URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL

INSPIRING LIBRARIES.
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES.

2014 TOP INNOVATORS

Inspiring Libraries. Transforming Communities.

About the Innovations Initiative

"Creativity is contagious. Pass it on."
— Albert Einstein

Five years and literally hundreds of smart ideas later, the Urban Libraries Council's (ULC) *Innovations Initiative* continues to showcase public libraries' remarkable capacity for leadership, innovation, and transformation in the communities they serve.

The 2014 *Top Innovators* epitomize the pillars of 21st century library success – supporting a lifetime of learning for all, maximizing digital access, encouraging civic engagement, meeting health and safety needs, promoting economic and workforce development, serving communities in crisis, and more. From a library-school partnership that introduces kids to the power of eReaders, to a mobile career center for job seekers, to a collaborative effort to reduce obesity and promote healthy living, to helping communities recover from natural disasters, public libraries are at the center of community life and success.

A panel of expert judges selected the 2014 *Top Innovators and Honorable Mentions* in 10 categories based on the strength of their innovations, results achieved, and capacity to be replicated. The categories are: Leading Learning; Civic and Community Engagement; Collections; Customer Experience; Economic and Workforce Development; Health, Wellness, and Public Safety; Operations; Organizational Change and Strategic Management; Positioning the Library; and Sustainability. In addition, ULC is honoring two communities for their leadership in helping their communities respond to and recover from natural disasters.

In 2014, more than 180 stories of successful innovations were submitted. All will become part of ULC's Innovation Resource Center which now includes close to 1000 leading practices in these diverse categories of library services and operations.

ULC congratulates all of its member libraries and the 2014 honorees for their innovative practices that highlight the power and impact of high-performing public libraries.

Leading Learning

Grand Rapids Public Library, MI
DigiBridge
grpl.org/schools

DigiBridge is a joint effort of Grand Rapids Public Library and the Grand Rapids Public Schools to put technology in the hands of middle and high school students to help them become 21st century learners. The program includes conversion of school IDs to digital library cards to provide quick access to library databases, aggressive efforts to register students for full-access library cards, and training for teachers, students, and parents on using databases for research. As part of the program's initial roll out, eReaders loaded with grade-appropriate books were purchased and distributed to 200 students at four middle schools to foster digital literacy skills.

In just six months, *DigiBridge* produced remarkable results – 17,000 school IDs became digital library cards, students logged 3,800 research sessions using digital resources, more than 850 students, parents and teachers completed training on how to use library databases, and nearly 100 students, parents, and teachers joined library staff at the Nook eReader Festival in January. In addition, middle school students attended a four-week *Teen [Tech]Knowledgy Camp* where they used library resources to learn about technology and its real world applications.

Honorable Mention:
Palo Alto City Library, CA
makeX: Teen Mobile Makerspace
cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/lib/teens/makex.asp

makeX is a teen-designed "starter" mobile makerspace in which middle- and high-school aged youth in Palo Alto can build, design, tinker, play, and let their imaginations run wild. This model for makerspaces, that can move throughout the community, emerged from a partnership between Palo Alto City Library and Palo Alto Art Center to promote self-directed and mentored creative expression as well as learning about art and technology while relieving stress and connecting with friends in a "place of their own."

Civic and Community Engagement

Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, KS
Librarians Facilitate Community Change
tscpl.org

The Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library is becoming the go-to resource for helping groups of smart people achieve great things together for the community. After completing an Effective Facilitator/Masterful Meetings training program, librarians and management staff have the skills needed to serve as conveners for community conversations and as trusted resources for reconciling diverse perspectives and helping groups reach consensus. In addition, the training process broadened the role of librarians in the community as change agents and contributed to individual professional development.

Library staff have facilitated meetings, workgroups, and strategic planning sessions for multiple community organizations including the Downtown Rotary, the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department, the Heartland Healthy Neighbors coalitions, and the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce.

Honorable Mention: Wichita Public Library, KS
Activate Wichita
activate-wichita.org

Activate Wichita is a library-designed and led online town hall that engages citizens in conversations about challenges facing the metropolitan area and increases connections to the library. In its first year of service, *Activate Wichita* had more than 10,000 visitors viewing 5,400 pages per month with 1,000 active participants in online community conversations. The site offers two-way communication 24/7 between city leaders and local residents.

