

Video in Mishawaka-Penn Public Library

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Few library patrons have ever considered checking out video cassettes of current major motion pictures from their local public libraries. Today, however, more homes have video decks than ever before, and people use video as often as they use their radios or stereos. The Mishawaka-Penn Public Library offers entertainment video cassettes for home use free of charge. Video circulation figures have escalated 100 to 300 percent over the past three years, vividly demonstrating the rapid increase of video usage. But the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library has not always been this successful with video.

The library established video in January 1978 with the help of an LSCA grant. "Video In Mishawaka" was a three-year project with these original objectives:

1. To record on videotape events and situations of more or less permanent interest to residents of Penn Township for storage at, and circulation from, the Mishawaka Public Library.
2. To train interested and capable community members to undertake the actual videotaping of local interest and local history programs.
3. To circulate videotape equipment and program tapes for community group viewing.

Unfortunately, the original grant was written by someone who knew very little about video and its implications. That person also left before the grant really got underway. The part of the grant which required that a copy of everything produced had to be donated to the library turned some people away. After the first year, the objectives had not been met, so they were changed and enlarged in scope (i.e., senior citizens were added as an interest group). However, many of the senior citizens were frightened by this new technology. Very little provision was made to overcome their fears through outreach programs. Although it is difficult to document, it is believed that the differences in the personalities of the two video librarians involved with this project also had a direct bearing on the community's use.

The program tapes were intended by the producers for home use only and not community viewing. Previous to 1980, library programming, using entertainment videotapes, was a popular feature. Then an awareness of copyright restrictions curtailed such programming. Again, the objectives were not met and the grant was ruled to be unsuccessful. However, the people of Mishawaka were now aware of the possibilities of video as never before.

"Video In Mishawaka" started with a Sony 1610 color camera, a Sony Portable Beta 1 recorder, a ¾-inch JVC player/recorder, a 19-inch color monitor, a B/W monitor, a tripod, and a dolly. The Mishawaka-Penn Public Library now has six VHS player/recorders, two Beta 2 player/recorders, a ¾-inch JVC player/recorder, a Sony 1610 color camera, a Sony Portable Beta 1 recorder, a 19-inch monitor, a B/W monitor, lights, tripod, and a dolly. (Plus miles of cables and wires and lots of RF transformers.)

In 1977, when the library applied for the LSCA grant, the library served a population of 53,483 with a circulation of 265,456 items. In 1983, the library served a population of 57,899 with a circulation of 305,714 items, of which 10,395 were videotapes.

In 1979 there were 15 program titles in the collection; in 1983 the library owned 399 video titles. The Mishawaka-Penn Public Library also became part of the Indiana Library Film Service Video Circuit in 1983, and now receives 15 titles on a bimonthly basis. The initial collection of preprogrammed video cassettes was in Beta 1 and ¾-inch formats. But as the library patrons began purchasing their own ½-inch equipment, they mainly chose VHS. They requested that the library purchase video cassettes in that format. About this time Blackhawk ran a special for libraries on videotapes, a rent-to-purchase old movies plan. Since the rate of production was not high and entertainment titles were the least expensive and most requested, the library went into old movies and entertainment.

The philosophy in the video collection development over the last four years has been that the video collection is designed for home entertainment and not intended to be educational or instructive. Because instructional videotapes did not circulate frequently, the staff decided to rely on 16mm films for instructional purposes. Videotapes are now purchased in both Beta 2 and VHS formats with the breakdown of 30 percent Beta 2 and 70 percent VHS. Titles are selected based on availability, prospective audience, demand, content, and subject matter. Purchase of additional video titles either in a second ½-inch format or as additional copies of the original format is considered on the basis of popularity. At the same time there was a conscious effort by the librarian to keep the collection family-oriented, although there were and are "R" rated titles added to the collection. The present collection has only 14 percent "R" rated video titles. In order to prevent problems, patrons are required to be at least 18 years of age to check out videotapes. The library also notes the "R" rating on annotations and on the format list.

In 1983 the library spent four times as much on preprogrammed video as in 1980. The present value of the collection is approximately \$16,000. The cost for preprogrammed ½-inch videotape has declined from \$90-\$130 per title in 1979 to about \$25-\$60 today. The library's average cost per circulation is 92 cents. The average tape life of a video cassette is 100-150 circulations.

