Evaluation of Smart Play Spots: Evidence for How They Are Being Used

Center for Early Education and Development

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Executive Summary

Smart Play Spots (SPS) are mini-children’s museum-like exhibits installed in libraries and community centers to foster children’s creative play and early literacy. The purpose of this evaluation was to describe how children and adults were using the SPS. Four SPS in first-ring suburban, suburban, rural libraries and in a community center on a native American reservation were chosen by the Minnesota Children’s Museum and the Hennepin County Libraries to participate in the evaluation.

The following evaluation questions were posed:

1. To what extent do caregivers and children interact differently in the SPS as compared to regular children’s library areas?

2. What does children’s play look like in a SPS?

3. Did adults change their knowledge and attitudes about activities that promote early literacy through play?

4. How do the play training and SPS change library staff attitudes and practices?

A multi-method approach was taken. Toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children and their adult caregivers and library and community center staff were observed in the SPS. Parents were interviewed. Library staff completed an online survey. Pre-post observations, interviews and surveys were obtained from the first-ring suburban library pre-and-post-installation, and from the suburban and rural libraries and community center SPS post-installation.

Findings from the library SPS indicate that toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children actively engaged in object play, pretend play and exploration of the SPS environment, and are less engaged in specific literacy activities. Older children engaged in greater amounts of pretend play and toddlers in object play. The most popular components in the SPS were the farmer’s market, the business, the tree, house, and bus/truck. Children averaged 1-2 minutes per component, save bookshelves, which averaged between 5-6 minutes. Peer interaction occurred more frequently with older children engaged in pretend play. Caregivers were observed to be disengaged almost two-thirds of the time, and most positively engaged with preschoolers during pretend play. Caregivers did report positive perceptions and learnings in the SPS, including activities to engage in at home. Library staff perceive themselves as confident and able to support play in the SPS (although slightly less so post-play training) but were very rarely observed doing so.

Findings from the community center on the Native American reservations, where the opportunities for observation were more limited, suggested similar patterns of child and adult interaction and caregiver perceptions and learning. However, community center SPS staff were more engaged with both children and caregivers through explaining and joining in play and encouraging adult-child interaction than library SPS staff.

The following recommendations were offered:
1. Continue to monitor component use and popularity. There were differences in component use so to maintain interest in the SPS, insure that all areas of the SPS are being utilized, and accomplish SPS goals, gauging use over time will be important.

2. Continue to build on parents’ positive perceptions. While they were less engaged than expected, their positive perceptions and the links to practices at home provide windows of opportunity to support their knowledge and activities regarding play and early literacy.

3. Explore the roles, expectations, and tasks of library SPS staff. The mismatch between their perceptions of their support of play and observed behavior in the SPS suggests that a reflection and planning time may be helpful to clarify goals and support library staff expertise.

4. Discuss the kinds of continued professional development that is most desired by SPS staff. Differences in their educational backgrounds, job responsibilities, SPS setting, and patterns of use may shape how professional development can maximize the talents, skills and opportunities of staff supporting SPS.
Introduction
The Minnesota Children’s Museum (MCM), in collaboration with the Hennepin County Library (HCL),
developed and installed Smart Play Spot (SPS) as a strategy to further its outreach mission to promote
early childhood literacy and creative play in Minnesota. The SPS are mini-children’s museum exhibits
comprised of different components designed specifically to be installed in children’s areas in libraries
and community spaces. Components of the SPS in each location were determined by MCM and staff in
each location. The SPS generally included features that reflected the library and community centers’
geographic and cultural communities and components young children often enjoy (e.g., boat, market,
picnic table, telescope, map, garden, bicycle). Accompanying the installation of a SPS is play training for
all relevant staff that focuses on the linkages between play and early literacy and includes information
on how to support play in the SPS.

MCM and HCL have collaborated to establish SPS in libraries in Hennepin County, and MCM has also
established SPS in libraries and community settings around the state. As the interest in SPS has grown,
MCM and HCL wanted to collect evaluation data that would document the use and impact of SPS on
children and caregivers and on library and community center staff. For the purposes of this evaluation,
four sites were chosen by MCM and HCL: a first-ring suburban library, a suburban library, a rural library,
and a community center on a Native American reservation. Our evaluation team at the Center for Early
Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota worked collaboratively with the
MCM and HCL staff to develop an evaluation plan and questions, and then carried out the evaluation.
The procedures, measures, findings and conclusions are detailed in the following report. While the
same evaluation questions and procedures were used across all 4 sites, findings for the community
center on the Native American reservation are reported separately as the context for the SPS differed
enough from the library SPS (e.g., presence/absence of bookshelves, adult activities in library, presence
of staff) such that combining the results could have masked the uniqueness of the findings of each type
of setting.

Evaluation Plan and Questions
This evaluation was able to occur at a time when several SPS had recently been installed and play
training had taken place in the suburban and rural sites, and prior to the installation and play training in
the first-ring suburban site. As a result, evaluation questions exploring: 1) the impact of an SPS in a
library setting and 2) the use of SPS by children, caregivers and library staff were posed. The evaluation
design examined impact by examining activities in the site before and after SPS installation occurred
(pre-post) and also examined use of the SPS with sites where SPS was installed (post).

The MCM and HCL were particularly interested in the use of the SPS by caregivers and children;
perceptions of parents about the SPS and the links to early literacy; and the impact of the SPS and play
training on the library staff. Working with MCM and HCL staff, the following evaluation questions and
hypothesized short-term outcomes were developed:

1. To what extent do caregivers and children interact differently in the SPS as compared to regular
children’s library areas?
   a. Are there higher rates of child engagement? Caregiver-child engagement? Parent
      interaction/role?
b. Are there different kinds of engagement or interaction, when children are alone in the SPS, with adults, or with other children?

*Hypothesized short term outcome* was that parents and children spend time interacting in SPS in ways that promote relationships and learning.

This question was addressed specifically with the first-ring suburban site which had the opportunity for pre-post installation.

2. What does children’s play look like in a SPS?
   a. Which components do children engage with most frequently?
   b. Which components do children engage with the longest?
   c. Which components promote the most interaction with peers?
   d. Which components promote the most interaction with adults?
   e. Is there a relationship between the use of components and adult-child interactions? Are there certain components where adult-child interaction occurred more frequently than others?

