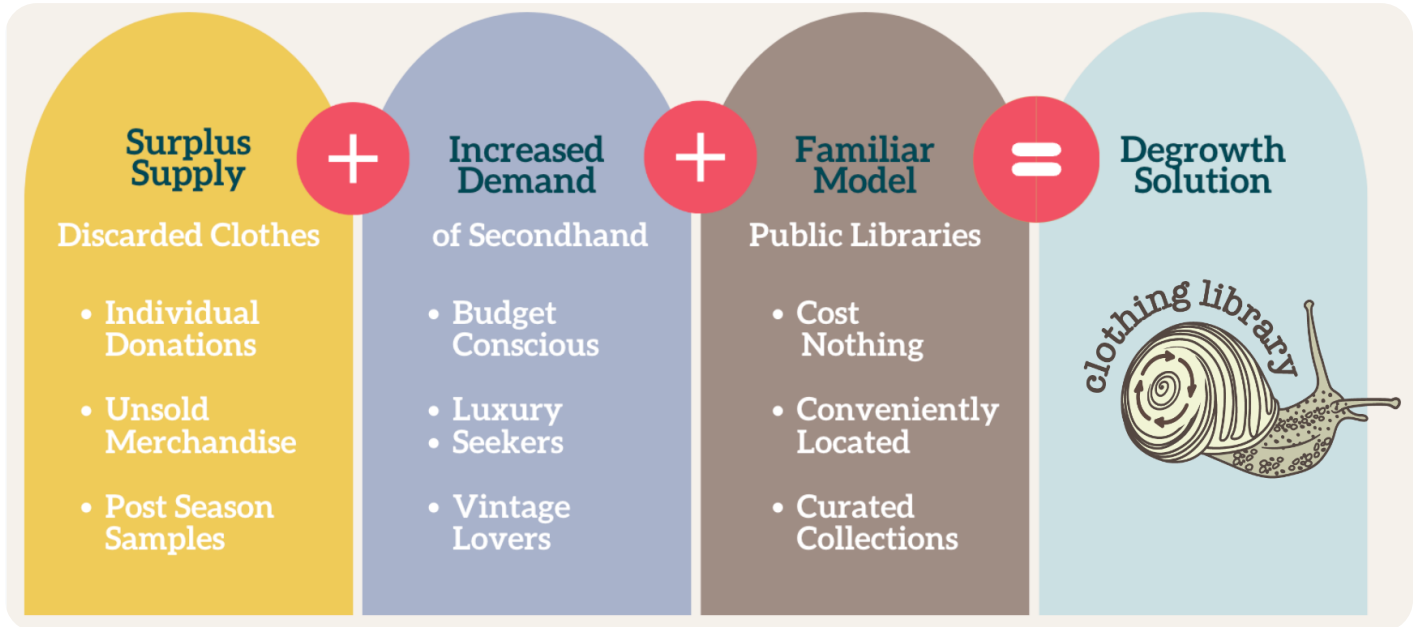


Sewing Seeds

Initiative - Lending and Learning



A Marriage of Sustainability and Social Wellbeing

The Clothing Library partners with public libraries and local secondhand retailers to **provide 'looks' not books to make borrowing easy, convenient and free**. Turning wasted textiles into wanted wares, this new initiative offers **curated collections that are stylish and varied** at the third place - the local public library. By meeting all three buying considerations - **cost, convenience and quantity** - the Clothing Library offers the Seacoast community a **viable and reliable alternative to clothing consumption**. By **offering it as an ongoing initiative** (unlike swaps, for example), the Clothing Library presence helps to **normalize borrowing over buying behavior**.

For the pilot, the collections are culled into **three categories of occasion wear** - things that are worn seldomly or seasonally - and sit in closets or in landfills, taking up space and doing harm. Categories include **dressy** (e.g. wedding, prom, holiday parties), **professional** (e.g. job interviews, funerals) and **seasonal** (e.g. ski outfits). Taking this approach allows the Clothing Library to **extend the wear of the least used items** that people buy to wear occasionally.

Designed with **degrowth principles**, the **Clothing Library aims to curb shopping habits by first enabling access rather than ownership** of garments and introduces the concept of the **'commoning' of clothing** (collectively shared and managed resources) to the community. By employing behavioral insights, the Clothing Library's long-term strategy is to take consumers **from buyers to borrowers** (behavior change) and **overconsumption to voluntary simplicity** (mindset shift).

