Digital Navigator 2.0

Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) was ready to take the learnings from the previous digital navigator design work and do additional prototyping, refining, testing and iterating in order to ensure that CML customers were receiving technology help that was most relevant and useful for them.

THE PROBLEM

Previous design work (can link to those case studies) had revealed ways in which people wanted to access tech help. As the work progressed, CML wanted to spend more time going deeper on specific features new programs could include.

THE APPROACH

Beginning in early 2022, we spent two months focused on using our learnings from previous digital design work to co-create new prototypes, test them with community members and refine them to make them better.

We did four rounds of interviews that included more than 21 interviews (11 in depth interviews + ~10 intercept interviews) with seniors, New Americans, and parents.

Interviews were a combination of empathy interviews, and co-creation and feedback sessions to iterate and refine tech help offerings.

The design team included community members: Burhan; Juanita; Samuel; Andrew; Tricia; Jessica; Pamela; and Deoria. Community Partners included: Chris Cloud; Kristine Cook; Dorcas Taylor Jones; Benjamin Reid; Miya Reyes and Summer Sherman from the Columbus Metropolitan Library. In addition, designers LaToya Jordan and Bre Przestrzelski joined the team which was led by Heather Tsavaris and supported by Mark Lomax from the Columbus Foundation.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Even though there had been significant learnings about how people wanted and needed to receive tech help prior to this project, the project revealed several additional insights.

We heard from community members how important common language was between those offering and and those receiving help. This did not just apply to spoken language (i.e. Spanish speakers sought Spanish speakers to help them; Somali speakers sought Somali speakers); this also applied to people with common lived experience. Single moms who sought help with technology wanted help from other single moms who may have used technology in the same ways to take care of their children and importantly would not offer judgment.

Second, although tech help is important, tech challenges were not necessarily top of mind for residents we encountered (especially during intercept interviews); tech issues happened in the moment when

someone was trying to accomplish a task using tech or devices they did not understand. People we interviewed would not say that technology challenges were the most serious challenges they had in their lives.

Finally, we did hear how the lack of tech skills more than two years out from the start of the pandemic was still contributing to great suffering in many communities where we conducted interviews. We heard this most clearly from parents who continued to lack tech skills and because of that, they felt helpless in offering their children support in school or in keeping them safe online.

That said, we also heard that conditions had to be just right for people to access tech help.

In order to get tech help, people need:

To feel safe,	not judged.
To be seen,	not rushed.
To feel help is abundant,	not scarce.

One prototype that we recommended taking forward was the Family Plan:

FAMILY PLAN

People are not alone in their tech needs; children's needs impact parents' needs and vice versa. This prototype would test a **whole family assessment** and **customized offering** that gets each family member the tech help they want and need.

No matter which programs CML took forward, the design team recommended the following principles:

Going Forward Design Principles

- ❏ Keep the tech help offering relevant to people's interest and needs; let them take as much or as little help as they want.
- ❏ Having a pre-existing relationship can make people more likely to trust you and ask you for help when they do need it.
- ❏ "Common language" between helper and helpee is important.
- ❏ Know that tech challenges are not likely to be top of mind for people in their day to day life; however when people do need help, they often need it urgently and suffering can occur when they don't get it.
- ❏ Technology is a means to an end; it is not an end in itself for people we have worked with.
- ❏ Dignity matters; design ways to help people preserve theirs no matter what.

IMPACT

We will need to get from the library (Benjamin Reid) what they have tried. They are in the process of trying a whole family offering.

2023