*The hypothesized short term outcomes* were that children engage in early literacy activities within SPS components, and that children interact with peers and adults in early literacy activities.

This question was addressed with the three library sites and the community site once their SPS had been established for a minimum of 2-3 months.

3. Did adults change their knowledge and attitudes about activities that promote early literacy through play?
   a. Did the play experience itself contribute to, reinforce or change their knowledge and attitudes?

*The hypothesized short term outcome* was that adults increase their awareness of activities that promote early literacy through play. This question was addressed by interviewing adults at the SPS library sites.

4. How do the play training and SPS change library staff attitudes and practices? Do library staff:
   a. Feel more confident about their ability to support playful learning?
   b. Interact differently in the SPS than prior to acquiring an SPS and having play training?
   c. Use the play training to initiate more interactions between children and families?
   d. Are there differences in the type of activities library staff encourage between caregivers and children? Do they reflect their play training?

*The hypothesized short-term outcome* was that library staff are more confident about their ability to support playful learning.
These questions were addressed by surveying the library staff in the SPS library settings and the library staff in the library setting before and after installation. In this way, it was possible to describe the library staff practices with SPS and describe what changed specifically as a result of installing a SPS and getting play training.

**Evaluation Design**

The evaluation design allowed for pre-post installation comparison to test impact on child and adult interaction and library staff beliefs and practices before and after and description of use and library staff beliefs and practices (post-installation) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Evaluation Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Question</th>
<th>Pre-Installation</th>
<th>Post-Installation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Impact of SPS on engagement, interaction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Description of children’s play</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Caregiver knowledge and attitudes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Library staff confidence and activities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method**

Two samples were gathered in the evaluation of the SPS in library settings, one in the first-ring suburb for pre-post comparison, and the second in the three library settings for description of use.

**Sample for Pre-Post Comparison**

The pre-installation comparison sample consisted of 25 observations of play lasting up to 10 minutes (or up to 5 instances of changing play activities) that were conducted in the first-ring suburban library pre-installation (68% male, 32% female). Observations were conducted at various times of the day and week to obtain a reasonable representation of activity. Sixty-eight percent were accompanied by a female caregiver, 5% by a male caregiver, 26% had no identifiable caregiver, and 53% were accompanied by at least one other child. When there was more than one child in the setting, a target child was selected for observation. The target child was randomly selected by the observers from the children in the SPS at the time of observation. Children did not know they were being observed; caregivers were notified by observers as much as possible and all granted permission for observing their child.

Nineteen children who engaged in 25 instances of interactions with the library space were observed. Each time a children moved from a component a new play instance was recorded. Eleven were toddlers, 21% were preschoolers, and the majority, 68%, were school-age children.

The post-installation comparison sample consisted of 22 observations (after the library had its SPS between 2-3 months; 41% male, 59% female). Twenty-three percent were accompanied by male caregiver, 50% by a female caregiver, 5% by both, 23% by an unidentifiable caregiver, and 66% were...
accompanied by at least another child. Post-installation, children were more likely to be accompanied by a male caregiver. Twenty-two children were observed in 81 instances of interactions with the SPS (18% were toddlers, 23% were preschoolers, and 59% were school-age children).

**Sample for Post-Description**

Twenty-two observations of play lasting up to 10 minutes or after a maximum of play on 5 different components were conducted at each of the three library SPS settings. Two of the SPS had their SPS for at least 4-5 months, and one had their SPS for 2-3 months. Observations were conducted at various times of the day and week to obtain a reasonable representation of activity in the SPS. Children were often in a group ranging from 1-5 children (including the target child), with an average of 2 children. Sixty-five percent of children were accompanied by at least one other child.

Sixty-six children (49% male, 55% female; 15% toddlers, 39% preschool, 46% school age) who engaged in 267 instances of play with components were observed.

During the observations, 79% of children had at least one caregiver present (9% male caregiver only, 65% female caregivers only, 5% one of each, 21% no caregiver in the area). Of those caregivers, 30 caregivers were interviewed (the large majority of parents whom we asked to participate in the interview did so, but as there was one observer and one interviewer at each observation period, all caregivers who were in the setting at the time could not be interviewed and a few declined the interview request). They ranged in age from 19-81 years, with an average age of 39 years. Mothers comprised the largest percentage (63%), followed by non-parental relatives (20%), fathers (17%), caregivers (10%), and neighbors (7%). Eighty percent were Caucasian, and 90% spoke English most at home. There was a range in parent education levels (see Table 2).

Table 2. Parents educational backgrounds (N=29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school/GED</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year College</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 years College</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**

Three sources of data were collected: observations of children and adults in the SPS, in-person interviews with caregivers in the SPS, and online surveys completed by library staff.
Observations. The observation tool used in this evaluation was adapted from Kessler (2011) to include the timing of aspects of child-adult interaction, peer interaction, and specific components (see Appendix A for specific detail regarding observation tool and protocol). Adaptations were developed based on the unique questions posed in this evaluation and through piloting at two established SPS settings that were not part of the evaluation. Types of child interaction with the space were coded: observing, exploring, socializing, physical play, literacy activity, object play, pretend play; type of adult interaction (disengage, observe, facilitate, read, direct, play, supervise); type of interaction with peers; length of time of interactions; tone of interactions; and the components.

The same observation protocol was followed at each site. When possible, caregiver permission was sought, and a target child chosen. Each time the target child changed components, a new interaction was coded, for a maximum of 10 minutes of time or 5 changes of components to insure a range of children and experiences in the SPS. The observation team established inter-rater reliability prior to conducting observations in the field ($\alpha = .75$).

Components varied by site. The following components were observed at each site (see Table 3):

Table 3: Components observed at each library SPS site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Market/Alphabet Market</td>
<td>Rural, Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>Rural, Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzle Crate</td>
<td>Rural, Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookshelves</td>
<td>Rural, Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telescope</td>
<td>Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucks (Bus, Public Works Truck)</td>
<td>Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (Post office, Hobby/Tailor Shop)</td>
<td>Suburban, First-ring suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Suburban, Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Table</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caregiver interviews. Caregivers accompanying the child were interviewed by a member of the evaluation team after the target child has completed his/her time in the SPS. Caregivers were asked
questions about their knowledge and attitudes about play and early literacy and how the SPS might help them support early literacy (see Appendix B).

