

2010

Top Innovations

Urban Libraries Council

Lead. Innovate. Transform.

LEADERSHIP... INNOVATION... TRANSFORMATION

Today's public libraries are on the cutting edge of innovation. From strategic approaches to the library's role in improving reading levels to increasing public safety to meet urban challenges, public libraries are transforming their community role and broadening their impact in remarkable ways.

In 2010, the Urban Libraries Council invited its members to share their most successful innovations to highlight the excellent work occurring in libraries every day. More than 200 success stories were shared.

A panel of judges selected 12 outstanding programs based on their innovation, results achieved, and capacity to be replicated in other libraries. The top innovations all reflect hallmarks of modern library success – access to front-line neighborhood demographic information, one-stop shopping for entrepreneurs, equitable access to technology for the community and

raising individual sustainability awareness and responsibility. These successes occur through the deep community connections and strategic partnerships of the most trusted institution in local government—the public library.

INNOVATIVE LIBRARIES FOR INNOVATIVE COMMUNITIES

The top innovations offer leading practices to the industry. Their national recognition in 12 categories covers both meeting external community needs and internal operations to enhance service delivery. They provide great examples of how 21st century public libraries lead, innovate and transform both their organizations and the communities they serve.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Education Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Techies (T4)

More than 120 teens participate annually in the **Brooklyn Public Library's** eight-day Summer Technology Institute to join the Today's Teens. Tomorrow's Techies (T4) volunteer corps. The teens develop advanced digital literacy skills and become technology interns for the library, training them to help others and become more tech savvy in the process. T4 teens have shown dramatic improvement in their technology skills which increases their job marketability through this leadership opportunity in their neighborhood libraries. The program -- described by one participant as a "life changing experience"—gets teens involved in a productive activity that positions them as valued technology trainers in their community.



120 Teens
8 Days

A lifetime of skills

Public Safety It's A Crime Not to Read

It's a Crime Not to Read improves reading levels, builds self-esteem, and creates powerful connections between young children and police officers. In partnership with the Police Service, Board of Education, Catholic School District, and Rotary Clubs, the **Calgary Public Library** program boosts the self-esteem of participating second and



LITERACY



SELF-ESTEEM



COMMUNITY
RELATIONS

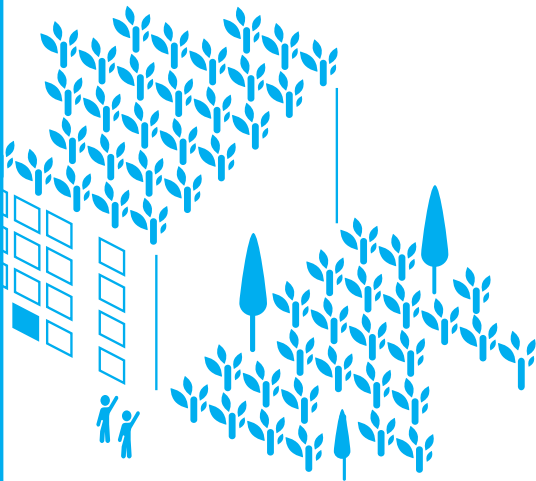


third graders while improving their literacy and strengthening police-community relations. Now in its fourth year, more than 750 children participated during the 2008-2009 school year with 15 police officers serving as regular readers, mentors, and positive role models to these kids.

Sustainability Green Stacks

The **San Francisco Public Library's** Green Stacks program increases awareness of environmental sustainability and responsibility among residents who might otherwise be left out. Designed to ensure environmental equity, Green Stacks combines model green library construction and operation with diverse public programs and resources to establish the San Francisco Public Library as a sustainability model and the go-to place for environmental information. Program components include use of compostable plastic library cards, an

interactive display teaching eco-literacy to young children, two community gardens and two green roofs at branch libraries visited by thousands of patrons, and support from community partners to develop green spaces and broaden community awareness. The San Francisco Public Library Green Stacks program engages and empowers every part of the community with sustainability resources that affect their lives and inform their choices about preserving the environment in which they live.



Economic and Workforce Development GovFest for Entrepreneurs

The **Johnson County Library's** annual GovFest for Entrepreneurs provides one-stop shopping to connect small businesses with government and non-profit resources. The day-long event includes classes and an exhibit where participants can learn business strategy and become familiar with community services to help sustain



and grow their businesses. More than 400 entrepreneurs and 50 exhibitors participated in the most recent GovFest. The combined education and one-stop connections to sources of funding and program support help individual businesses thrive and grow which contributes to the region's long-term economic health.

Health Services Queens Library HealthLink



Cancer Action Centers were created



people accessed Centers in and around Queens

High rates of late-stage cancer detection in this New York City Borough prompted the **Queens Library** to coordinate a community-based research partnership to increase access to cancer prevention screening, treatment, and education. Through Queens Library HealthLink, 16 Cancer Action Centers were created in participating public libraries where more than 4,000 people have taken advantage of valuable cancer information, health education, and screening services. Programs and health related materials are offered in Spanish, English, Korean and Chinese in libraries, senior centers, places of

worship, and public housing across the community. Queens Library is the hub for community organizing, education, data collection, and program planning in Queens Library HealthLink which connects community residents with key cancer resources through the neighborhood library – a safe, friendly, and non-threatening resource.

HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Civic and Community Engagement [Hartfordinfo.org](#)

The [Hartford Public Library](#) created Hartfordinfo.org to meet the community need for comprehensive information data and resources in one place. Created in 2004, Hartfordinfo.org is a gateway to virtually everything anyone would want to know about Hartford including more than 6,000 reports, articles, data sets, maps, newspaper articles, videos, census



data by neighborhood, and more. The site is now used by 15,000 people monthly and averages more than one million hits per month. Hartfordinfo.org empowers residents with neighborhood level information and provides a valuable community asset for elected and appointed officials, teachers, journalists, local non-profits, and funders.

ORANGE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Technology [OCLS Mobile](#)

OCLS Mobile offers Orange County, Florida, a breakthrough way to access library services using Smart devices. The OCLS app is tailored for iPhone and iPod Touch users and offers catalogue search, account access, library locations and driving directions, a calendar of events

and video content on the go. The response has been enthusiastic. During a recent 10-month period, mobile views increased 162 percent with an average of 3,600 mobile views per month. [Orange County Library System](#) is bringing 24/7 access to the fingertips of on-the-move users.



KING COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Raising the Image [Look to Your Library...Especially Now](#)

The [King County Library System](#) launched the comprehensive “Look to Your Library..Especially Now” communication campaign to increase awareness of local job resources when more than 89,000 citizens found themselves out of work in less than a year. Many of these newly-unemployed King County residents were not aware of the free resources available

through their local public library. Outreach included a special section of the library website, temporary additional open hours, demonstrations of job-related tools, information on

other community resources, and more. The King County Library System made it easy for the community to “look to their library” for essential support during a time of financial crisis.



Extended [hours](#) , New [tools](#)
More [job resources](#)

Operations **HPL Express**

Computer access to nearly

83,000

HPL Express customers



Bridging the information needs of community members through technology is job one at the **Houston Public Library** (HPL). Four high-tech public library branches placed within existing buildings such as multi-service centers and parks buildings is a part of the comprehensive Houston Public Library strategy to provide equal access to technology throughout the community. The HPL Express libraries are state-of- the-art facilities that

provide more technology per square foot than traditional print collections and shelving. During 2009, HPL Express libraries provided computer access to nearly 83,000 customers and conducted 481 technology sessions and 97 citizenship classes for over 5,000 community members. Houston Public Library’s innovative information service model is delivering equitable access to technology every day in Houston.

The Organization **Integrated Data Tracking System**

Shrinking budgets and the need to improve data-driven decision making prompted the **Cleveland Public Library** to develop an integrated data tracking system. The centralized SQL database consolidated and organized staggering amounts of data from multiple sources to create ready access to real-time metrics for both information and action. Data is entered into the system

Consolidated
SQL
database



by library staff through an Intranet page and is also pulled automatically from vendor databases to keep track of gate counts and computer usage. The tracking system ensures that library leaders have vital use data at their fingertips to guide strategic decision making and allocate limited resources to best serve the city of Cleveland.

User Experience **Renew By Text**



Cuyahoga County Public Library has increased the interactivity, ease of use, and flexibility of renewing library materials with Renew by Text. Users can now renew materials using this free and convenient service – continuing the library’s goal of providing patrons with easy access anytime and anywhere. Text savvy patrons who were already receiving notifications from the library about available materials and due dates were ready for more options to strengthen library connections. The

library worked closely with its text message provider to ensure that the renew-by-text service was easy to use and reliable. Next up for Cuyahoga library patrons is a pay your fines by text option – another service designed to enhance the library user experience in Cuyahoga County.

Collections **Technical Services Turnaround Time**

The Columbus Metropolitan Library is streamlining its processing for faster delivery of library resources to the community by dramatically reducing technical services turnaround time from a high of three weeks to an average of 1.5 days for more than 437,000 items. A library staff task force used focus groups, time and motion studies, and workforce analysis to identify process bottlenecks, streamline workflow processes, and

increase service efficiency. While the original service goal of 48 hours from receipt of material to shelf ready for all locations was achieved in 2004, the library staff continues to review processes regularly to sustain and improve turnaround time and look for ways to get information resources in the hands of customers even faster.



TAKE A LOOK at exciting innovations going on in today's leading urban and metropolitan libraries through the Urban Libraries Council website at **www.urbanlibraries.org**.

On the site, you can review all of the 2010 leading library innovations that are transforming communities across North America.

About the Urban Libraries Council

Since 1971 the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) has worked to strengthen public libraries as an essential part of urban life. A member organization of North America's leading public library systems, ULC serves as a forum for research widely recognized and used by public and private sector leaders. Its members are thought leaders dedicated to leadership, innovation and the continuous transformation of libraries to meet community needs.

As ULC approaches its forty year anniversary, its work focuses on assisting public libraries to identify and utilize skills and strategies that match the challenges of the 21st Century.