bit." (Kelley, 1999) Rick Ashton of the Denver Public Library agrees that "The Library is not a social services agency…What we can do is put a book in someone's hands with plenty of help from knowledgeable staff. No one else is trained to do that." (Squibb, 1995) . Librarians have legitimate fears about working, untrained in mental illnesses, among the homeless. These concerns are discussed in the review of literature on library services to the homeless. The goal of the following guidelines is to have the library functioning as efficiently as possible to serve all areas of the community.

Library Services to the Homeless

Libraries serve the homeless in many ways, and planning is important to this service. "Odione's law states that things that do not change stay the same." (McNeil, 1996) Planning services that address a group of patrons means you must learn who they are. In order to do this for homeless library users, librarians may want to use all the

available community resources such as city planners, mental health agencies,

rehabilitation centers, social service agencies, schools, hospitals and newspapers. In

1990 the American Library Association wrote a formal policy on library services for the

poor. It stated that "These poor people are affected by a combination of limitations,

including illiteracy, illness, social isolation, homelessness, hunger and discrimination,

which hamper the effectiveness of traditional library services. Therefore it is crucial that

libraries recognize their role in a democratic society, but utilizing a wide variety of

available resources." (Kelley, 1999) According to the American Library Association

there are six main library services available for homeless patrons.

- The provision of street cards which list services to assist in finding food, health, shelter, legal aid, welfare and employment information.

- Some libraries provide reading rooms within homeless shelters.

- "Community rooms" within libraries are designed to provide information on community social services.

- Library cards for homeless people who are without a permanent address.

- Educational and cultural programs for homeless children and literacy programs for the adults.

- Open referral services in libraries that aid homeless patrons. (American Library Association)

The purpose of these resources is to better serve all areas of the community. They hold

value in that employing these practices would improve the position of librarians as well

as the lives of the homeless.

In 1996 the ALA formed the Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty, a

subcommittee of the ALA's Social Responsibility Roundtable to enforce the "library

services for the poor" policy. The Task forces' purpose is to encourage library outreach

programs to the poor and homeless and to lobby ALA and Congress on poverty issues.

(Kelley, 1999) There are many good examples of successful library outreach services.

The Denver public library was one of the first libraries to start a homeless program for

children and adults. They also allow people without a permanent address to have library

cards. Another example is the New York Public Library system which started excellent

programs in twenty five shelters in the 1980's. In 1986 the NYPL worked with the

children's aid society and two other local resources to set up weekly story hours at a

nearby welfare hotel. "The children were sometimes sent down in their best clothes."

(Kelley, 1999) One of the most comprehensive library outreach programs in the US is

the Newark Public Library collaboration with the Newark Housing Authority to form "a

group of 10 on-site library centers in public housing and shelters around the city."

(Kelley, 1999) In order to determine the needs of the residents staff interviewed them

and found that "A halfway house needed books on substance abuse. A public housing

site with a clinic needed books on pregnancy and HIV and AIDs." (Kelley, 1999)

Outreach services include services to homeless shelters, social service agencies,

institutional services, women's safety shelters, schools, residence homes for the abused

and Braille centers. (Johnson, 2000) These services are valuable in that they are vital to

the well being of the community. Actions librarians can take regarding outreach services include the following:

- Contacting and building partnerships with local welfare consumer and antipoverty organizations to find out how the library can contribute.

- Community needs assessment should be evaluated as well.

- It is helpful to have a display area for brochures and reports of local organizations so that people can contact them if they want to get involved.

- Libraries can collect donations of food and clothing and promote volunteerism especially in relation to minorities and women.

- Compiling a database of local community organizations and incorporate it into your libraries home page so that people can understand the issues affecting them such as school services, welfare, child care, taxes and health care is helpful.

- Promotion of public awareness through displays and programs on living wage laws, and affordable housing is recommended. (Progressive Librarian, 2001)

There are many actions that library professionals can take to work with homeless patrons in a positive and effective manner. A number of them are outlined in "Recommendations for Action in Implementing ALA's 'Library Services for the Poor' Resolution" in 2001.

- Librarians can examine the library mission statement to insure that all people served are welcome as well as make sure the public can voice concerns about library policies.

- The library services should also be evaluated to be sure they don't discriminate based on the patron's ability to pay for them.

- Promotion of the removal of all barriers for the homeless such as fees and charges and policies that exclude the homeless is desirable.

- Literacy is another issue the librarian can take action on.

- Insure that children know how and are encouraged to read.

- Librarians should work with literacy providers to publicize the availability of adult education classes, GED, and ESL to help adults improve literacy skills. (Progressive Librarian, 2001)

"The key concept at work here is the Library as a public forum- and environment for free speech. We have a professional obligation to guarantee people's right to read." (Squibb, 1995) The value of these services is that they insure that all members of society have access to information.

Because many of the homeless have mental illnesses it is important to have in-service training for library staff. The Denver Public Library security staff is trained in skills "not usually linked to security gaurds – communication, handling emotionally disturbed people, and conflict management." (Squibb, 1995) Staff tries to call the homeless patrons by their names and treat them with respect. "We get more cooperation

that way." (Squibb, 1995) Staff training supervisors are advised to train staff to handle

the clientele at hand. Some recommendations are the following:

- Train staff to be sensitive to issues affecting poor people and to maintain positive

  attitudes which help to remove barriers to the poor.

- Supervisors should also promote training opportunities for effective techniques in

  generating public funding to upgrade library services to the poor.

- In terms of budget planning it is best to promote low-income programs and

  services into the regular budget rather than supporting projects with "soft money"

  like private or federal grants.

- It is also recommended to promote equity in funding adequate library services

  (materials, facilities and equipment) for poor people.

