

# ACTIVATING PUBLIC LIBRARIES

## LIAQUAT MEMORIAL LIBRARY - A CASE STUDY

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### OUR MOTIVATION

- Privatization of leisure activities has led to neglect of public spaces such as libraries
- Hence, we decided to employ the Human Centered Design approach in our research to find ways of improving the quality of user experience in public libraries.

### PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

- Contrary to our expectations, Liaquat Memorial Library receives a steady stream of daily visitors.
- However, the library is a very passive space where people only come for individual study sessions. We wanted to find out what stops people from engaging in collaborative sessions and group discussions and explore possible opportunities for community engagement.

### BACKGROUND

Public libraries can be spaces for

- studying and working
- community engagement,
- workshops,
- career counselling,
- various educational resources.
- rich reservoirs of the city's cultural heritage

Feeling the dire need for such public libraries that also act as recreational spaces in Karachi, we decided to conduct our case study at the Liaquat Memorial Library at Stadium Road, Karachi.

LML is a self-study based environment with a

- study hall
- CSS study rooms
- a private study room for women
- a children's section
- a newspaper archive room, among others.

### OUR AIM

- Our aim was to gauge the interest and quality of experience of people who visit such public libraries.
- Based on the insights from our target community we developed a viable prototype to enhance user experience by activating existing spaces within the library. We also developed a plan to help the library improve its outreach program.

# SECONDARY RESEARCH



The 'Together with Smile' project held in the Regional Library Karvina in the Czech Republic invited children with special needs and held creative workshops for them.

The Sigando Digital Learning Workshops held in The State Library of Queensland in Queensland, Australia equipped migrant communities with a personal computer and the skills needed to use and maintain it, thus improving digital literacy.

The Language Development Group in Eskilstuna City Library in Eskilstuna, Sweden helps immigrants learn the local Swedish language and culture by providing access to language development resources and organizing activities encouraging language practices.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Observations from visits to the library over the span of 3 months.
- In-depth interviews with the Director of the Library, the Chief Librarian, and the Head of Technical Staff.
- One-on-one interviews with 19 users of varying ages and genders.
- Focus group discussion with the directors of Lincoln Corner.
- Two surveys: current users and potential users.

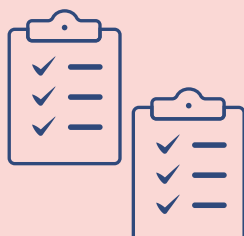
## PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Meetings with the Library Director and staff helped us understand the management and functioning of Liaquat Memorial library.



The analogous inspiration - Lincoln's Corner - served as a comparison to Liaquat Memorial Library.

The current user survey yielded information about user demographics and their experience.

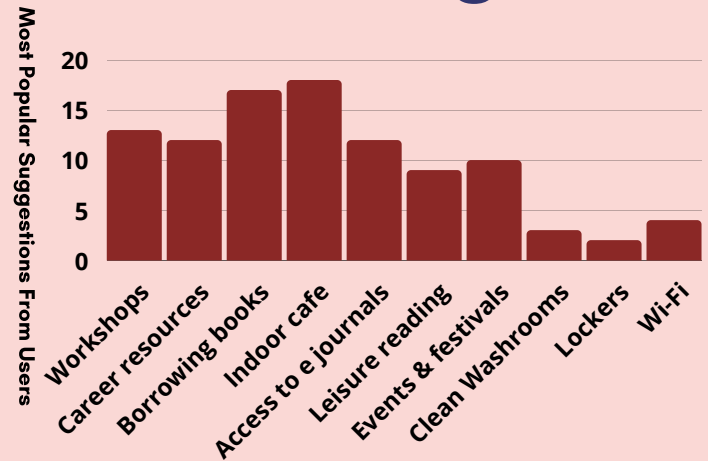


Potential users survey helped us understand interest and opinions on public libraries amongst the general populace.

# Primary Research Findings

## Interviews

- Very few children to talk to and mostly came to do **homework only**.
- People were unhappy with lack of **collaborative spaces**.
- Unaware about facilities and events.
- Concerns over **unhygienic rooms and washrooms**.
- Book referral system was very **tedious and old-fashioned**.
- **Inconvenient** café location, users unhappy with state of infrastructure, lack of **Wi-fi & computers**.



## Observation

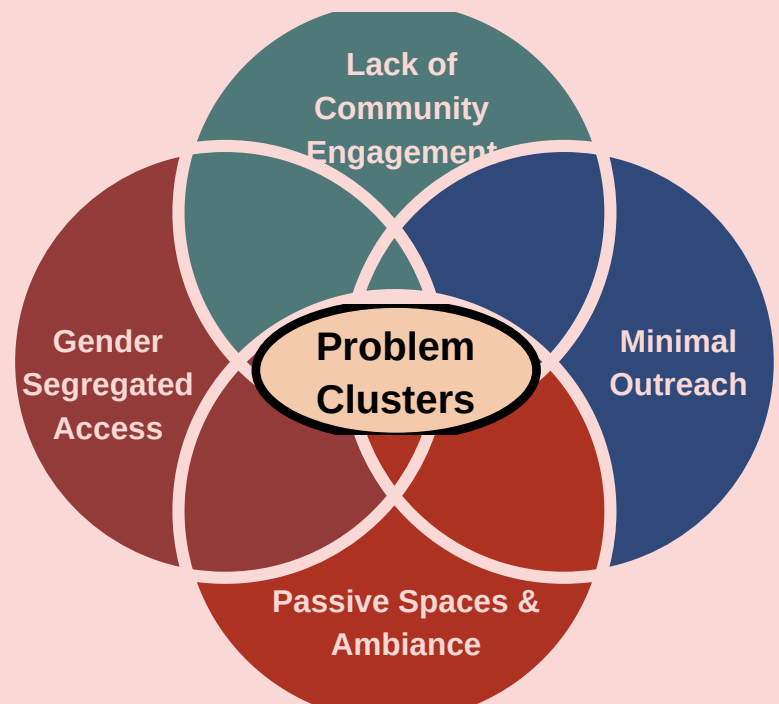
- Dull ambiance, **grey interior** and solitary design.
- Hygiene issues and absence of facilities like **Wi-Fi**.
- Limited access for females as the library has **male dominated areas**.