Dover Clothing Library provides first-hand looks at second-hand attire

We aim to make borrowing secondhand, second nature,” said Stella McSera, the brains behind the Clothing Library in Dover, NH

Sophia Schlichtmann, Staff Writer

December 21, 2023



Stella McSera, the brains behind The Clothing Library

According to the [Harvard Review](#), the single biggest trend is **consumers wanting to consume more responsibly although most do not**. Access to legitimate options and overwhelm of choice can play a role as well, often making the easy choice over the right one. By providing **behavioral nudges** through suggestions and social rewards, the Clothing Library can help **consumers realize their desire to do good**.

Not limited to lending, the Clothing Library **offers learning opportunities** through events, social engagements and workshops focused on **style and sustainability** to empower people as changemakers through [every day activism](#). Secondhand Fashion Shows, Eco-Panels and DIY Mending Workshops are just some of the **educational programming and social engagement events** the Clothing Library provides.

As an abundant resource, **re-circulated clothing has the potential to eradicate the need for new textile production** - this includes ‘sustainable fashion’ as it still requires raw material extraction. Given the enormity of the discarded yet wearable items in landfills, and the ecological and social harm it causes, the **fashion industry has an opportunity to re-tool and re-focus away from new to the new-to-you resale market** and make new production passe.

By **collaborating with secondhand suppliers** who donate their surplus inventory, as well as, **public libraries** who provide space and an existing membership base to offset operating costs, and by **designing a behavior change strategy**, the **Clothing Library can serve as a catalyst for cultural transformation** as it **expands horizontally** through public library networks.

The Clothing Library is the first of its kind program that intends to weave together community, shared values and conscious consumerism...one borrowed garment at a time.

TABLE 2 Program Launch Model for the Clothing Library Pilot

<i>What We Need</i>	<i>What We Do</i>	<i>How We Deliver</i>	<i>How We Measure</i>	<i>Why It Matters</i>
<p>PUBLIC LIBRARIES Infrastructure + Resources</p> <p>SECONDHAND SUPPLIERS Continuous, Donated Inventory Stock</p> <p>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Pilot Participation in Programs + Events</p> <p>STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT Co Founders + Volunteers, In-Kind Sponsors</p>	<p>PRODUCE PROGRAMMING Develop Lending + Learning Programs</p> <p>CURATE COLLECTIONS Meet Consumer Size + Style Criteria</p> <p>BUILD COMMUNITY through the Commoning of Clothing</p> <p>INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS in the Co-Creation of a Clothing Library with Like-Minded People</p>	<p>LAUNCH 'BORROW NOT BUY' PILOT Eco- Events, and Mending Workshops</p> <p>CREATE BORROWING 'BUNDLES' to Save Consumers Time + Money</p> <p>RAISE AWARENESS Events, Social media, Press, Newsletters, Website</p> <p>PROVIDE 'DO GOOD' OPPORTUNITIES Process Inventory, Create Content, Evangelize Programs</p>	<p>COMMUNITY FEEDBACK Gauge Feedback Gathered On/Offline</p> <p>ANALYTICAL TOOLS Evaluate Borrowing Behavior via Software, Surveys + Interviews</p> <p>COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Record Attendance, Follows, etc.</p> <p>STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION Record Sponsors, Volunteers, Donations, etc.</p>	<p>MISSION Curb the Negative Impacts of the Fashion Industry by Making It Easy and Stylish to Borrow Not Buy Clothing</p> <p>VISION Realize a World Where People & the Planet are Prioritized Over Profits</p>

Threading the Needle

Implementation - Sustainability Strategy

The Clothing Library is designed to be a **non profit cooperative, locally co-founded** and operated by residents of the community and **each networked together as a collective** - to share knowledge and resources - as it expands through the existing public library system. The Clothing Library will continue to iterate and is meant to serve as a **flexible model** for cities and towns that can **adapt its framework and strategies as needed**.

The pilot was developed to **test the clothing lending** concept and the **learning programs** (workshops, eco-events, etc.) via participation and engagement **measured by surveys, interviews, data analytics tools and observations**. The **future non profit cooperative** will incorporate a **freemium model** (base membership is free with paid premium tiers) in addition to **styling and mending services**. This **business model will be tested** as soon as **funding is raised** for its launch.