- Supplemental support should be promoted for library resources for and about the

  poor by using the government (local, state & federal) and the private sector to

  provide adequate funding. (Progressive Librarian, 2001)

When dealing with mentally ill patrons it is useful to know that "There are two

basic types of mental illness. Organic illnesses are caused by biological factors and entail

damage to the nervous system. Functional illnesses are caused by psychological or social

factors with no physical damage. Examples of functional illness causes are prolonged,

unrelieved stress and physical or psychological abuse." (McNeil, 1998) The importance

of these illnesses in understanding the behaviors and situations of many homeless people,

means that public libraries may want to have in service training for staff, self study

materials and occasional seminars to discuss potential problems and solutions concerning mentally ill patrons. (McNeil, 1998) "Staff should also be trained to recognize problem situations before they occur and should be given explicit instruction in how to handle patrons who may suffer from various mental illness" (Gudson, 2001) Managers can also provide some employees with formal instruction in psychology in the form of college courses. As University courses vary the local University staff will be able to assist you in deciding which courses may be helpful. Staff should also have support in the case of incidents. The support should be that in the event of difficult encounters with patrons allow staff to discuss what happened, write the incident up, or receive professional counseling. (McNeil, 1998)

Safety needs of librarians include rules as to which behaviors are off limits. At the Denver Public Library the off limits behaviors are "abusive or threatening behavior, excessive staring, asking for money, and sleeping." (Squibb, 1995) Patrons are given two gentle warnings before being asked to move on. The presence, training and capabilities of security gaurds is vital. "It is strongly recommended, therefore that each library appoint a building security officer, whose responsibility is the coordination of all security efforts. The building security officer, together with a committee of administrators and other staff personnel, should then formulate and adopt a master plan for building security, regardless of budget, location, circumstances" (Shuman, 2002) Emergency situations are extremely fluid. "Literally, anything could happen next." (Shuman, 2002) In 'Problem Patrons: Reviewing Your Options' Bruce Shuman outlines several emergency scenarios and offers the pros and cons of a dozen possible responses to the situation. There are several assumptions to be made in emergency situations:

- There is no single correct solution to a behavior problem.

- Some solutions will have more success than others.

- Emergency situations are more complicated than they appear.

- You can never accurately predict human behavior.

- Library work, while much safer than other occupations, can still present sudden problems in which you will have to make real world decisions. (Shuman, 2002)

Shuman suggests going over a variety of scenarios and evaluating the potential success and pitfalls of each solution. If one thinks about options and plans responses ahead of time, then at least an intelligent plan exists for unforeseen crisis.

Some suggested ways in which librarians can participate in professional association activities are to read the ALA's "Poor People's Policy", distribute copies of it to colleagues, ask ALA's Washington office to support legislative initiatives that would reduce poverty, get involved in the Social Responsibilities Round Table Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness, and poverty or the OLOS subcommittee on the "Poor People's Policy." (Progressive Librarian, 2001) Libraries can also "promote the publication, production, purchase and ready accessibility of print and non print materials that honestly address the issues of domestic and global poverty, hunger, and homelessness, that deal with poor people in a respectful way, and that are of practical use to low-income patrons." (Progressive Librarian, 2001)

Who are the Homeless and what caused their homelessness?

Who is homeless? The current statistics list that "An estimated 842,000 adults and children are homeless in a given week, with that number swelling to as many as 3.5 million over the course of a year.

- 66% are single adults, and of these, three-quarters are men
- 11% are parents with children, 84% of whom are single women
- 23% are children under 18 with a parent, 42% of whom are under 5 years of age.

Racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, are over-represented:

- 41% are non-Hispanic whites (compared to 76% of the general population)
- 40% are African Americans (compared to 11% of the general population)
- 11% are Hispanic (compared to 9% of the general population)
- 8% are Native American (compared to 1% of the general population)

People who are homeless also have high rates of other background characteristics:

- 23% are veterans (compared to 13% of the general population)
- 25% were physically or sexually abused as children
- 27% were in foster care or institutions as children
- 21% were homeless as children
- 54% were incarcerated at some point of their lives
- 39% report some form of mental health problems (20-25% meet criteria for serious mental illness)

  [http://www.nrchmi.samhsa.gov/facts/facts_question_2.asp]

- 44% of homeless interviewed in a study in 1999 had worked at least part time in the last month. (Kelly, 2001).

The implications for library services are that providing resources for a variety of segments of the community is important. Librarians are likely to encounter patrons from all walks of society. Because the homeless are such a diverse population it is likely that their educational background will range from those who are illiterate to those with higher education. "Homeless clients are less educated than the adult U.S. population" (HUD) Thirty-eight percent of homeless clients have dropped out of high school compared to only 25% of the non-homeless population. The percentage of homeless people who have a high school diploma is 34 percent which is the same as the general population. In the homeless population 25% have education beyond high school compared to 45% in the non-homeless population. (HUD) Homeless people who are in families are more likely to not have completed high school.

Prior to 1980 it was hypothesized that "homelessness has at its basis a learned detachment from social life, and rejection of the values of society," (Russo et. al. 2001) a view that imputes volition or choice to live in homelessness. Today it is recognized that there are many factors which cause homelessness including economic, sociological and dispositional variables. However, the value of the past still has its effects. What accounts for many reports of high levels of stress, low self esteem and increased depression and hopelessness is that "many homeless individuals ultimately internalize society's judgment that they are, at least in part, responsible for their plight." (Russo et. al., 2001)

One school of thought divides the homeless into three groups. The first are perceived as undeserving of help and the other two as deserving in two different ways. The undeserving are perceived as those who are homeless due to laziness, irresponsibility or some forms of substance abuse. The second group is perceived as deserving because they lack the needed survival skills through no fault of their own. These are children, the mentally or physically ill and some substance abusers. The third is known as the unwilling victim. They are caught by circumstances beyond their control such as plant closings, gentrification and physical abuse. (Rosenthal, 2000)

Structuralists view homelessness as being the result of structural causes such as gentrification and other societal factors; they argue that virtually all homeless people are competent and deserving of aid unless disabled. People who stress personal causes (individual personal fault) generally argue that the homeless are at most deserving of charity and at the least deserving of nothing. Structuralists argue that "homelessness is essentially a game of musical chairs. Personal factors may help explain which individual ends up without a chair (i.e. a home), but structural factors mandate that someone -- some millions -- will". (Rosenthal, 2000). In the 1980's Americans became more understanding of structural causes of homelessness but not of individual ones. Despite these advances both the wealthy and the average person make distinctions between those poor that are deserving and undeserving.