Library staff online survey. Library staff completed online surveys (pre and post for first-suburban site) that included questions regarding attitudes and practices related to the play training and the SPS (see Appendix C).

Results

Evaluation Question #1: To what extent do caregivers and children interact differently in the SPS as compared to regular children’s library areas?

While the same observation tool was used pre and post, the opportunities for interaction differed from pre-post installation. During the pre-installation, opportunities for interaction in the children’s area included computer time, bookshelves, and puzzle crate. Comparisons of the pre-and-post-installation activities showed that children were more likely to play (86% vs. 52%), less likely to be involved in literacy activities (10% vs. 36%), and engaged in shorter interactions (1.8 vs. 6.4 minutes). These changes are likely due to the greater options for play and the decrease in time spent at the computer post-installation. Adults were disengaged for a majority of the interactions and staff were minimally involved, both before and after SPS installation.

Summary: The hypothesized short term outcome, that parents and children spend time interacting in SPS more frequently in ways that promote relationships and learning, was not clearly borne out in the pre-post comparison. Children did change their activities with greater play time and less computer time, but caregivers and library staff were not notably more engaged with children post-installation.

Evaluation Question #2: What does children’s play look like in a SPS?

Children’s play: Of the 6 categories of child activity coded, children were most likely to be engaged in object play (35%) or pretend play (26%). Expected age differences emerged. Toddlers, compared to preschoolers, were significantly more likely to explore and significantly less likely to engage in pretend play (p < .05). There were no gender differences in categories of play in which children engaged (see Table 4).

Table 4. Children’s Play in library SPS by age group
The most popular components (adjusted for opportunity) were the farmer’s market, the business, the tree, house, and bus/truck. Time spent playing at most components ranged between 1-2 minutes, with the bookshelves as an exception, likely because selecting books can take more time and tended to involve adults. Information about the popularity of components and frequency and length of time of use appears below (see Table 5).

Table 5. Observed Component Use Across Library SPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>% of Visits (adjusted for opportunity)</th>
<th>Average Time Per Visit</th>
<th>Total time spent at component (adjusted for opportunity)</th>
<th>Favorite Components (top 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Market</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.9 min</td>
<td>34.33 min</td>
<td>Rural, suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1.6 min</td>
<td>25 min</td>
<td>First-ring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2.4 min</td>
<td>38.5 min</td>
<td>Rural, suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1.4 min</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus/Truck</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2.0 min</td>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>First-ring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5.6 min</td>
<td>39 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzle Crate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.6 min</td>
<td>9.33 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookshelves</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3.4 min</td>
<td>18.33 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.1 min</td>
<td>6.67 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telescope</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1.6 min</td>
<td>8 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Table</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>3 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Adjusted for opportunity means divided by the number of sites with that component offered.
Component use across sites did not differ significantly by age group. Component use is related to child activity, with highest levels of pretend play at the boat (77%) and the trucks (64%), and lowest levels of at the telescope (0%) and bookshelves (6%). Literacy activities were more likely at bookshelves than at the other components.

Male and female children did not differ in the amount of time they spent at each component, or in their level of engagement. They did differ in terms of which components they visited (p < .001) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Patterns of component use by gender

Parents’ primary activity:

Most frequently, across all settings and age groups, parents were observed to be disengaged in the SPS (59%). Parents’ level of engagement was linked to the age of their children. Parents with preschool-age children were most involved. They were least disengaged, more likely to observe, offer direction, and facilitate. Parents of school age children and parents of toddlers had lower levels of engagement than expected. Parents’ engagement did not differ by parent or child gender (see Table 7).

Table 7. Parent engagement by age
Thirty-two percent of the observations included parent-child interactions. We further examined those interactions, focusing on positive adult engagement. Positive adult engagement was defined as reading, playing, directing, or facilitating. Adults were significantly more likely to be positively engaged with preschoolers, and less likely to be engaged with school-aged children \((p < .001)\). Unexpectedly, adults were less positively engaged with toddlers than preschoolers. This may be because parents saw more of an opportunity to teach preschool-aged children through reading and play. Of note, however, 92% of toddlers’ component visits involved some level of adult-child interaction, compared to just 39% for preschoolers and 19% for school-aged children. Taken together, these data suggest that parents of toddlers are having frequent brief interactions with their children, while parents of preschoolers are having less frequent but more sustained interactions that are more likely to involve positive engagement – reading, facilitating, directing, or co-play. Parents of school-age children are less likely to be involved by either criterion.

Positive adult engagement also varied by component and child activity. In this sample, adults were most engaged at the bookshelves \((p < .001)\) or when children were engaged in literacy activities \((p < .001)\) (see Table 8).

Table 8. Positive adult engagement by age
Peer interaction:

Peer interactions comprised 45% of observed interactions. The frequency of peer interactions was related to child age, with toddlers having less peer interaction (p < .01). Peer interaction did relate to children’s activity (p < .001); they were more likely to occur during pretend play and least likely to occur during exploration. Peer interactions differed by component (p < .05). The distributions of peer interaction by component and age are below (see Table 9).

Table 9. Frequency of peer-peer interaction by component and age

Summary: The hypothesized short-term outcomes, that children engage in early literacy activities within SPS components, and that children interact with peers and adults in early literacy activities, were somewhat supported. Children are engaging in play and early literacy activities in the SPS, and using multiple components when they are in the SPS. Adults tended to be largely disengaged, although when they were positively engaged, their interactions were most sustained with preschoolers and briefer with
toddler. Peer interaction takes place often in SPS and across many different components; it occurs more frequently with preschoolers or school-age children who are engaging in pretend play.

**Evaluation Question #3:** Did adults change their knowledge and attitudes about activities that promote early literacy through play?

This question was addressed in two ways: by interviewing parents pre-and-post-installation and comparing their results (first-ring suburb); and by interviewing parents in the post-installation library SPS sites (suburban and rural libraries). Findings from the pre-post comparison are presented first, followed by the post-comparison findings.