## Current Users' Survey

- The management conceived the Library as just a **quiet place** for self-study.
- Users loved the Lincoln experience because of its inviting atmosphere and opportunities for **discussion**.
- Users wanted a place which can be used in multiple, **holistic** ways where they could get engagement, fun and **community-learning**.

## Potential User's Survey

- **92% respondents** felt the need for more and better public libraries in Karachi.
- **67.5% of respondents** were not aware of Liaquat Memorial Library.
- Roughly **50% respondents** preferred having a **gender mixed space** with separate study and leisure areas for women.



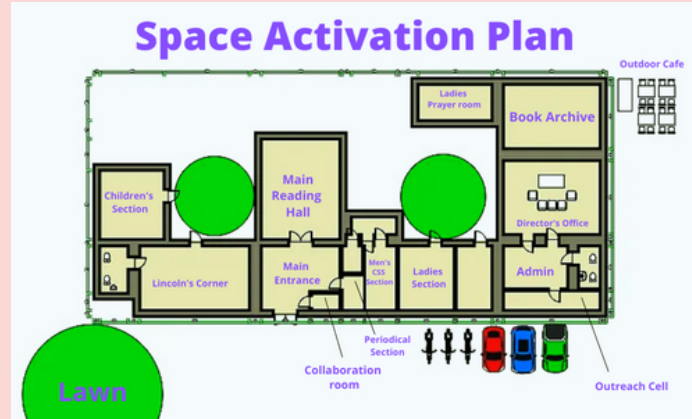
# OUR OUTREACH CELL

A 5 STEP OUTREACH PLAN TO ACTIVATE LIBRARY SPACES THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS

## OUTREACH STAFF STEP 01

Establish a small outreach team consisting of:

- Outreach manager
- social media manager
- volunteer program manager



## STEP 02 IDENTIFY SPACES FOR ACTIVATION

The Outreach staff identifies areas for activation. Based on our research the children's room and the lawn are two spaces that are underutilized

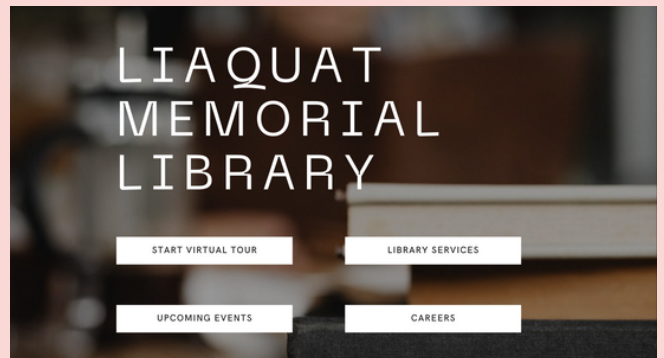


## REACHING OUT TO STAKEHOLDERS



The Outreach Manager can reach out to NGOs, community organizations and Professional associations to hold workshops and seminars. The Outreach manager should prepare an action plan to keep track of partner organizations and project timelines.

## STEP 03



## PUBLICIZING THE EVENT

The social media manager should run a campaign on a social media website as well as on the library website regularly.

The Volunteer Program can be run through this website. Forms can be put up to recruit volunteers.

## STEP 04

Activities & Events	Focal Person	Implementing Partner	Status Updates	Funding Estimate	Fun Resot Spon
Book Fair		Universities/Schools/Publishing Houses/Local Businesses			
Storytelling Program		Schools/Volunteers/Authors/Publishing Houses			
Literacy Program		Ministry of Education/Volunteers/Universities/Academics			
Cultural Festivals		Volunteers/Culture Department/Local Artists/Local Businesses/NAPA/Food vendors			
Career Workshops/Job Fairs		Professionals/Trainers/Career Counsellors/Businesses			
Educational Fairs		Local & International Universities/Colleges/Schools			

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The outreach cell should keep a digitized database of attendees to gauge the popularity of events and user experience to finetune future events to community needs

## STEP 05

### References

- ALA-IRRT International Connections. (n.d.). Best practices from world libraries photo gallery. Google sites. Retrieved December 17, 202 1, from <https://sites.google.com/view/icc-programs/2020-photo-gallery>
- Project for public spaces. (2009, January 1). *How to make your library great*. RSS. Retrieved December 17, 202 1, from <https://www.pps.org/article/libraryattributes>