The causes of homelessness are varied. Some feel that one cause for the increased rate of homelessness since 1980 may be that many patients in the 1980's were de-institutionalized and are now unable to care for themselves. (Martin, 2002) Doctors increasingly rely on medication rather than hospitalization. This is a problem in that

many mentally ill people cannot afford their medications or remember to take them. The second is that during the Reagan era low-income housing was drastically cut back. (Harvey, 2002) "US cities destroyed housing that traditionally housed the poor" such as single occupancy hotels which were torn down by the thousands. For many low-income elderly, disabled or working poor, the loss was a shock. Rents have been rising for modest housing since. (Martin, 2002) Gentrification of urban areas, the breakdown of families due to divorce, chemical dependencies, and early, unwed motherhood all contribute to the increasing number of homeless people. (Hersberger, 1999). The various forms of addiction that have been flourishing since the 1980's are compounded by inadequate treatment options for addiction sufferers. (Martin, 2002)

A study was done in 2001 in which eleven causes of homelessness were analyzed. The leading reasons given for men becoming homeless were loss of a job, discharge from an institution, mental health problems and alcohol and drug addictions. For women the main reasons were eviction, interpersonal conflict and a person being no longer able or willing to help. Other reasons cited were age, marital status, race and being a veteran. (Tessler et. al., 2001) Recent studies of the increasing female homeless population document childhood sexual and physical abuse and domestic violence as the main causes. These studies also cite an increased susceptibility to violence for these women once they are homeless.

Gentrification of urban areas previously available at low costs has caused "US citizens to pull up their private 'drawbridge' and the nations landscape assumes this hostile milieu…publicly funded facilities like libraries are being eroded, and leisure space such as beaches are becoming more acutely segregated." (Macloed et al., 2002) In some

areas of the nation features to prevent the homeless from sleeping out doors are used. Bum proof benches to make sleeping uncomfortable and sprinkler systems set to drench the sleeping homeless are set up. It seems little wonder that the homeless seek indoor places to sleep in the day.

In New York City mayor Guiliani set a zero tolerance against the city's poorest by cutting off public facilities to encourage the poor to leave its limits. Many cities have set policies designed to keep the homeless out and purify public spaces. Apparently this is due to "compassion fatigue" also observable in some librarians striving to resolve situations involving the homeless. One question that must be faced is whether the government and its citizens bear responsibility for ensuring a decent minimal level of living for everyone. The term "revanchism" suggests the combination of revenge and reaction against oppressed workers, welfare mothers, immigrants, gays, racial minorities, homeless people and demonstrators. (Macloed et al., 2002) City planning no longer endeavors to integrate communities so much as plan certain areas of it to separate the desirable from the undesirable. (Macloed et al., 2002)

Hope and the Homeless

In 2003 a study was done to find the meaning of hope to the homeless. It seems this concept is directly tied into the function of a library in the lives of the oppressed. Hope is boiled down to five themes. The five themes are expectancy, connectedness, the perspective from the street, emotionalism and brokenness.

- Expectancy- Expecting to achieve something in the future.

- Connectedness- The perceived sense of a meaningful relationship with self and others.

- The perspective from the street- The alteration between hope and hopelessness involves the joy of freedom of street life compared to the hope depleting effects of cold weather and the effort of keeping clean. "People saw keeping clean as important in terms of feeling better and as part of a strategy for maintaining hope." Keeping safe and the lacking the energy needed to access the basics of life are other factors.

- Emotionalism- Devaluation as a human being is one main threat to the ability to sustain hope. "For the homeless the physical and psychological are closely linked. Both are not safe and 'had to be stored somewhere inside themselves."

- Brokenness- The uncertainty of whether the future leads to hope or despair. (Partis, 2003)

Hope is generally "characterized by an expectation of achieving something in the future albeit with some uncertainty. Thus being without a home is considered a threat to hope as it highlights the fact that the future is uncertain". The library, however, can be a constant in the lives of the homeless. The characterization of hope has been a central concept for the online resource created in conjunction with this paper, hope being "A positive feeling that included some kind of activity and involved the expectation of attaining realistic goals." (Partis, 2003). Hopelessness is an acute trauma and chronic stressor which saps the physiological and physical resources of the homeless. Many homeless women experience feelings of giving up, self-blame and helplessness.

"Although no universal meaning of hope exists, it is a universal need for humans."

(Partis, 2003)

The library represents a temporary spot in which the homeless are not excluded

from the world. Connectedness relates to this interaction with others. Creating families

on the street to replace the genetic ones often lost is a source of hope. Likewise, loyalty

to and sticking with street families can be inhibitors to getting off the streets. One of the

reasons the homeless give as an inspiration to getting off the street is someone reaching

out to them. If the homeless made connections in the world outside of their cliques it

would open up possibilities of connectedness beyond street life. Librarians treating the

homeless as worthy human beings could greatly increase their sense of hope. "The

library is one of the few places where the homeless can sit undisturbed next to someone

from a mainstream lifestyle, read a magazine, or have access to information that may

improve their lives." (Squibb, 1995)

> "Feeling hopeless it's a horrible feeling, sort of going backwards instead of going
> forward and just feeling negative about your self. I used to feel that a lot was to
> do with homelessness really thinking I am the dregs of society you know. And
> then talking to other people they used to say, 'don't put yourself down.'. You
> hope to get up, start again and not worry about that I'm homeless that I'm not the
> only one you know. Some people have got happy dispositions although they are
> not in a good position but they still laugh along with life you know. The main
> thing is that you got to retain your sense of humor because with out that you are
> lost. You do get a bit despondent and a bit black I think. You think I wonder
> when all this is going to end. But then you have to get up and try again each new
> day and look at it from a different angle." (Partis, 2003)

To have hope is to have resilience, hardiness, stamina and the "ability to maintain a

positive sense of direction in life in spite of emotional acknowledgment of major losses."

(Partis, 2003) A study on formerly homeless women found that their hopes for the future

were "connected closely to issues of education, employment, and their children's well being." (Styron et al., 2000)

Another major threat to hope is emotionalism. This includes guilt, loneliness, loss and anger. Emotions, like physical property are not safe on the streets and need to be stored somewhere hidden inside. This relates to the final theme of brokenness. Being homeless is so traumatic that negative feelings must be blocked out in order not to be overwhelming. The homeless information online resource attempts to incorporate the concept of hope as being a safe commodity which cannot be lost.

