

Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

TRANSFORMATION STORY

Norelius Community Library

Denison, Iowa

The Community

Every community is unique

Denison, Iowa

- **Service Population:** 8,308
- **Location:** Crawford County, Iowa;
Along the Boyer River



“There are more than 16 different languages spoken within Crawford County. NoreliusCommunity Library is an Open Access library, so anyone living in Iowa may borrow books from our library.”

Before the Changes

Small libraries can create Smart Spaces

“Due to Denison’s diverse population we meet families that come from countries that do not have access to a library. We want to reach out to these families by providing a welcoming environment for parents to participate and engage in their child’s education.”

Three Spaces, Unlimited Potential

For their *Smart Spaces* project, Norelius Community Library chose to focus on their children's library, which occupies the entire upper floor of the library. Norelius has a robust after school program. With the elementary and middle schools less than a five-minute walk from the library, you can just about set your watch to when kids will be arriving. Every day, Youth Services Director Kim Eichler has kids coming in to see her.



Norelius Youth Services Director Kim Eichler catches up with one of the children's library regulars after school.

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

**The library utilized surveys to
determine the needs and wants of
their community.**

Survey Highlights

“Children and their parents are looking for more opportunities to create and parents are looking for more opportunities to interact with their children here at the library.”

“The children are interested in more interactive technology.”

“The parents are interested in more hands on and cognitively challenging activities like learning manipulatives for their children when they come to the Children’s Library.”

“The example given by a specific parent was ‘stringing beads.’ More old fashioned gaming such as puzzles and piece assembly type activities.”

Prepare for Change

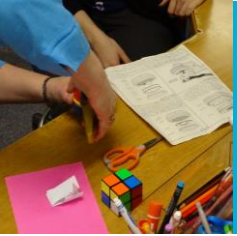
Making way for transformation

Norelius Library was able to make changes in three different areas – the pre-school space, kids space, and makerspace



Transform

Make it happen!



“Kids are using the space every single day.”

Norelius Community Library was able to take a \$5100 grant and spread it around to multiple areas of the children's library. They prove that you don't have to make huge changes to make a big impact.

Opening Up the Pre-School Space



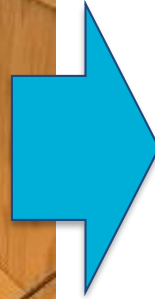
The pre-school area was opened up by removing shelves and adding a rug to define the space. The addition of a large activity cube and light table gives toddlers and pre-school children activities that promote shared play and exploration. The light table is even popular with older children. According to Eichler, she has even had a group of third grade girls use it to build houses together.

The Activity Center: A Change in Perspective



Library Director Monica Walley says, “The LEGO Wall and LEGO table have been a great hit at our library.” To expand the use of the area, the space was redesigned by changing the orientation of the wall panels from vertical to horizontal, making them more accessible to the children they were intended for. A storage cabinet was repainted and resurfaced with adhesive white board material proving you don’t have to do a lot to make a big impact.

Crafting in the Makerspace



An Activity Center was created in the space by adding a craft center makerspace, fully designed with children in mind. The center is accessible and filled with opportunities to create. It's stocked with a variety of supplies including string beads, coloring pages, crayons, markers, stickers, paint and glue. One of the most exciting additions is the new sewing machine: "I can't wait to bring that out for programs!"

Celebrate & Sustain

Continual community connection

“Kim has brought a new energy to the children’s library. Kids respond to her very well, even confiding in her.”



For more information on how Small Libraries
Create Smart Spaces and more case studies
please visit oclc.org/SmartSpaces.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Association of Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) worked collaboratively with WebJunction on all project phases.
- Project for Public Spaces (PPS) provided subject expertise, consultation and instruction.
- This project is made possible by support from OCLC and by a grant from the Institute of Museum & Library Services, LG-80-16-0039-16

