

Visiting a New Library: Exploring the Community Impact in New and Familiar Ways *by Ray Pun, IFLA CPDWL Advisor*

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Main Library, South San Francisco Library

In late December, I visited the Main library of [South San Francisco](#) (a different system from [San Francisco Public Library](#)) called “Library | Parks and Recreation Center.” This library opened its doors back in October 28, 2023. In this post, I wanted to reflect on this experience and share what this library is offering to the community in South San Francisco. This library was very spacious and in a new land as I learned from a library staff. There were programming and events listed for children, young adults, families, and adults. These activities included lego building events, book clubs, and story times for children in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Tagalog! Signage throughout the library was bilingual in English and in Spanish. In addition, a library wing was named after a dedicated library advocate and former U.S. representative for California’s 14th congressional district Jackie Speier.



Library Wing named after Jackie Speier

Here are some highlights from my visit:



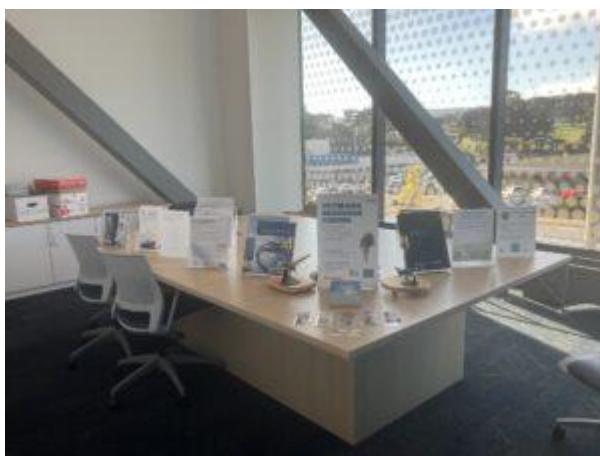
Memory Activity Kits

[Memory Activity Kits](#) – According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 6 million Americans of all ages have Alzheimer's disease. ["An estimated 6.7 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's in 2023. Seventy-three percent are age 75 or older."](#) According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “currently *more than 55 million people* have dementia worldwide,” I saw there were “Memory Activity Kits” which is the [library's Mental Health Initiative](#), “funded in whole or in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provision of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant, administered by the California State Librarian.” The kits support “caregivers and families in providing mental stimulation to members experiencing dementia or Alzheimer's.” I looked at the kits and they included jigsaw puzzles and card games as well as music and books for specific decades to help those experiencing memory loss.



Video game collections on display

Video Game Collections – Video games as library collections aren't necessarily new to libraries (see [Stanford University Libraries, 2023](#) and [IFLA WLIC 2018 programme from Audiovisual and Multimedia Section joint with the Information Technology Section called "Video Games: Winning strategies for libraries"](#)). But what made it interesting was that I was just looking up a couple of games on Twitch, an interactive live streaming service for gamers, and suddenly I see the games available to be borrowed. They were located in the youth section of the library. It reminded me of the importance of public libraries collecting and sharing resources beyond books. [The American Library Association's Games and Gaming Round Table](#) offers more information about video game collections and community engagement with games



Veteran resource center

In addition to collections, this library had a Veterans Resource Center and a MakerSpace. The Veterans Resource Center offers library and community resources supporting veterans. (For additional resources and ideas on libraries supporting veterans, see [Libraries & Veterans: National Forum](#)).

The MakerSpace in this library was very big and had different technologies such as sewing machines and printers. There were products on display ranging from small robot toys to

miniature figures. (See [IFLA Section's Libraries for Children and Young Adults on "MakerSpaces: new tradition in context."](#)) Not all libraries can offer these MakerSpace resources and training since they can be expensive but it was very good to see how this library's MakerSpace support, engage, and transform their communities in different ways.



MakerSpace in the library



MakerSpace products on display

When you are a librarian, visiting other libraries, especially new ones, can offer new ideas and lens into how libraries serve and impact the local community. It's important to document these experiences to show how we can learn from each other and better serve our communities. As you visit a library for the first time, observe the space and service points from signage to accessibility, it may help you understand how the library is set up to support all members of the community. I am inspired by visiting this new library and hope this blog post inspire you to visit libraries and offer you some ideas too!

Categories: General