

Awesome Box

Library Lab Final Report

Project Summary

Awesome Box is an additional returns box that offers library users the ability to promote any item. Users understand the returns box as an interface, and if they understand one box, they can understand two boxes: one for items they just want to return and one for items they thought were awesome. The Awesome Box allows users to easily cast a physical vote for an item they found amazing or useful. That item gets recorded as “Awesome” so the entire community can see what others have found helpful, entertaining, or mind-blowing.

Accomplishments

Two boxes were installed. One is in Widener and one is in Lamont. Six more boxes will be installed in the very near future.



Figure 1: User returning an item to the Awesome Box

Over 200 items have been returned to Awesome Boxes, which makes for a steady low-volume stream.

Awesome items are available through an RSS feed and a Twitter stream (@hlawesome). In addition, a Recently Awesome page (hvr.d.me/awesomebox) allows users to browse through recently awesomed items.



Figure 2: Recently Awesome web interface

Challenges

Creating the actual physical boxes with accompanying signs was a challenge. We went through many iterations and spent a lot of time hunting down suppliers and manufacturers. Signage was another challenge. It was difficult to find a balance between informative and simple aesthetically pleasing signs.

The last challenge was getting library staff to participate. For the most part everyone was enthusiastic but it took a lot of coordinating.

Next steps

We have six boxes nearly ready to be installed in six more libraries. If additional libraries would like to participate we can work with them on getting a box. We're also responding to feedback and implementing tweaks and bug fixes accordingly.



We are reaching out to other libraries beyond Harvard to solicit participation in the project.

Publicity

Our progress was documented on our blog.

<http://librarylab.law.harvard.edu/blog/2012/05/17/awesome-box-pilot/>

<http://librarylab.law.harvard.edu/blog/2012/06/12/awesome-box-signs-a-work-in-progress/>

There are also a few informative posts.

<http://librarylab.law.harvard.edu/blog/awesome-box/>

<http://librarylab.law.harvard.edu/blog/get-your-own-awesome-box/>

We sent a message to hlcomms to announce the project to library staff.

The Chronicle of Higher Ed featured Awesome Box in a piece they did on the Library Innovation Lab.

<http://chronicle.com/article/As-Libraries-Go-Digital/135514/>

The Crimson also mentioned the Awesome Box in a Library Lab article

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2012/11/15/library-lab-projects/>

Presentations

We presented Awesome Box at the October Conference at Dartmouth College.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~biomed/services.html/OctCon2012/index.shtml>

We also presented Awesome Box at Internet Librarian.

<http://www.infoday.com/il2012/day.asp?day=Wednesday#TrackC>

<http://librarylab.law.harvard.edu/talks/awesome-slides/>

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