How to Get the Homeless off the Streets

How do we get the homeless off the streets? The concept of just care implies a method of helping the homeless permanently leave the streets, not just providing a band-aid for temporary care. It is suggested that treating the homeless with compassion and making a connection with them is helpful. Just treatment is the principle that people do two things:

- Society extends to the public arena activities usually carried out as private responsibilities.
- People refrain from objectifying the homeless by ignoring them. (Reitz-Pustejovsky, 2002)

It has been found that welfare to work experiments benefit children. In the New Hope project children scored higher on standardized reading tests, writing grades and

behaved better than those not in the program. The parents in the program also earned

higher wages than those not in the program. (Wetzstein, 2003) Another study on criteria

that helped people get off the streets consists of the following facilitating factors:

- Recognizing one's personal destitution.

- Revolting against death, violence and devaluation.

- Having someone reach out to you.

- Relocating and separating from the street lifestyle.

- Experiencing a spiritual event.

- Going through detox or drug re-habilitation.

- Realizing self worth.

- Realizing one's confidence and abilities.

- Establishing a stable, legitimate job.

- Achieving educational success.

- Creating new relationships with mainstream people.

- Re-establishing family relationships.

- Experiencing accountability.

- Establishing a stable residence.

- Emulating mainstream role models.

- Counseling either formal or informal

- Facing the responsibilities of parenthood.

- Dealing with issues prior to the streets.

- Bottoming out.

(MacKnee, 2002)

Hindering incidents were as follows:

- Feeling a sense of loyalty and family to street friends.

- Receiving free services or welfare.

- Bad experiences with support workers.

- Learning in alternate schools or specialized programs lacking in social / peer

    support.

(MacKnee, 2002)

Homeless and the Internet

The internet can serve as the great equalizer in certain situations. When doing

business online one cannot tell who is wearing what or when they last had a shower

available. "It's classless. It's genderless. It's raceless." (Eng, 1997) Although studies

show that internet use increases with family income levels, the lowest financial group in

society have experienced that barriers to information access are actually crumbling. In

1999 Los Angeles librarians reported that at times 75% of the people using the internet

are homeless. The urban public library is the primary access point for the homeless.

Many use the internet for email because they don't have a regular mailing address.

The internet also helps to obscure class distinctions. "That's the beauty of this

medium…it's available to everybody." (Miller, 1999) In one instance a homeless man in

Los Angeles was admitted to college and awarded financial aid based on applications he

submitted online.   The internet provides a means to not only raise the homeless out of poverty but to alleviate spiritual impoverishment through literature and art as well. "Frank, an eloquent 25 year old who left home at age 14, says 'on the net…nobody can see I'm black.'" (Eng, 1997)

There are groups of homeless in various cities known as the internetters. They surf the internet for hours daily, eventually learning more about the internet than their peers in mainstream society. The internetters build online businesses selling videos or building pathfinders for which a small fee is charged users. (Unfortunately some of them create illegal scams.) The most expert internetters help train other homeless to use computers at the library. It can even be viewed as a replacement addiction in some situations. People who are not using drugs sometimes stay online 72 hours in a row.

Another major use of computers by the homeless came about after the popularity of crack in the 1980's. Formerly the homeless shelters were occupied by alcoholics with only their addiction standing between them and recovery. The crack addicts of the 1980's were less skilled, in their twenties, with terrible addictions and unable to read. Computer programs teaching literacy were used to teach them basic skills. There is a center in Los Angeles with a deluxe computer room containing 35 computers.   The year long rehab program requires the inhabitants to study at least 2 hours of skills per day. Those who make it through the program improve three or four grade levels. There are also numerous online mailing lists for the homeless. Some are sent out by individual homeless writers and others by national homeless organizations. "Lindsey has spent so much time on the net that he says he should be hired to teach others how to do it. 'I'm

learning too much,' he said. 'Someone's bound to say, 'Hey, you know too much. I want you.'" (Eng, 1994)

Communication with the Homeless

There are certain ways to communicate with and help the homeless. Part of the problem libraries have in interacting with the homeless is due to the difficulty in engaging them. Engagement is known as "a process during which the worker focuses on assuring that basic life support services (food and shelter) are in place while attending to the development of rapport to overcome barriers to further collaboration." (Park et al., 2002) Because many homeless people have mental illnesses this is a serious consideration in implementing a learning program. It is very important to achieve early intervention.

Outreach is the most important step in connecting with a homeless person. The core values of outreach are:

- Respecting the dignity of the person.
- Recognizing their strength, uniqueness and survival skills.
- Empowerment and self-determination.
- Respect for the recovery process.
- Respecting the goals and the needs of the client.
- Hope- instilling a sense of hope for clients while maintaining positive, realistic expectations.
- Kindness.
- Advocacy for social justice.

Other characteristics which are helpful for outreach workers are having good judgment, non judgmental attitudes, being a team player, flexibility, realistic expectations, commitment, altruism, a sense of humor at difficult times, creativity and resourcefulness, cultural diversity, resilience and patience. (Erickson, 1998)

A website can be an important tool for exploring and satisfying the fit between users and medium

The needs of the homeless and their advocates fit the characteristics of library and internet services in many ways. A part of operating a cultural institution is determining the needs of the community using it. The information needs of the homeless as indicated in studies by Julia Hersberger are for resources on finances, child care and relationships, housing, health, employment, education, transportation, public assistance, shelter, crime and safety, migration and legal resources. (Hersberger, 1999) These are all resources that are within reach of most librarians and which are organized and provided by the Information resources for the homeless website. As more and more resources are available online it is possible to access them more easily and more quickly. The training librarians receive in evaluating resources has the potential to serve as a powerful tool in guiding the homeless and their advocates towards the social agencies and resources which can help them.

