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Listen Local at Deschutes Public Library

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Listen Local at Deschutes Public Library

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Over the last two decades, the music industry and the ways people acquire music have changed dramatically. Fewer and fewer people rely on CDs, instead using online sources to discover and enjoy music¹. The ripple effect from this digital shift can even be felt at the local library, where circulation of CDs has decreased. In a world where savvy music listeners find almost anything they want quickly and for free, what role does the library's music collection have for a community?

One response has been to offer free music downloads to customers through services such as Freegal and Hoopla. Deschutes Public Library (DPL) has also responded with the launch of Listen Local (www.deschuteslibrary.org/localmusic). Listen Local brings together albums by area artists and makes them free to preview and download for library cardholders. This new resource offers unique home-grown content, increases discoverability for local musicians and can ultimately strengthen our community.

For years, I have wanted to offer local music to our customers. The costs and staff time needed to buy directly from individuals coupled with the relatively short life of library CDs—due to damage, loss, and normal wear and tear—prevented me from pursuing this. When I read about the Iowa Music Project², I realized that shifting the collection online could eliminate the risks and maximize our investment. After bringing on other staff, I was ready to look into creating a similar project for DPL.


An important first step was to identify local musicians willing to work with us. With a dovetailing goal of exposing listeners to artists that customers could see perform live, I began by contacting musicians based on two criteria: they have produced a full-length album and also play regularly around town. Our local daily paper was a great resource for helping us find people who fit this criteria—both the annual top ten list and weekly calendar listings. Most bands have websites or are on Facebook, so a little digging around gave me the contact information I needed.

Following the Iowa City Local Music Project model, local musicians sign a contract with DPL and are offered compensation for their work. Response was positive overall. Some musicians had questions that were easily addressed by a personal phone call.



Once paperwork was in order and music files received, DPL started the process of building the webpage, complete with preview, library account authentication and downloading capabilities.

Listen Local launched in December 2014 with 11 local bands featured. We have done a soft launch publicizing it on our Facebook page, and will send out a press release to local media in the coming weeks. As far as content, this is just the beginning—every six months we hope to add another round of albums.

We are now able to offer local music—content not readily available through our library vendors or the bigger streaming sites like Pandora and Spotify. More importantly, Listen Local gives our customers a place to discover music created here—in and by our community. 

References

¹“Album Sales Hit A New Low”

By Ed Christman and Glenn Peoples in *Billboard* August 28, 2014

<http://www.billboard.com/articles/business/6236365/album-sales-hit-a-new-low-2014>

²“Iowa City Library Launches Local Music Project”

By Jenny Baum in *Library Journal* on June 26, 2012

<http://tinyurl.com/o83p5d8>

Other Libraries with Local Music Pages

Denver Public Library

<https://volumedenver.org/>

Iowa City Public Library

<http://music.icpl.org/>

Monroe County (New York) Library System

<http://www3.libraryweb.org/localmusicproject/>