**Pre-post comparison site**

Our pre-post comparison, since it includes a very small sample size of 10 parents pre and post and would have resulted in underpowered analyses, is presented with graphical, rather than statistical, comparisons.

When asked what they usually do when they come to the library with their children, pre-installation, the most frequent activity mentioned revolved around looking at and finding books, while post-installation parents mentioned playing most often. Computers were also mentioned less frequently post-installation (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** What do you usually do when you come to the library?

![Chart showing pre and post activities at the library](chart)

When asked about the importance of play for literacy, 7 out of 10 endorsed “very important” pre-installation, while 9 out of 10 endorsed it post-installation (see Figure 2).
We also asked the parents why they thought play was important for literacy. Before the play space was installed, parents were most likely to talk about learning words, and after they were most likely to talk about how play makes learning more fun and enjoyable for children. Before the play space was created, two parents could not come up with any reasons, but after it was installed, everyone who was asked was able to think of a reason (see Figure 3).

The parents were asked if they had seen their child do anything at the library that could help with early literacy. Before the play space was installed, most parents focused on interacting with books. After the
play space was installed, parents were more likely to give answers about exposure to letters, words, and play (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Have you seen your child do anything here to help with early literacy?

Parents also seemed more satisfied with the library’s resources to promote early literacy after the play space was installed. Before the play space, many parents mentioned they would like to see more activities and story times, whereas after the installation, parents were more likely to say that there was nothing else they wanted from the library (see Figure 5)

Figure 5. Are there any other resources the library could offer to support your child’s literacy?
Summary: Although our small sample does not allow us to determine statistical significance, we saw some positive trends in the data. Compared to parents interviewed before the SPS was installed, parents interviewed at the SPS saw their children engaged in a wider variety of literacy-related activities, had stronger ideas about how play supports early literacy, and were more satisfied with the resources that the library provided.

Post-installation library SPS sites

When asked about connections between play and literacy, parents reported believing that there were connections between play and literacy. Most of their answers related to the specifics of learning words or the enjoyment of learning (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Parent report of connections between play and literacy.

Some comments from parents regarding the most frequently offered explanations for the linkages between play and literacy:

- **Words:** “Helps them develop verbal skills, being able to communicate, just while they’re playing they’re picking up sounds and letters.
- **Fun:** “It almost makes it fun for them. It’s a game, but they’re learning, and they don’t see it as that.”
- **Socialization:** “How to interact with other children, what they should and shouldn’t do.”

Parents observed their children engaged in a variety of literacy activities (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Literacy-related activities parents observed in SPS
Parents described their children’s literacy-related activities in the SPS.

- Letters: “Plays with the alphabet and I’ll tell him what letters they are.”
- Words: “We do the fishing...and you can put different words together...Seeing the words with the vegetables.”
- Play: “All of the toys, everything in here.”

A little over half the parents said that the SPS gave them ideas of activities in which they could engage at home (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Parents got ideas of activities to do at home

Parents gave examples of some activities in which they could engage at home.

- “It’s reminded me that the more experiences he has the more he’s going to learn about the world, and in turn words, and how to talk about it.”
• “Set up a mailbox at home, found a cash register and made his own money, he loves that.”

• “We have an alphabet, seeing them interested in doing their names – why don’t we pull out the ones at home and do it there?”

A little over half the parents did not have contact with SPS staff (see Figure X). Of those who did, there was a range of kinds of interactions from cleaning (11%) to supporting play (8%), helping (6%), and greeting (5%) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Parent contact with library staff in SPS

Summary: The hypothesized short term outcome was that adults increase their awareness of activities that promote early literacy through play. Both the pre-post installation and the post-installation only results suggest that parents did increase their awareness of activities that promote early literacy through play. The parents interviewed offered a solid grasp of the linkages between play and early literacy. They felt the space was child-friendly and appealing, had variety, and promoted learning. They had limited contact with library staff but reported getting ideas on their own from the SPS that they could incorporate at home, and were more satisfied with library offerings.

Evaluation question #4: How do the play training and SPS change library staff attitudes and practices?

Library staff in the first-ring suburb responded to the online surveys pre-and-post installation. Interestingly, library staff rated themselves as less confident, comfortable and prepared after the installation of the SPS, although they rated their role as more important (see Table 10).

Table 10. Pre-post library staff self-report of attitudes (N=9)
Library staff from the rural and suburban library SPS sites also felt a great deal of confidence, comfort, and sense of preparation after their play training and SPS installation (see Table 11).

Table 11.  Post-only library staff self-report of attitudes (N=11)

Some of those library staff had not changed how they spent their time (N=9) and others said they had (N=9). Those who said they changed provided examples:

- I play and interact more with the children in the play areas. And, I pick up toys!
- How we set up for events, how we do class visits, keeping the older kids out of the Smart Play spot as much as possible, especially when younger children are present.
- Have spent time talking about how the area came about, and showing the various features. Have joined in with play from time to time. Have answered questions concerning the different play areas.
- I am physically in the children's area/early literacy area more often than before
Most reported that their interactions with adults and/or young children changed in duration or quality post-installation (yes=15, no=5). They provided examples:

- We now require more time to clean up after them, and have to ask caregivers to please monitor their children more frequently
- Longer duration
- I am more enthusiastic about what our library has to offer and happy to introduce the play area.
- I am more involved in the play.
- More contact
- I do more showing and explaining of what we have in the Smart Play Spot.
- I am in the children’s area more often and therefore have more face-to-face interaction with children in the library on a daily basis (rather than just at storytime or at the reference desk)

Library staff reported their most important learnings from the play trainings:

- Don’t have time to do much more than periodically clean up the area
- Respect individual interpretations of patrons on how they want to use area
- Just to be there for children and role model for parents
- I’m more intentional with how I interact and about the importance of playing together
- The importance of structured play in gaining the ability to read
- How to encourage interaction between parents and children in the play area
- When playing with the kids, try to make it more child directed
- Interacting with children and different ways to play with children
- Open ended questions with children (not "yes"/"no" questions) -- I have continued to use this in all areas of play with children
- My favorite quote from the training is “play is the work of children”

While library staff did offer suggestions of facilitating play including watching puppet shows, making up stories, and alphabetizing letters, the majority of responses about how to facilitate play were related to maintenance of the space (see Figure 10).
Observations in SPS:

Across all three libraries sites, staff was present in the SPS for 10 out of 66 observations (17%).