Collections

Santa Clara County Library District, CA
SCCLD-JukePop Launch Self-Publishing
sccl.org/browse/ebooks-and-downloads/episodic-fiction

A unique public library-Silicon Valley partnership has provided an easy-to-use platform for bringing self-published fiction to library users in an eBook format. The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) and JukePop, Inc., a Palo Alto start-up company specializing in self-publishing, joined forces to provide free access to 800 self-published eBooks on the library website.

The partnership has increased traffic to the library website, reached a new set of readers who are interested in self-published content, revitalized interest in serial fiction, connected up-and-coming authors with new audiences, and increased use of eBooks in the library collection. The library's relationship with JukePop has also provided significant eBook content at no cost while demonstrating the potential for lending eBooks for use by multiple readers simultaneously. While easily available through the SCCLD website, the JukePop content is not part of the library's collection, and any questions, concerns, and challenges regarding content are referred to JukePop.

Honorable Mention:
Pikes Peak Library District, CO
Waldo Canyon Fire Digital Collection
ppld.org/digital-collections

The loss of two lives, 347 homes, 18,247 acres of land, and $350 million damage from a major fire in the Colorado Springs area prompted the Pikes Peak Library District to use its archival experience to collect and preserve information about the fire's impact. The Waldo Canyon Fire Digital Collection contains reports, press releases, photographs, videos, oral-history interviews, and handwritten personal stories. Because the documentation was "born digital," the process challenged library staff to rethink their approach to archival work in the 21st century.

Transforming Communities.

Customer Experience

Denver Public Library, CO
DPL Connect: A Pedal-Powered Bookmobile
bikedenver.org/bicycle-news/Denver-public-library-on-2-wheels

DPL Connect, a fully equipped book bike with shelves, display areas, and a Wi-Fi hotspot, has successfully imbedded the Denver Public Library throughout the community in a nimble, dynamic, and unexpected way. The book bike is part of a comprehensive effort to make the library more accessible by bringing services, products, and staff outside traditional branch locations. It was designed by a local custom bike builder and has helped establish new community and business connections for the library. For example, the Denver Bicycle Cafe offered happy-hour prices to customers with library cards at an event where *DPL Connect* was registering new library users, and Bike Denver named DPL a bicycle-friendly business.

The book bike's VPN connection to the library's integrated library system has made it possible to register new library users and circulate items. That VPN link is now used by DPL's street team to ensure that the library is connected to its customer base anywhere and everywhere. More importantly, the book bike has expanded the customer experience and changed the way the library is perceived in every corner of the community.

Honorable Mention:
Edmonton Public Library, AB
Great Stuff: EPL Makes It Personal!
epl.ca/staffpicks

The Edmonton Public Library (EPL) created a "Great Stuff Crew" to help customers get a handle on the 6.5 million items in its collection. The nine-member team, selected through a casting call and auditions, has become the face of the library – a fun, creative group that shares relevant, cool, and unique content about trending and timely topics. While the crew is the front-line for customer service, every staff member plays a role in promoting EPL's collection and generating excitement about and awareness of its resources, and encouraging customers to see EPL as a trusted source for information and advice.

Inspiring Libraries.

Economic and Workforce Development

Memphis Public Library & Information Center, TN
JobLINC: Mobile Bus for Job Seekers and Employers
memphislibrary.org/joblinc

With an unemployment rate lingering above 10 percent, the Memphis Public Library launched the *JobLINC* mobile career center to provide a one-stop resource for job seekers in close-to-home locations - community centers, library branches, community agencies, grocery stores, malls, and other public areas. Rolled out in 2012, the 38-foot bus offers a range of job-hunting resources as well as staff on board to help job-seekers in various ways, from preparing resumes or sharpening interview skills to improving computer skills, applying for jobs online, or setting up and accessing an email account using the on-board laptops. Its services are tailored to individual needs and a strong focus on solving problems that interfere with job-hunting success.

The eco-friendly and ADA-accessible bus has solar panels to power its electronics, recycled flooring, and a hybrid engine that runs on diesel fuel.

JobLINC has been enthusiastically welcomed throughout the city and county with between 6,000 and 12,000 people using its services and resources annually including an average of 1,500 in-depth counseling referrals and more than 2,000 job searches. It is sometimes flagged down by job seekers en route to an appointment or followed until its next stop.