Method

The Information Resources for the Homeless website, which can be seen

at the following web address *http://pages.ivillage.com/homeless_information/,*

provides information about the key areas in which the homeless have been found to show

interest as well as information for the non-homeless about homelessness. The resources

were gathered and organized in December 2003, the website assembled in February 2004,

and remained under construction until April 2004. The subject criteria were derived from

a study of the information needs of homeless families. According to studies by Julia

Hersberger, those needs are: finances, child care and relationships, housing, health,

employment, education, transportation, public assistance, shelter, crime and safety,

migration and legal resources. (Hersberger, 1999)

Online information categories are as follows:

I Finances

>   a/ Reauthorization of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF)

>   b/ SSI Supplemental Support Income

>   c/ Public funding based on need

>   d/ Food Stamps

>   e/ Earned Income Credit

II Child care and relationships

>   a/ Diversity among the homeless

>   b/ Education

III Housing

>   a/ Low income and section 8 housing

IV Health

    a/ Health – mental and physical

    b/ Substance abuse

    c/ Disabilities

    d/ Veterans

V Employment

    a/ Jobs

    b/ Job opportunities for those with disabilities

    c/ Jobs in North Carolina

VI Education

    a/ How to use the library

    b/ GED

    c/ Literacy

    d/ Children's education

    e/ Understanding the homeless

VII Transportation

    a/ Public Transportation

    b/ Transportation for those with disabilities

    c/ Travel information

VIII Public assistance

    a/ Help for the homeless

    b/ Food

IX Shelter

    a/ Homeless Shelters

    b/ Women's and family homeless shelters

X Crime and safety

    a/ Tips for street safety

XI Migration

       a/ Resources for immigrants and transplants

XII Legal.

       a/ Released convicts

       b/ Identification cards   (Hersberger 1999)

The first phase of the website was that of an art project. "Much of the difficulty in helping the homeless mentally ill arises as a consequence of their resistance to engagement." (Park et al., 2002) When thinking about mental illness I was struck by the number of homeless I had seen creating strikingly beautiful art work. "When we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities….for a person with a mental disability who cannot communicate effectively through words, a painting rich with color and life may say more than verbal sentences ever could...". Through art people with disabilities can be connected to the world. (VisArts, 2003) Therefore, in designing the website, it was important to create a means of connecting with the viewer that does not require education or advanced reading abilities.

Learning disabilities often affect the ability to read and shorten attention spans. In designing the resource the aim was to create the shortest and simplest route to a resource of practical use in life style and improvement. On the "jobs for the homeless" page, for example, the links are oriented to go directly to the stage at which the viewer fills out a job application or makes a job search.

The primary image on the home page is a candle with the word hope floating above it. The image was inspired by such people as Donna Bates and her two children

who told a reporter "When they sleep in the street she keeps a candle in her box for those times when they are frightened." (Decker, 2000) The concept is based on light breaking through the darkness. The entire color scheme is based on the colors in the hope photograph and is built around them. The images intentionally do not depict human subjects. This decision was made based on the desire not to alienate any member of the diverse homeless community or to exploit the lives and images of the homeless. (While gallery exhibitions of photographs of the homeless are well intentioned they are at times a source of anger for the subjects.) The positive quotes on the concept of hope were included because "As many public welfare clients live under difficult conditions, with a history of deficits and failures in their lives, there was an emphasis on teaching workers to look for the positives… ways of positively influencing attitudes of clients about themselves were judged as the most helpful parts of the course. Instilling hope in clients also gave more hope to workers who often replicated the feelings of helplessness experienced by those with whom they worked." (Flashman, 1992)

As stated earlier the format of the internet was chosen because it is an information resource which allows social equality and the temporary loss of stigma for oppressed segments of society. (Eng, 1994) In designing the site, the Tate Learning page of the Tate Museum of Art was analyzed for educational and usability purposes.   Ease of navigation was a very important issue for the user audience of the homeless site. Following the Tate example the layout of the home page features the four most important links placed in large font in the middle of the page. A shortened navigation menu appears at the top of each page and an expanded version appears at the bottom of each page. A site map was placed in a separate page.

Web Page Use

When observing statistics it was discovered that the 'Information for the homeless' site map page was receiving a large amount of traffic. The map was then moved to the home page below the four main links. In this manner viewers were able to bypass that step in navigating to the information they needed. The next highest number of hits were to the North Carolina jobs pages and the images of hope page. The images of hope page contains all of the photographs in the site along with their metadata. Based on previous experience in the creation of an online pathfinder the server Ivillage was chosen to raise the site's page rank in order to facilitate viewing of the resource. This server provides detailed statistics on how viewers are accessing the site, what search terms they are using and how many IP addresses are accessing the URL. This information was useful in monitoring and adjusting the site layout.

A survey was then drawn consisting of ten questions and distributed to 36 participants. The participants were librarians, homeless people, advocates for the homeless and none of the above. The survey was hosted by Zoomerang (http://www.zoomerang.com). All survey statistics were calculated by Zoomerang and MarketTools, Inc. The Zoomerang concept is an Internet-based survey tool which allows customers to design and send surveys and analyze the results in real time. The survey asked which resources were most and least helpful, whether the site inspired a sense of hope in the viewer, if the images were helpful and asked for suggestions for additional resources and additional comments.

Data

Survey Results

An online survey was taken to evaluate the usefulness of the Information

resources for the homeless website. There were 36 responses to the online survey. Of the

36 responses 22% (8) of the respondents were homeless or formerly homeless people,

22% (8) were homeless advocates, 31% (11) were librarians and 25% (9) were none of

the above.

Most of the respondents (29% or 10 votes) chose the 'Information for the

homeless' page as the most useful aspect of the site. This page holds the site map of the

website as well as a vertical menu of all the categories of information available. The

majority (7 of 10) of the viewers who chose this page were librarians. No homeless

people selected this page. In initial statistics during the month of April 2004 the

'Information for the homeless' page received a high amount of traffic. The next most

popular page was the 'What to do first' if you are homeless page with 20% (7) votes.

75% of the homeless viewers chose this page as most useful. The other 25% selected the

'How to find food' page. The 'Images of hope' page was the next most popular page on

the site with 14% (5) of the votes.   This page contains photographs designed to inspire

hope and positive feelings in the viewer.

Page selected	#of votes	% of votes
Information for the homeless	10	29%
What to do first	7	20%
Images of hope - browse the collection	5	14%

When asked which page was the least useful 22% (7) of respondents selected the 'Images of hope' page and 19% (6) selected 'About the image collection'. The 'About the image collection' page contains information about the photographs themselves and is not listed in any of the navigation menus. The page for "Resources in North Carolina" also received 19% of the votes.