Staff reinforced rules (1.5%), gave information (3%), cleaned up the SPS (9%), and encouraged literacy activities (4.5%), and joined in play (1.5%). Just .4% of play instances at libraries involved staff-child interaction. Library staff were never observed socializing with families, discussing the child’s play, encouraging the child’s play, or supporting adult involvement in play.

Summary: The hypothesized short-term outcome, that library staff are more confident about their ability to support playful learning, was partially supported. Library staff rated themselves as having relatively high degrees of confidence, comfort and preparedness, but interestingly, the pre-post comparison data showed that library staff felt less prepared after taking the play training and installation than they felt previously. In addition, while some library staff offered suggestions for interaction with children and caregivers and support of play, the results from the observations and parent interviews suggest that library staff interactions with children and caregivers were extremely limited and minimally included activities to support play. They also suggest a strong focus on maintenance and cleaning in the SPS.

Conclusions from Library SPS

Findings from this evaluation suggest that the addition of a SPS in a traditional library setting did change the kind of child activities by increasing children’s play. Certain components (farmer’s market, businesses, tree and house) generated greater amounts of play and peer interaction than others. Children also spent time moving amongst components and spent less sustained interaction at any one in particular. Adult engagement was noticeably lower than expected, but parents reported positively about the SPS and the ideas they generated from them to support play and early literacy at home. Library staff reported positively about their training and preparedness but were observed as either not present in the space or as supporting play mainly through maintenance activities.
Results from community center on Native American reservation

Members of our evaluation team traveled to White Earth in February, 2014 to conduct observations and interview parents and community center staff. The rollout of the SPS occurred over the fall and harsh winter, and the opportunities for observation at the end of the week and weekend when our staff were in attendance was limited in hours the site was open. As a result, our opportunities for observing children in the SPS was limited. Community center staff were early childhood educators. Thus, because we had many fewer observations of children in the setting as compared to the library SPS and the community center staff differed from the library staff, we decided to report the results separately. Because of the limited sample size, we were not able to run tests of significance for differences within the group. We note where there are similarities and differences with the library SPS.

Sample
Seven observations with 31 instances of playing with components. Of the seven target children, 4 were males and 3 were females. Two were 2 years old, 2 were 3 years old, and 3 were 4 years old. Five of the children were accompanied by both a female and male caregiver, and 5 had another child in the group with them.

Five caregivers were interviewed. They ranged in age from 49-70 years, with an average age of 55 years. All five caregivers were grandparents who accompanied their grandchildren to the SPS. Three were Ojibwe Native American and two were Caucasian. They all spoke English most at home. Two of them had completed high school, and 3 had completed some college.

Components observed included the Farmer’s Market, the canoe/mural, the bulldozer, the wigwam, the garden, and the tree.

Evaluation Question #2: What does children's play look like in an SPS?

Children’s play: Similar to the library SPS, children were most likely to be engaged in object play (39%) or pretend play (29%). The next most common form of engagement was exploring the environment (19%).

The most popular components were the farmer’s market, the bulldozer and the canoe, followed by the tree, the wigwam, and the garden. Time spent playing at most components ranged between 0-6 minutes, with an average time of 1.9 minutes per component. Amount of time spent playing at components in the community center SPS and library SPS was similar.

Adults were most frequently disengaged (42% of time, similar to the library SPS), followed by supervising (26%) and facilitating (20%) (two aspects of positive engagement). Adults tended to be positively engaged with children in the wigwam, followed by the bulldozer and the canoe.

Peer interactions comprised 31% (11/31) of observations. Peer interaction occurred at similar proportions amongst the components (average of 2 instances), save the garden, where no peer
interaction was observed. The small number of peer interactions, however, preclude any generalizations regarding the components and frequency of peer interaction.

Summary: While the number of children observed is small, the observed interactions in the community center SPS appear to follow similar patterns to those in the library SPS of adult disengagement, adult positive engagement and peer interaction.

**Evaluation Question #3: Did adults change their knowledge and attitudes about activities that promote early literacy through play?**

Parents at White Early cited similar connections between play and literacy as seen in other libraries (see Figure 11). Figures in this section have counts rather than percentages because of the very small sample size.

Figure 11. Connections between play and literacy

Parents cited exposure to letters and opportunities to write or draw as literacy-related activities they saw their children participate in (see Figure 12).
Figure 12. Have you seen your child do anything literacy-related here?

Three of the five parents reported that they had gotten new ideas to do at home by seeing the SPS. Two of the caregivers we interviewed were staff at the SPS, and the other three all indicated that they had contact with the staff in the SPS, and reported that the staff were involved with playing with the children.

Summary: While we were only able to interview a very limited sample of parents at the community center SPS, their responses appeared to be similar to those of the parents in library SPS as they saw linkages between play and literacy and got ideas to try at home.

Evaluation Question #4: How do the play training and SPS change library staff attitudes and practices?

Two staff were interviewed the days of observation regarding ways they support children’s play and adults’ play and their perceptions regarding the usefulness of the play training. They support play by asking open-ended questions of children, and modeling for parents, then pulling them in, and intentionally interact with families. Since they have early childhood backgrounds, they felt the play training was less useful to them.

- I thought there was going to be more training on how to engage the parent. We're knowledgeable about how to engage children, but it was more about how to get parents engaged. So when the training didn’t really give us that, I actually looked it up on the internet and in some resource books.

Observations

Staff was present in the SPS for 6 out of 7 observations (86%). Staff members socialized with families (57%), discussed the child’s play (57%), supported the child’s play (for example, by explaining how to use
props; 43%), joined in the child’s play (57%), and encouraged caregivers to participate in play (43%). Thirty-nine percent of play instances observed involved staff-child interaction. Staff were not observed to encourage literacy activities, communicate rules or information, or clean up the space. Although a limited sample of staff interactions, staff involvement was notably greater than the library staff at SPS with both caregivers and children.

