

Deep What We Sew

Impact - Fashion Findings

And, that's a wrap. The Clothing Library **pilot was an overall success** benefiting the community and stakeholders involved - public library, suppliers, borrowers and volunteers. Below provides **feedback, engagement and participation highlights**, as well as, stakeholder proposed and perceived values based on a combination of **observations, data analytics tools, surveys and interviews.**

The **lending - Borrow Not Buy - program** had a lot of participation *in just 12 days of operation!* **Participation data** (check out/in, number of items borrowed/returned) was taken from the myTurn inventory software, the **membership sign ups** from a Google Form, and the number of **visitors** was recorded by hand. We saw a **100% return rate**, in part because of the **borrowing waiver, the biodegradable laundry sheets** provided for return and, I believe, the focus on **social norming.**

We hosted **2 learning events** (fashion show launch, fireside chat closing event) and **3 workshops.** The two events - the fashion show (the **largest indoor event in the history** of the Library Director's tenure) and the fireside chat (followed by engaged Q&A discussions) were **sold out.** The **workshops** were not well-attended as the **lead time was very short** (less than one week for each because of scheduling issues).

Engagement was high from the start. Three libraries were interviewed but the **Dover Public Library** became the **clear, ideal partner** for the pilot (population, schedule availability, and support). **10 secondhand suppliers** immediately agreed to provide ongoing donations and donated over **5K+** items that were then sorted, edited and inventoried by the over **50+ volunteers** that participated in the **launch, lift off or landing phases.** The curated collections were whittled down to **1500 items**, from which volunteers created outfits and posted content on social media.

Raising awareness was important to not only provide information but to **foster trust and curiosity.** Although the **communication strategy** was not formalized, the Clothing Library managed to create quite a buzz in the Seacoast community. **2 press articles** were written that **garnered 1344 views** (according to the publisher, 1K+ views was considered a success); the **clothinglibrary.org** had **4300+ site visits**; the **weekly newsletter open rate was 63.2%** (industry average is 25%); and our **organic social reach** - while not huge - **had over 450 active followers.**

Note: The Clothing Library also dressed an Emmy-nominee for the red carpet during the pilot.

TABLE 7 Participation + Community Engagement Data Highlights

| LEND | LEARN | ENGAGEMENT | COMMUNICATE |
|--|--|---|--|
|  |  |  | <p>Looks not books: UAB student brings The Clothing Library to Seacoast</p> <p><small>Ajdel Hisham Portsmouth Herald Published Nov. 29, 2023</small></p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visitors 103 ● Member Sign Up 68 ● Borrowers 65 ● Items Borrowed 101 ● Items Returned 101 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fashion Show Attendees 168 ● Fireside Chat 34 ● Mending Workshop Students 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public Library 1 ● Secondhand Sponsors 10 ● Items Donated 5K+ ● Volunteers 50+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Press Articles 2 ● Website Visits 4344+ ● Social Reach 2307+ ● IG/FB Follows 455+ ● Open Rate 63.2% |