Page selected	#of votes	% of votes
Images of hope - browse the collection	7	22%
About the image collection	6	19%
Resources in North Carolina	6	19%

When asked if viewers felt the website inspires hope (a positive feeling that includes some kind of activity and involves the expectation of attaining realistic goals) in viewers 83% (30) felt the website did inspire hope, 8% (3) answered negatively and 8% (3) had no opinion. 100% (16) of the homeless and homeless advocates answered positively. Also answering yes were 6 librarians and 8 viewers who did not fit listed categories. Of the viewers who felt the site did not inspire hope 2 were librarians and 1 did not fit into the listed catagories. 100% (3) of the viewers with no opinion were librarians.

Selection	#of votes	% of votes
Yes	30	83%
No	3	8%
No opinion	3	8%

When asked if viewers felt the presence of visual images on this website was helpful in any way 72% answered yes, 17% answered no and 11% had no opinion. Of the homeless viewers 100% (8) felt the visual images were helpful. Librarians were half in favor and half opposed. 7 out of 8 homeless advocates favored the images. The no opinion group consisted of 2 librarians and 2 viewers who did not fit listed categories. Several viewers felt that the images were too prominent. "Though the pictures are most likely inspiring to some, I think they should play a less prominent role in the overall site, for fear that they might turn some people off to an otherwise extremely useful and well designed site."

Selection	#of votes	% of vote
Yes	26	72%
No	6	17%
No opinion	4	11%

Viewers also responded to the request for resources they would like added to the site. Responses range from the inclusion of specific URL's and information about social services programs to a request for more artwork. One person recommended a slight rearrangement of the navigation bar and the relocation of the link for Spanish resources to a more prominent place.

Of the 17 responses to the request for 'additional comments' 11 were primarily positive feedback such as "Fantastic Resource", "I am impressed --- and inspired" and "The links are very useful.". There was one request to reduce the images and one for cleaner presentation of the images page. Two Requests were made to rearrange several of the links in a navigation bar. One person inquired as to "how is this to get to homeless

people" the answer to which is through homeless listservs and search engines. The most hope inspiring comments to the author were "I would LOVE to help in any way possible" and "this is a very important issue to address that could literally be life changing for people".

Website Statistics

Website statistics indicate that the most active month was the month of May with 2,515 visits from 471 different IP addresses to the website. The Resources for the Homeless website was accessed over a period of four months. During the first two months the site was under construction and accessed 295 times in February and 873 times in March. In April 2004 it was accessed 1,368 times. During the month of April alterations were made to improve the navigation based on the user patterns (statistics). The month of May 2004, therefore, gives the most accurate measure of user habits with 2,515 visits from 471 distinct hosts (IP addresses). Users entered the site most often through the North Carolina job resources page. This is due in large part to the existence of a URL for job resources present on that page. The URL ncesc.com is listed as the most frequently entered search term in finding the site.

The most frequently visited pages were as follows:

The 'North Carolina job resources' page received the most visits in May with 511 hits (20.32%) /homeless_information/id16.html. The next most frequently visited page was the homepage with 363 (14.43%) visits at the URL: /homeless_information/. The 'Jobs for Homeless People' page was the third most frequently visited with 197 (7.83%) visits at the URL: /homeless_information/id15.html. In close tie for fourth place were the 'Job

resources' referral page 95 (3.78%), 'Information on homelessness' 94 (3.74%), 'Information for the homeless' 92 (3.66%) and 'Help for the homeless' 91 (3.62%). After these the 'Homeless Women' page received 80 (3.18%) visits.

Studies have found that unemployed people used the library three times as often as other user groups. (Ryynanen 1999) This is supported by the site statistics and the number of hits to the job information page. The statistics indicate that the site is being used as a job hunting resource.

The primary referring URL's were the North Carolina job resources (256), Google.com (205), the homepage (330), the Jobs page (15) and aol search (103).

The most common search terms used to find the site were www.ncesc.com (88), resources for the homeless (39), ncesc.com (24), images of hope (23), homeless images (15), homeless information resources (11), help for the homeless (9), information about the homeless (7), homeless women (6) and www.unemploymentoffice.net (6).

Analysis

The survey indicates that the website is successful at engaging and inspiring people who have the most direct interest in homeless resources. This would include the homeless and the homeless advocates. The preference for the 'Information for the homeless' page by librarians is likely due to formal training in the use of scholarly resources. MLS programs train librarians to use site maps when viewing online resources. It could be that no homeless people selected this page because they are looking for immediate solutions to a specific problem rather than an overview of resources. That would explain why 75% of the homeless viewers chose 'What to do first' and 'How to find food'. As mentioned above engagement is a problem and the website is designed to catch the attention of viewers with symptoms of trauma and short attention spans. The preference for the use of art work with the mentally ill combined with the high numbers of homeless people with mental illnesses would in part account for the popularity of the 'Images of hope' page. (VisArts, 2003)

In contrast the 'Images of hope' page was also chosen by 22% as the least useful section. One viewer commented that "I had a problem answering question no. 3, "Which category do you feel is the least useful," because all of the categories are useful. I ended up selecting the Images of Hope category, only because, as a reference librarian, I don't expect to need that particular resource. The site contains links to a wealth of resources on this topic. Thank you for putting them all on one site." The "About the image collection' site received 19% of the vote because it is related almost solely with the technical process of the art work. It is not listed in any navigation menus and is only included for those who are curious. A possible reason for the 'Resources in North Carolina' also getting

19% of the vote is that the survey was distributed internationally through the website itself. In the comments area a viewer from California noted the location issue. "The local resources are not useful to me and my clients because we are in California. The Web site is inspiring though, since it is so beautifully done." Another viewer commented "I wish every state had a similar resource listing".

The majority (83%) felt the website inspired hope. This could be due to a combination of images and text in delivering the message that there is hope for the lives of the homeless to improve if they take some action through the use of the website. The concepts behind both the images, the text and the layout of the links is based on a study of hope in the homeless done in 2003. (Partis, 2003) Visual images have a great power to subtly and overtly affect the viewer. Training in the visual arts provided the creator of the website with the knowledge and experience to execute those images. Simply the presence of the word hope may have been a positive influence on some viewers. The inspirational quotes have the potential to turn off the cynical viewer or inspire the open minded one. The tone of the site may have created an empathetic connection with those who are suffering by not being overly joyful and unrealistic yet maintaining that life has unlimited potential to improve. The photographs of the sky may have resulted in a more light hearted feel as many people associate blue skies with good times.

