Community meetups for professional development
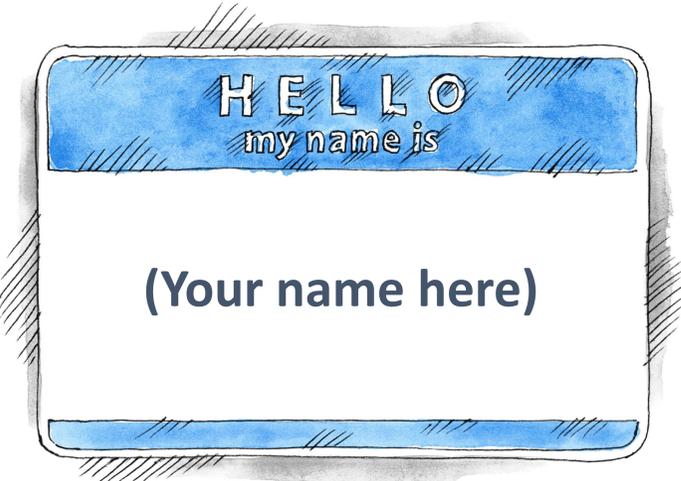
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HELLO
my name is

(Your name here)

Local meetups, organized through social media, offer rich professional development opportunities for librarians, particularly in emerging or rapidly-changing areas where conventional forms of training may not exist.

With direction and support from meetup groups, people with shared interests can develop skills in a creative, engaging environment that offers the potential for cross-disciplinary collaboration, while social media features facilitate interactions beyond in-person meetings.

We encourage librarians to connect with community meetups for self-directed learning that builds and enriches skills relevant to their professional roles.

We use "**meetup**" to describe **a group of people that uses social media to organize and promote in-person meetings on shared topics of interest**.

Social networking features support online conversations and collaborations among group members.

We suggest **Meetup** and **Eventbrite**, two popular meetup websites, for finding meetups relevant to professional interests.

Our goals

- Wanted to **expand services** provided at **Maps, Data, and Government Information Centre** reference desk.

- **Free versions of online mapping tools offer limited features**; in order to use advanced features, users must pay for access to full versions.

- **Open source mapping tools**, while free to use, **required technical skills** that Rebecca, GIS & Digital Resources Librarian, did not have.

- **Conventional training options** (webinars, in-person instruction, self-guided tutorials) **were limited or did not address specific needs**.

- **No active projects** on which to collaborate with other library staff in order to develop required skills.

- Recognized the **need to find different means for learning** how to find, evaluate, and use open software to create interactive maps.

Why meetups?

- Rebecca and Jen, Systems Librarian, discovered the **Ottawa Open Data Book Club** meetup through professional connections.

- Given a common interest in the group's focus on open data and open government, participating in the meetup would provide **an excellent opportunity for collaboration and mutual skills development**.

- At Open Data Book Club meetups, members demonstrate projects related to a monthly theme. **Organizers provide inspiration** by suggesting related open datasets and technologies with which to analyze, transform, and/or display datasets.

- Proposing a project for an upcoming meetup **sets a low-risk deadline** for learning, applying, and demonstrating new skills.

- What we proposed: **use Leaflet.js**, an open source Javascript library for interactive maps**, to create a geographic display of open datasets** from the 2015 federal election.

What we gained

- Seeing projects created by other meetup members, using similar datasets, we learned about **emerging applications and technologies** we might have chosen to work with, or **how to work with familiar tools in new ways.**

- As colleagues, we had the opportunity to **collaborate on external projects** which brought together complementary skillsets.

- In working together, **we acted alternately as educator and learner** in teaching and applying skills used **in our respective areas of expertise**.

- This partnership has had a **de-siloing effect**. We each have **a better understanding of skills of colleagues** in working in different areas.

- **With increased awareness of colleagues' skills**, we have the **opportunity to access their expertise** in serving library users, instead of trying to meet users' needs ourselves, perhaps less capably.

What we contributed

- We **conceptualized, developed, and demonstrated an interactive map** created with Leaflet.js, which was informative to other members attending the meetup.

- As meetup participants, the **perspective of librarians as service providers differs from that of other group members**, which includes data analysts, open data providers, developers, IT professionals, and policy analysts. Diversity in meetup members' professional backgrounds contributes to a broader understanding of the uses of open data and open technologies.

- We provided feedback on other members' projects and discovered the **expertise we brought to the group was valuable**.

- Participating in the group **helped combat Impostor Syndrome**, which occurs when someone believes their skills or expertise is not valuable. [3]

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[3]For an introduction to Impostor Syndrome, we recommend the following articles:
Richards, C. Learning to Deal With the Impostor Syndrome. (2015, October 26). The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/26/your-money/learning-to-deal-with-the-impostor-syndrome.html
Faulkner, A. E. (2015). Reflections on the Impostor Phenomenon as a Newly Qualified Academic Librarian. New Review of Academic Librarianship, 21(3), 265–268. http://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2015.1070185

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