Conclusions

Similar patterns of play and engagement with children and adults were observed in the SPS on the Native American reservation as in the library SPS. Community center staff, however, were involved with children and caregivers much more frequently than library SPS staff and in ways that were enhancing play and learning. It may be that, because the community center SPS staff were trained as early childhood educators, that they saw their roles differently than library SPS staff. Of note, the community center staff had no competing responsibilities besides supervising the SPS, while library staff were involved in overseeing the circulation desk, shelving books, and keeping the library organized. Furthermore, since the sample size was limited, these conclusions are descriptive of this small sample, and can be followed up at a later time to extend them to a larger group of children, caregivers and staff.

Recommendations

5. Continue to monitor component use and popularity. There were differences in component use so to maintain interest in the SPS, insure that all areas of the SPS are being utilized, and accomplish SPS goals, gauging use over time will be important.

6. Continue to build on parents’ positive perceptions. While they were less engaged than expected, their positive perceptions and the links to practices at home provide windows of opportunity to support their knowledge and activities regarding play and early literacy.

7. Explore the roles, expectations, and tasks of library SPS staff. The mismatch between their perceptions of their support of play and observed behavior in the SPS suggests that a reflection and planning time may be helpful to clarify goals and support library staff expertise.

8. Discuss the kinds of continued professional development that is most desired by SPS staff. Differences in their educational backgrounds, job responsibilities, SPS setting, and patterns of use may shape how professional development can maximize the talents, skills and opportunities of staff supporting SPS.
Appendix A

Observation tool

Protocol:

1. Identify focal child. Identify caregiver (If the child is not with an adult, enlist help of librarians in identifying the adult they came with). Approach to explain project, ask permission to observe play, and ask parent to touch base when they’re close to leaving (for parent interview).
2. Begin observation. Record date, approximate age and gender of focal child, composition of group, and any mediating factors (e.g., mother is caring for infant, child and father speak Spanish, etc.). You may also record mediating factors during the observation as they become apparent. Do not record level of use until the end, then select average level of use over the course of the observation.
3. Interactions begin when children engage with different components.
   a. Record the time that each interaction starts, then check off component, child activity, and adult role. Check off as many activities and roles as apply over the course of the interaction – you will then select a primary activity and role at the end of the interaction. If the child is playing, please designate both a play category (play with objects, pretend play, physical play, and exploring space) and a social category (solitary play, parallel play, and interactive play). If they are playing interactively, please note whether the interaction is predominantly positive, negative, or neutral/mixed. Choose parent’s role with regard to focal child, not to any other children (eg, siblings) that may be present (though you may check off “disengaged, engaged with other child” if applicable).
   b. Describe the play in the narrative section, and note visitor interaction codes with in the rightmost column. Each interaction may include several visitor interaction codes as the composition of the group changes (e.g., first the child may play alone – CO, then be briefly joined by the parent - CA, then alone again – CO, then with another child – CC.)
   c. When the child moves to a new component, note the time the first interaction ended and the second interaction began. If the child enters/engages with a new component, start a new interaction – even if it’s less than a minute. Components should refer to what props the children are using, not necessarily where they physically are. If the child takes props from the first component and continues to engage with them, wait until s/he begins to engage with a new component before beginning the new interaction. If you have time, select the primary child activity (at the level of play category, if the child was playing) and adult role, and designate an overall engagement level for that interaction. If you don’t have time to score then, go back and code at the end of the observation.
4. Code interactions until the child leaves the space,* or until you’ve coded five interactions, whichever comes first. End by coding level of use and indicating whether more than one caregiving adult interacted with the child over the course of the observation.

*If the child leaves the SPS with props from a component, keep coding that interaction. If the child leaves the SPS without props, stop coding the interaction. If the child quickly returns to the SPS, begin a new interaction, even if they return to the same component. If they remain outside the SPS for awhile, stop the observation.
Level of Use scale (adapted from SELL’s observation tool):

Empty (no one else in the space)

Light use (one or two other families in the space)

Moderate use (two to three other family groups used the space)

Heavy use (four or more families in the space)

Engagement Scale (from SELL’s observation tool):
SUPERFICIAL—visitor stops, watches or views one or more elements of the component/area with slight interest; visitor may look briefly at a component such as the Listening Station or Puppet Theater, but does not play or further explore.
MODERATE—visitor enters the space and explores it fairly thoroughly. Views one or more elements of the component with apparent interest; appears engaged and focused; seems to listen fairly closely; picks up objects, begins to play or engage in some conversation related to the component/area, or may point out certain elements.
EXTENSIVE—visitor enters the space and explores it in depth and with apparent focus and concentration. Views elements of the component/area very intentl; appears extremely engaged and focused; picks up items or objects and plays intently; engages in a fairly extended conversation with others about the area/component, or points out many aspects of the component/area.

Child Activity Definitions:

Observing: watching another child/children/adults read (silently), play, or interact.

Socializing: interacting socially without directly engaging the Smart Play Space (e.g., a mother and baby making faces at each other/playing peekaboo, or two children conversing outside a play scenario). If children are talking while ambiguously engaged with toys and you can’t hear what is said, code their play behavior instead.

Literacy activities: reading/being read to, turning pages, selecting books, sounding out letters.

Physical play: running, jumping, playing hide and seek, etc.

Object play: exploring the physical properties of objects without an obvious narrative/symbolic component: banging things together, putting pieces in a puzzle, sorting objects.

Pretend play: any play with a symbolic or fantasy component: pretending to use familiar objects in an appropriate way, pretending one object is another, manipulating imaginary objects, acting things out, role playing, playing with imaginary friends, etc.
Exploring space: Looking around an area, superficially interacting with objects without extended manipulation (object play) or clear narrative/fantasy (pretend play): looking inside the tree, picking up a toy and putting it down, briefly wearing a hat without appearing to take on role.

Solitary play: playing alone, self-directed

Parallel play: playing alongside with minimal interaction, may observe or imitate playmate’s activities

Interactive play: engaging in play with a dyad or group. Please also code whether interaction is predominantly positive (positive affect, turn-taking, negotiations), negative (negative affect, disagreements, bossiness – may drive one or more child away from the activity or require adult intervention), or neutral/mixed (neutral affect, mild disagreements that are quickly resolved, mix of positive and negative aspects)

Disengaged: trailing family members or other child, standing/sitting still, gazing blankly, not engaged.