The library now has a collection that is out-circulating our present system of reserves and checkout. Videotapes are reserved and booked through the reference desk, although they are housed in the AV department. The amount of record keeping the reference staff has to do has increased proportionately with the increase of titles in the collection and is causing problems. Patrons may book videotapes within the present month and one additional month and can checkout two video titles at a time. Ideally, a patron could checkout two video titles for every day the library is open if they so desire, as the loan period is 24 hours. Each video title now goes through three departments on its way out of the building, reference, AV, and circulation, causing an predictably large amount of paperwork and waiting.

The amount of preprogrammed video titles in the collection has increased enormously over the past few years since the LSCA grant ran out. Some titles have done better than others, as is the case in any collection. The following are the top video titles, listed in order of circulation, for 1983:

An Officer and A Gentlemen

Annie

Best Little Whorehouse in Texas

On Golden Pond

Superman II

Grease

Victor Victoria

Firefox

*M * A * S * H*

Dumbo

The following is a cumulative list of the top 10 titles for the last four years in circulation:

Superman

Grease

Muppet Movie

*M * A * S * H*

Star Wars

An Officer and A Gentleman

9 to 5

Annie

Pete's Dragon

Popeye

There are also some titles that in less than one year have out-circulated titles which have been in the collection for two to four years. It is expected that *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Mr. Mom*, and *Tootsie* will be added to the top circulating list at the end of 1984. For higher circulations, the staff is still experimenting to see if it is better to purchase two VHS tapes of the same title or a Beta 2 and a VHS. It is difficult to get accurate statistics because of the fluctuation of demand per title.

I do my selection by going to the movie theatre when new movies are playing. I look for films that would be good for our collection and our patrons. Then, I order the title when it is released from the producer. We use MVC and Ingram as our two sources at the present time. I am always looking for a better value for the money I have to spend, and I have used a variety of sources. Some of the things I look for in a source are the same price for limited purchases as quantity purchases, the number of titles that are placed on back order, the quality of the titles, ease of returns, and speed of service. Every video title that is added to the collection is previewed for quality control since there are a lot of poor quality tapes. Lately we have encountered some problems with oxide particles.

The Mishawaka-Penn Public Library loans video cassettes to its patrons and reciprocal patrons on a 24-hour loan basis with a limit of two titles per patron, household, or institution. We also loan equipment (Beta 2, VHS, 3/4-inch, and a color camera and a Portable Beta 1) for the same time period and a \$50 cash deposit. Equipment is not part of the reciprocal agreement. Every weekend the majority of

the tapes and Beta 2/VHS equipment is checked out; presently, the waiting time for a VHS deck for a weekend is two months. Due to the heavy demand, monthly equipment checkout per patron is limited to one weekend and one midweek date.

I would advise all libraries to get into video as soon as possible. One can easily survey patrons to find out what equipment format the majority of them owns and then purchase tapes in that format. One does not need equipment in the library to start a video collection, if someone is available to preview the video titles for the library. I would recommend starting with 10 titles. After publicity, including word-of-mouth, the library will undoubtedly be busier than ever anticipated. The expense of taking the family to a movie has patrons looking for a cheaper form of entertainment, and the library has an opportunity to be in the forefront in providing an extremely popular service.

The Mishawaka-Penn Public Library is presently looking into automated circulation systems which will increase video circulation effectiveness. The new branch library will also have videotapes to help reduce the strain on the main library's video collection. The staff also has considered discontinuing video reservations in order to save paperwork and time.

The "Video In Mishawaka" grant was not considered to be a success, but video in Mishawaka today is a popular and ever-growing service. Even though there are no firm statistics to substantiate this, I believe more people use the library now because of our video service than ever before. I know that some patrons got library cards simply to checkout video, and I am hoping that once inside the building they become aware of our other services. The patrons of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library will undoubtedly be requesting video tapes for some time to come. I believe ½-inch video players and video cassettes will continue to be in demand. This library is proud to provide a service which is in such great demand and which has increased patron awareness of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library.