Borrower Demographics

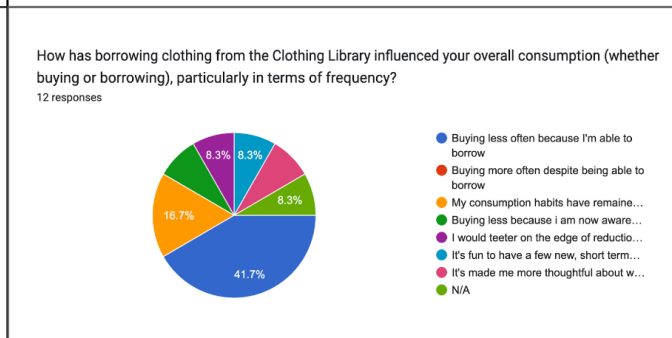
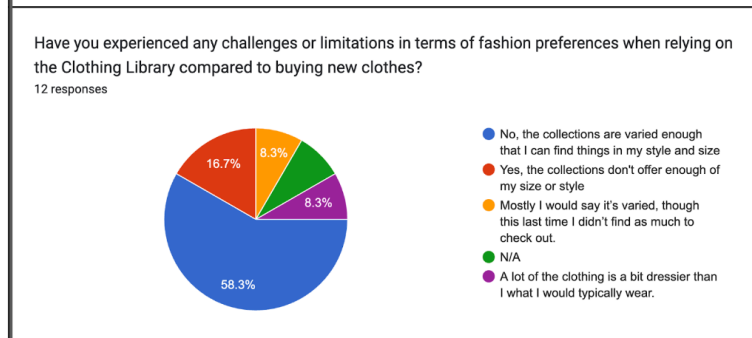
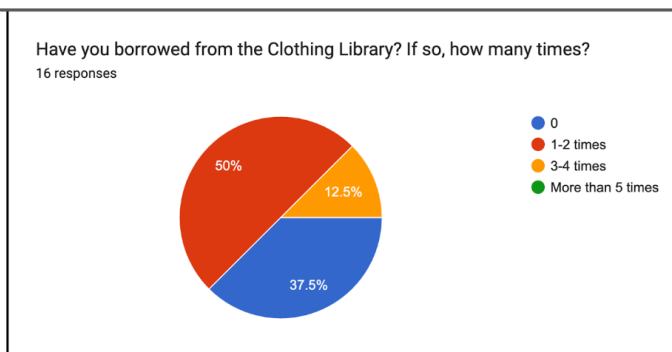
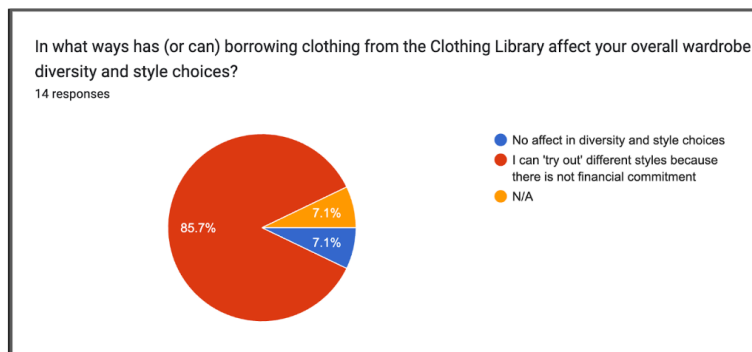
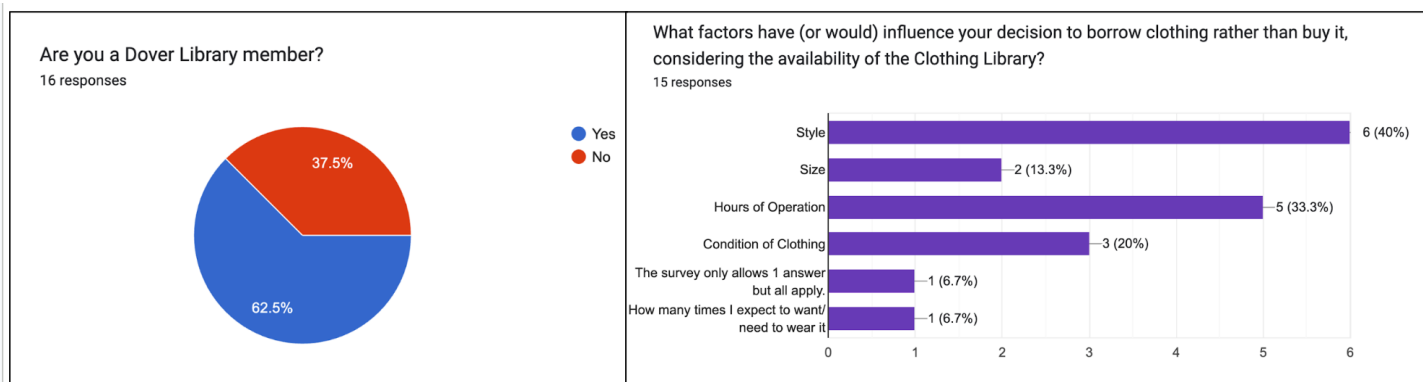
While **data was not collected**, **observations** were clear that on and offline, the lionshare of the stakeholders - borrowers, librarians, secondhand retailers and volunteers - were **women between the ages of 25-55** (Millenials and Gen X). An interesting note is that we had a **100% return rate for garments** but the **two men that borrowed** returned their items late (with several reminders for one of them). **Only one parent borrowed** children's clothing and **one teen** borrowed a dress.

Borrower Survey Data

A [10 question survey](#) was given to all stakeholders but for the purposes of this paper, the following results are from the **members only**.

Based on the charts and graphs below, the learnings included:

- **37.5%** of Clothing Library respondents reported not to be members of the Dover Public Library (DPL), **achieving one of our stakeholder goals of bringing in new people to DPL**
- As proposed, **40%** of respondents reported the importance of **style as a value perceived**
- A high percentage (**85.7%**) of respondents said that could take style risks **without the financial risk**
- **66.6%** of the respondents reported that the curated collections **provided enough variety**
- More than **50% respondents reported they are buying (or now contemplating buying) less** which meets one of the goals of the pilot



Stakeholder Interviews





"I actually haven't been shopping at all since you opened... it's making me think about (not buying) a lot more."

-Clothing Library Borrower



Interviews were conducted with 18 stakeholders (7 secondhand suppliers, 5 borrowers, 4 volunteers and 2 librarians) asking overall impressions of the Clothing Library pilot and feedback.

Based on interviews, the table below reflects the perceived value of the stakeholders compared to the proposed value (by the Clothing Library). The feedback reveals that there are additional values perceived to the value propositions.

TABLE 8 Value Proposed Versus Perceived

| Stakeholder | Value Proposed | Value Perceived |
|---|--|--|
|  LIBRARIES | MEMBERS ENGAGE EXISTING + ATTRACT NEW | MEMBERS + POSITIVE PUBLICITY |
|  BORROWERS | SAVE MONEY BORROW NOT BUY | SAVE MONEY + SAVE TIME THANKS TO CURATION |
|  SUPPLIERS | FREE UP SPACE DONATE SURPLUS GOODS | FREE UP SPACE + EXTEND CLOTHING WEAR |
|  VOLUNTEERS | DO GOOD FOR PEOPLE + PLANET | DO GOOD + NEW LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS |

In addition to **welcoming more non-Dover Public Library (DPL) members** visitors, the DPL **got press** (two articles and social media) and positive feedback about the initiative. The Library Director shared...


“People I wouldn’t have expected had come and talked to us and said, that’s a great idea, I love that idea.”


Borrowers appreciated the cost savings (and extra space in their closets from not buying) but the **curated collection** (including ‘Bundles of 5’) **saved them time**.

The **secondhand sponsors** supplied surplus donations but were also appreciative that their wares could now be worn longer and **kept circulating in the local community**. Many retailers had donated their surplus to textile suppliers and large thrift stores chains (for ease and lack of better options) but the **Clothing Library aligned best with their values of localization** and sustainability.

It took an **army of dedicated volunteers** to realize the launch and operations of the Clothing Library pilot as it was a **learn-as-you-go experiment with many unknowns**. As volunteers sorted, edited, and curated collections for consumption, content creation and event production, **new friendships blossomed based** on the shared interests and generosity of their time and talent.