Parent Role Definitions:

Observer**: watching child/children play/read/choose book, discussing child’s actions with staff, other patrons, etc. and/or documenting play by taking pictures/filming (in or just outside the Smart Play Space)

Reader: reading books to or with the child, reading one’s own books independently in the Smart Play Space, or reading adult messaging within the SPS (please note which).

Player*: joining in child’s play, may be child-directed (joining in play that’s already started, taking the child’s lead), adult-directed (adult taking lead in initiating play, setting up the scenario, redirecting existing play), or collaborative (a combination of child and adult-directed play, may involve active negotiation in which both parties share valued points of view).

Facilitator*: facilitating child’s activities without joining in them: modifying environment for child (moving objects closer, setting stage for play), helping child enter play and find a role by making suggestions and offering options (without joining in the play), facilitating introductions/social interactions with other children, praising/encouraging child, conversing with the child, narrating/describing what the child is doing, answering questions and offering suggestions when the child needs help, helps the child select appropriate activities/books, making suggestions but allowing the child autonomy and deferring to their preferences.

Director*: directing a child’s activities without joining in them, authoritative (or authoritarian) not collaborative: instructing child on who/what/how to play without eliciting/responding to child’s preferences, selecting books for child without involving him/her.

Supervisor**: managing behavior, monitoring movements careful to ensure physical safety, monitoring social interactions and intervening to solve conflict if necessary, enforcing rules, establishing time limits on play.

Disengaged**: disengaged with the focal child (may be interacting with other children)
*Engagement with the props the primary criterion for adult-directed play. If the parent is engaging with the props (not just handing them to the child, but using them – sorting the blocks, pretending to eat the plastic food, etc.), that is adult-directed play. It may be brief and segue into Facilitation or Observation, or it may be more prolonged and become more collaborative. Facilitation is about providing background support – suggestions, options, explanations, descriptions, materials – without playing alongside them. Direction is about providing instructions without playing alongside them. Examples:

a. **Adult-Directed Play:** Mom shows child how to pretend to eat plastic banana then hands to her. Father role plays as a customer at the café. Mom instructs the child to make her a hamburger and pretends to eat it.

b. **Facilitation:** Dad asks if the child wants to play in the garden. Mom helps child put on fire truck outfit. Mom hands child spatula while he plays at the stove, but does not play with the utensils herself. Dad describes and praises what child is doing: “Wow, you’re doing a really good job making that burger!” without playing along.

c. **Direction:** Mom tells child to make her a hamburger, then disengages. Dad says, “Go play at the theater studio with your sister.” Child doesn’t know where to go, mom leads into café.

**Distinguishing among Observers, Disengaged, Supervisors:** Observers watch the child play passively – they are watching to pass time or enjoy their child, not to intervene. Disengaged parents do not watch the child play (though they may glance up from time to time). Supervisors are monitoring more actively – they may be watching continuously or periodically scanning (especially in the case of multiple siblings). They may follow them around the space. They give the impression of being ready to intervene if there are safety issues, conflicts, rule violations, etc. The parents we saw at North Regional would be Supervisors.
Appendix B. Caregiver interviews

Adults in Library Survey

Hello, my name is _________ and I am from the University of Minnesota, working with the Minnesota Children’s Museum and the ______ library, who worked together to develop this play and learn area. We are looking to understand how children and caregivers use this space and I have been asked to observe and talk with families who spend time in this area. Would you be willing to talk with me for a few minutes? Great!

1. Is this the first time you have been to this area in the library? Yes/No

2. What did you think of this space when you first was visited? Were you surprised to see this area in a library?

3. Why do you think the library put a play space here?
   3a. Has it changed what you do at the library or how you see the library?

4. Please tell me about some of the things you did here today with your child/ren.
   4a. IF they said they played with their children: In which areas of this space do you spend the most time playing together and why?
   4b. IF they said they watched their children: Which areas of the space do you think are your child’s favorite or most visited?

The library/community center created this space to support early literacy.

5. In your opinion, how important is play in the development of children’s early literacy?
   (Not important, somewhat important, important, very important.)
   5a. Why? What connections do you see between literacy and play?

6. Have you seen your child do anything in this space that helps him/her with early reading skills? If yes, give examples?

7. Has this space given you ideas about how you can help promote early literacy skills in your child in other settings (ex at home?) If yes, what are some of the ideas?
Around this space there are some signs that are just for parents.

8a. Did you notice these signs?
8b. How many did you read, if any?
8c. What did you think of the messages on these signs? Was it helpful?
8d. Have you incorporated what the signs say into your activities? Can you give an example?

9. What has been the most helpful part of this space in promoting play and reading readiness in your child?

10. What about your experiences in this play space sticks with you most after you leave? (If first time – what about your experience in this play space do you think will stick with you most after you leave?)

11. Have you noticed anything about your child by playing here? Please describe.

12. Have you had any contact with library staff in this space, and what was it like? (Probes – books, tips on reading, activities at library, play.) Are you satisfied with your contact with the librarians?

13. What other resources might the library provide you to help your child’s literacy skills or play?

Now we just have a few questions about you that we ask to all the people we are talking to.

14. What are the ages and genders of the children you came here with today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th># of Girls</th>
<th># of Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+ years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. How are you related to these children? (Check all that apply.)

__ Mother    __ Father    __ Grandparent    __ Other Relative    __ Caregiver
__ Neighbor  __ Other __________________

16. How often do you visit the library with the child/ren you care for? (Check ONE)

__ Every day    __ 2-3 times a week    __ Once a week    __ Once every few weeks
Once a month  Less than once a month

17. How many times have you been to the Minnesota Children’s Museum in the last 12 months?
   _ Never _ 1-3 times _ 3-6 times _ More than 6 times

18. What is your age? _____

19. What ethnicity do you identify with (Choose ONE)
   _ Asian, Indian, or Pacific Islander (Specify) _ Black or African American (Specify)
   _ Hispanic/Latino _ American Indian/Alaskan Native (Specify)
   _ White _ Other (specify)

20. What language do you speak most frequently at home? ________________

21. How much education have you completed?
   Some high school High school/GED Some college 2-year college 4-year college
   More than 4 years of college
Appendix C. Library staff online surveys

Pre-Survey

Block 1

We at the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota are interested in your interactions with young children and their families at your library. We will use this information to inform future collaboration between the Children's Museum and the library to benefit the community.