A slightly lower majority felt the presence of visual images was helpful in some way. The photographs may have aided in the engagement of the viewer. All of the homeless viewers felt that the photographs were helpful. Most of the homeless advocates (7 out of 8) felt they were helpful perhaps due to familiarity with the engagement process. The images may have proven to be a distraction for others. Librarians, who were divided

on the issue, are accustomed to primarily text interfaces associated with Universities and large corporations.

The requests for additional resources indicates that there is always room for improvement. Viewers seem satisfied with the quantity and quality of information but feel there are a few slight additions to be made. One viewer stated "I believe the site is extremely exhaustive in the amount of resources it provides." The additional comments more than anything indicate to the researcher that the site is successful in that it provides a much needed resource, inspires people and may create positive change in people's lives in the future. As stated above a viewer commented that "this is a very important issue to address that could literally be life changing for people."

The results of the survey do not necessarily correlate with the website statistics. The statistics largely indicate how the website was distributed through search engines and the use of search terms rather than being helpful in gauging the needs of the homeless. This discrepancy is due in part to the way search engines such as Google pulled the site up with search terms. The existence of a job hunting URL attracted many viewers who were seeking to find jobs. Other commonly used search terms were obviously used to seek images on the subject of hope and the subject of homelessness. Perhaps once the site has circulated on the homeless listservs and public library listservs it has been posted to the statistics will change to reflect its user population.

Conclusion

While the library is not the solution to the world's homeless problem it can be a part of it. It is important to think of and do constructive things when presented with a problem. This website has shown that it is possible to create positive change in a hrough the use of an online resource. The attempt to inspire a sense of hope through viewing the 'Information resources for the homeless' website can be considered successful in several ways. One indication that the attempt is successful is that 83% (30) of survey respondents felt the website inspired hope (a positive feeling that includes some kind of activity and involves the expectation of attaining realistic goals). (Partis, 2003) The conclusions of another study related self esteem strongly with counteracting hopelessness. It seems the library is capable of playing a significant role in providing hope in terms of the empowerment it can provide. Knowing where to find the resources to help your self plays a big part in that. In a study on people suffering from chronic illness (Miller, 1983) found that "individuals need to feel good about themselves, their value and their worth before they can invest in improving their situations". This website has been proven to a point to inspire a positive (hopeful) feeling in it's homeless viewers. Another indication that the site is capable of inspiring hope is that the web site's statistics reflect people are accessing the site through the job resources page. The online resource has in part fulfilled its viewers' needs in the respect that it is being used as an employment resource. "Various individual attributes are linked with leaving homelessness, including recent employment, welfare receipt, job training, identification with other homeless people, and homeless history." (Piliavin et al., 1996) Based on these statistics the role of hope may be considered to be fulfilled by way of the definition of

hope as the combination of an activity (job hunting) which results in the expectation of attaining realistic goals (a job). (Partis, 2003) "It's evident that libraries offer resources that can help disadvantaged people elevate themselves out of their economic state; but their ability to alleviate spiritual impoverishment – through the new technologies as well as the traditional avenues of literature and art – should not be underestimated." (Flagg, 2000) The study concludes with the hope that more resources of this nature will be made readily available for librarians, homeless patrons and their advocates in the future.

Recommendations for further research were made by viewers in the survey: "This is a very important issue to address that could literally be life changing for people. Apply for a grant from the state or US so that advertisement or someway the word could be spread. Try to get it on the library home page or something when people come in to search for a book." Other recommendations were to reduce the presence of images and improve navigation. Due to the differences of opinion perhaps one website with images and another in a text only version would be useful. In addition a table of contents at the top of each page to cut down on scrolling has been requested. A search function to find information within the site (due to it's large size) is planned. To promote further study on the subject the Information Resources for the Homeless site contains a page (a link on the homepage marked 'for librarians') with research resources, an online citation database and pathfinders intended for use by librarians, the homeless and homeless advocates.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Questionnaire

Consent Form

This is a study to determine which online resources (websites) are useful for homeless library patrons and for those aiding them. Answering these questions is important to the homeless and library community. The purpose of this project is to provide access to materials that may improve the experience of the homeless patron as well as that of the librarian by providing easy access to helpful resources. The viewer will look at the information site created by this researcher and then evaluate the most and least helpful aspects and make recommendations. The viewer will spend twenty minutes viewing the website before filling out the questionnaire. The survey takes between five and ten minutes to fill out.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts aside from viewing online resources linking the viewer to social organizations such as homeless shelters and social security offices. Viewers may benefit from the organization and availability of resources and websites. The viewer may choose to view the website and not participate in the survey or may choose not to do either.

All responses are anonymous.

Participation is voluntary; refusal to participate involves no penalty.
Participants may stop answering at any time.

For further questions please contact mmurray@email.unc.edu, or her advisor Dr. Carr Carr@ils.unc.edu, at 919-962-1319. This research has been approved by the Academic Affairs IRB. The AA-IRB is accessible via 962-7761 and aa-irb@unc.edu.

I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to the above terms:

Yes

No

1. You may select more than one option.

- Are you
- A homeless or formerly homeless person?
- A homeless person advocate?
- A librarian?
- None of the above?