To investigate this, we ask that you take approximately 10 minutes to fill out this short survey. Your responses will be anonymous. When we reference young children, we mean children ages 0-8.

Your time and input is appreciated!

1. What is the name of your library?

2. I am confident in my ability to play alongside children.
   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

3. I am comfortable with the amount of interaction I have with the children and families at the library.
   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree or Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

4. I can help young children through supporting their play.
   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

5. I feel prepared to help young children through play.
   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree
6. I make it a point to give children and families time in the library without my involvement.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

7. I play an important role in young children’s learning through play.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

8. Please give at least one example of how you support young children’s play (not necessarily playing with them).

   1

   2

   3

   If not applicable, write N/A

9. Please give at least one example of how you support adults’/patrons’ playful interactions with young children.

   1

   2

   3

   If not applicable, write N/A

Block 2

10. What is your role at the library/community center (official or unofficial)?

11. Please provide one or two specific examples of how you interact with caregivers with young children at the library/community center.

12. Are there other things that you would like to do with young children and their caregivers that you have not yet done?
Yes
No

12a. What are they?

12b. What do you feel are the primary reasons that you have not been able to implement these things?

13. How confident do you feel helping adults engage with young children through play?
   Not at all confident   Somewhat confident   Very confident

14. What factor(s) contribute to your current confidence level?

15. What new thoughts, if any, have you had about supporting play and early literacy at your library?
Library Staff Online Survey

Post-Survey

Block 1

We at the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) are interested in how the play training and installation of a Smart Play Spot in your library has affected your and your patrons’ experiences and behaviors. We will use this information to inform future collaboration between the museum and the library/community center to benefit the community.

To investigate this, we ask that you take approximately 10 minutes to fill out this short survey. Your responses will be anonymous. When we reference young children, we mean children ages 0-8.

Your time and input is appreciated!

1. What is the name of your library?

2. I am confident in my ability to play alongside children.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. I am comfortable with the amount of interaction I have with the children and families in the Smart Play Spot.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither Agree or Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. I can help young children through supporting their play.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. I feel prepared to help young children through play.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
6. I make it a point to give children and families time in the Smart Play Spot without my involvement.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

7. I play an important role in young children’s learning through play.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

8. Please give at least one example of how you support young children’s play (not necessarily playing with them).

1
2
3

If not applicable, write N/A

9. Please give at least one example of how you support adults’/patrons’ playful interactions with young children.

1
2
3

If not applicable, write N/A

Block 2

10. What were most important things (knowledge or skills) you learned in the play training session, and how have you implemented them?

11. What is your role at the library/community center (official or unofficial)?
12. Please provide one or two specific examples of how you interact with caregivers with young children at the library/community center.

13. Since the play training, has your time spent (e.g. programming, interactions) with young children and their caregivers changed?
   Yes
   No
   13a. In what ways?

14. Are there other things that you would like to do with young children and their caregivers that you have not yet done?
   Yes
   No
   14a. What are they?
   14b. What do you feel are the primary reasons that you have not been able to implement these things?

15. Do you think that your interactions with adults and/or young children have changed in duration or quality now that you have a Smart Play Spot?
   Yes
   No
   15a. How have these interactions changed?

16. Which parts of the Smart Play Spot do you find the easiest or most fun to be in with caregivers and children?

17. Before the play training, how confident did you feel helping adults engage with young children through play?
18. Now that you have had the play training, how confident do you feel helping adults engage with young children through play?

Not at all confident    Somewhat confident    Very confident

19. What factor(s) contribute to your current confidence level?

20. What new thoughts, if any, have you had about supporting play and early literacy since your library installed its Smart Play Spot?

Is there anything else you want to mention about how having the Smart Play Spot affects what you see happening at your library?
Library Staff Online Survey  
Post-Survey for first-ring suburb

Block 1

We at the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) are interested in how the play training and installation of a Smart Play Spot in your library has affected your and your patrons’ experiences and behaviors. We will use this information to inform future collaboration between the museum and the library/community center to benefit the community.

To investigate this, we ask that you take approximately 10 minutes to fill out this short survey. Your responses will be anonymous. When we reference young children, we mean children ages 0-8.

Your time and input is appreciated!

1. What is the name of your library?

2. I am confident in my ability to play alongside children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. I am comfortable with the amount of interaction I have with the children and families in the Smart Play Spot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. I can help young children through supporting their play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
5. I feel prepared to help young children through play.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree

6. I make it a point to give children and families time in the Smart Play Spot without my involvement.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree

7. I play an important role in young children’s learning through play.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree

8. Please give at least one example of how you support young children’s play (not necessarily playing with them).

1

2

3

If not applicable, write N/A

9. Please give at least one example of how you support adults’/patrons’ playful interactions with young children.

1

2

3

If not applicable, write N/A
10. What were most important things (knowledge or skills) you learned in the play training session, and how have you implemented them?

11. What is your role at the library/community center (official or unofficial)?

12. Please provide one or two specific examples of how you interact with caregivers with young children at the library/community center.

13. Since the play training, has your time spent (e.g. programming, interactions) with young children and their caregivers changed?
   Yes
   No

13a. In what ways?

14. Are there other things that you would like to do with young children and their caregivers that you have not yet done?
   Yes
   No

14a. What are they?

14b. What do you feel are the primary reasons that you have not been able to implement these things?
15. Do you think that your interactions with adults and/or young children have changed in duration or quality now that you have a Smart Play Spot?
   Yes
   No

15a. How have these interactions changed?

16. Which parts of the Smart Play Spot do you find the easiest or most fun to be in with caregivers and children?

17. Before the play training, how confident did you feel helping adults engage with young children through play?

18. Now that you have had the play training, how confident do you feel helping adults engage with young children through play?
   Not at all confident  Somewhat confident  Very confident

19. What factor(s) contribute to your current confidence level?
20. What new thoughts, if any, have you had about supporting play and early literacy since your library installed its Smart Play Spot?

Is there anything else you want to mention about how having the Smart Play has affected your work?