2.   Which category of information do you feel is the most useful?
       Please choose one.

- Information resources for the homeless

- Images of hope - browse the collection

- About the image collection

- What to do first

- Information for the homeless

- How to use the library

- Food

- Identification cards

- Shelters

- Money

- Resources in North Carolina

- Jobs

- Education

- Veterans Information

- Help for the homeless

- Housing

- Health

- Disabilities

- Substance abuse

- Diversity among the homeless

- Join your community

- Released convicts

- Transportation

- Understanding the homeless

- Homeless Women

3.	Which category do you feel is the least useful?
	Please choose one.

- Information resources for the homeless

- Images of hope - browse the collection

- About the image collection

- What to do first

- Information for the homeless

- How to use the library

- Food

- Identification cards

- Shelters

- Money

- Resources in North Carolina

- Jobs

- Education

- Veterans Information

- Help for the homeless

- Housing

- Health

- Disabilities

- Substance abuse

- Diversity among the homeless

- Join your community

- Released convicts

- Transportation

- Understanding the homeless

- Homeless Women

4. Do you feel the website inspires hope (a positive feeling that includes some kind of activity and involves the expectation of attaining realistic goals) in viewers?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

5. Do you feel the presence of visual images on this website is helpful in any way?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

6. Is there a resource you would like added to the site? Please list it here.

7. Do you have additional comments about the site you viewed?

Appendix B: Survey Answers

1)
Please select a catagory. Are you...

Page selected	#of votes	% of votes
A homeless or formerly homeless person?	8	20%
A homeless person advocate?	8	22%
A Librarian?	11	31%
None of the above?	9	25%

2)
On the information site you just viewed what was the most useful section and why?
(Please choose one)

Page selected	#of votes	% of votes
• Information resources for the homeless	2	6%
• Images of hope - browse the collection	5	14%
• About the image collection	0	0%
• What to do first	7	20%
• Information for the homeless	10	29%
• How to use the library	0	0%
• Food	1	3%
• Identification cards	0	0%
• Shelters	1	3%
• Money	0	0%
• Resources in North Carolina	1	3%
• Jobs	1	3%

- Education   0   0%

- Veterans Information   1   3%

- Help for the homeless   7   20%

- Housing   3   9%

- Health   0   0%

- Disabilities   0   0%

- Substance abuse   0   0%

- Diversity among the homeless   0   0%

- Homeless Women   2   6%

- Released convicts   0   0%

- Transportation   0   0%

- Understanding the homeless   1   3%

3)
Which category do you feel is the least useful? (Please choose one)

Page selected	#of votes	% of votes
• Information resources for the homeless	1	3%
• Images of hope - browse the collection	7	22%
• About the image collection	6	19%
• What to do first	1	3%
• Information for the homeless	1	3%
• How to use the library	1	3%
• Food	1	3%
• Identification cards	1	3%
• Shelters	0	0%
• Money	0	0%
• Resources in North Carolina	6	19%
• Jobs	0	0%

- Education   0   0%

- Veterans Information   0   0%

- Help for the homeless   0   0%

- Housing   0   0%

- Health   0   0%

- Disabilities   1   3%

- Substance abuse   0   0%

- Diversity among the homeless   1   3%

- Homeless Women   1   3%

- Released convicts   1   3%

- Transportation   1   3%

- Understanding the homeless   2   6%

4)
Do you feel the website inspires hope (a positive feeling that includes some kind of activity and involves the expectation of attaining realistic goals) in viewers?

Selection	#of votes	% of votes
Yes	30	83%
No	3	8%
No opinion	3	8%

5)
Do you feel the presence of visual images on this website is helpful in any way?

Selection	#of votes	% of vote
Yes	26	72%
No	6	17%
No opinion	4	11%

6)
Is there a resource you would like added to the site? Please list it here.

a) www.socialserve.com (we are a nonprofit service and serve several counties in NC)

b) Mental Health and Legal Aid information or links.

c) where i could view more art like that. it did make me feel hopeful.

d) None

e) I would add a bulletin board for postings by both homeless people looking for homes and people who are willing to help. This might join willing parties.

f) Resources for disabled folks to 1- get funding for adaptive equipment (see university of washington Aelternative Technology departments website 2- Resources for individuals with disabilities to connect with disabled activists- see the ragged edge website, new mobility magazine, ADAPT website 3- Deaf resources Also please list community college programs in your state.

g) The site is very extensive!

h) WIC (women's infants and children food vouchers) are available as a Federal program;we have homeless WIC clients in LA

i) I would put the link to the Spanish version near the top, like the "For Librarians" link. Non-English speakers would not scroll down that far to look for it. I would also add some porn. Homeless people like porn. Other than that, I think it looks great - a balance of clean and easy to read and artistic

j) yes i think thath they should help more for homeless people

k) no

l) no

m) no

n) No. I believe the site is extremely exhaustive in the amount of resources it provides.

o) Homeless shelters should be able to post their "wishlists".

7)
Do you have additional comments about the site you viewed?

a) I would LOVE to help in any way possible.

b) I like the idea of it. I would move things around a little....put food and shelter at the top of the page somehow. It seems to me those are the most important things to a homeless person.

c) great intentions. keep the extras to a minimum.

d) I had a problem answering question no. 3, "Which category do you feel is the least useful," because all of the categories are useful. I ended up selecting the Images of Hope category, only because, as a reference librarian, I don't expect to need that particular resource. The site contains links to a wealth of resources on this topic. Thank you for putting them all on one site. Design-wise, I was confused as to the purpose of the bulleted menu on the left side of some of the pages. I would find it more helpful to use that space for a table of contents menu for that particular page, with internal navigation to the major topics on that page

e) I wish every state had a similar resource listing

f) I am impressed --- and inspired.

g) this is a very important issue to address that could literally be life changing for people. Apply for a grant from the state or US so that advertisement or someway the word could be spread. Try to get it on the library home page or something when people come in to search for a book. cleaner presentation of images, without the further information so large, maybe use a smaller text for that link.

h) how is this to get to homeless people

i) The local resources are not useful to me and my clients because we are in California. The Web site is inspiring though, since it is so beautifully done.

j) Fantastic Resource

k) Thank you for taking your time to create a well needed site.

l) Though the pictures are most likely inspiring to some, i think they should play a less prominent role in the overall site, for fear that they might turn some people off to an otherwise extremely useful and well designed site.

m) I am formerly homeless, an advocate for the poor and a librarianship student. I wish I didn't have to choose identities for this survey

n) The links are very useful.

o) There is too much to look at everything and compare usefulness. It is all useful!

p) it would be good to haer thath we can help our people inthe uas frist be fore ant outher country

q) It gives a variety of info

r) an impressive information source

s) I believe images are necessary, but more for a background aesthetics value than browsing it like an art gallery. Also, the presentation is a bit overwhelming, with all the text and scrolling. A menu would be nice, with less scrolling.

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