Honorable Mention:
King County Library System, WA
Building a Workforce that Reflects our Community
kcls.org

The King County Library System (KCLS) established the Page Fellowship training program to recruit, hire, educate, and retain a diverse library workforce that better reflects and directly connects with the communities the library system serves. The program is built around three components - a community-centered recruitment process, a transparent training work plan, and regular reality-based evaluations. More than 10 percent of the KCLS's current staff are now former fellows of the program.

Transforming Communities.

Health, Wellness, and Public Safety

Houston Public Library, TX
Healthy L.I.F.E.
houstonlibrary.org/healthy-life

Healthy L.I.F.E. is the Houston Public Library's (HPL) health-based literacy initiative designed to empower and equip families with information, resources, and tools needed for healthy living. With 66 percent of adults and 34 percent of youth in the Houston area overweight or obese and one in five Harris County adults lacking basic literacy skills, the library leveraged its status as a trusted learning resource to tackle a significant community health education challenge through a family-learning model. Healthy L.I.F.E. offers regularly-scheduled events to help parents and children learn together about healthy lifestyles, stress-free living, school success, and healthy eating while also getting access to free community resources that support better health. The events are held at branches that serve low-income populations, have positive relationships with schools and community groups, and experience high-demand for and interest in family-centered programming.

Since its creation, more than 50 agencies have worked with the library to contribute information, resources, and services to more than 3,100 families including 50,000 pounds of fresh food distributed to needy families by the Houston Food Bank, along with 3,000 nutrition and fitness books and DVDs. Among participating families surveyed, 80 percent have committed to changing their lifestyles and improving their own healthy-living behaviors.

Honorable Mention:
Pima County Public Library, AZ
Santa Rosa Snacks
library.pima.gov/locations/santarosa

The Santa Rosa Branch of the Pima County Public Library System began serving healthy snacks to the many low-income children who use the library as a safe after-school space while their parents are working. More than 85 percent of the children who live in the Santa Rosa Library service area qualify for free or reduced cost lunches, and the 60-100 children who spend every afternoon at the library rarely had any snacks in their backpacks to carry them through the afternoon. The library became an Agency Market of the Southern Arizona Community Food Bank to qualify for their snack program for children in need. Library staff report that participating children are more focused after snack time, and there has been a decrease in behavioral problems.

Inspiring Libraries.

Operations

Aurora Public Library, CO
Library in a Big Box
aurorapubliclibrary.org

To meet the growing demand for public computing, the Aurora Public Library looked outside-the-box and moved into a big box. The Colfax and Chamber PC Center is a library-operated computer center inside a Kmart store in one of the city's most diverse and economically challenged areas. The 600-square foot space has 12 public computers and is open eight hours a day, six days a week. Located near the store's check-out counter, the PC Center offers a range of library services to people who rarely, if ever, visit a traditional library. Users can search the Internet, print documents, participate in computer classes, check out and return library materials, learn about library services, and get help and advice from a librarian. Because of its location inside the Kmart store with storewide security, only one library-funded staff person is needed, cutting labor costs in half compared to a stand-alone, store-front location.

During its first four months of operation, the center welcomed 10,000 visitors. In January and February 2014, traffic volume increased to an average of 3,150 per month. A $35,000 grant to the library from Comcast will make it possible to open the center on Sundays for at least three years and add one Early Literacy Computer. This first-time partnership with a "big box" retail store is a bold new approach to serving the community outside the library walls.

Honorable Mention:
Cuyahoga County Public Library, OH
MOVE TEAM!
cuyahogalibrary.org/About-Us/Facilities-Master-Plan/Facilities-Master-Plan-Details.aspx

As part of an ambitious multi-year plan construction plan, Cuyahoga County Public Library opened six new library branch buildings totaling 179,000 square feet of library space in one year – a new branch every 60 days. To carry out the daunting process, the library created a 12-member cross-disciplinary team to "swoop in" and transform each new building with empty shelves and lonely furniture into a bountiful and bustling community hot spot. The six branches opened on schedule, and each exceeded the expectations of the community it serves.

Transforming Communities.

Organizational Change and Strategic Management

Skokie Public Library, IL
Realigning for Greater Access, Learning, and Community
skokielibrary.info

To better align staff to meet the needs of the community it serves and stay true to its core values, Skokie Public Library carried out a major organizational realignment based on a new strategic plan. With the active engagement of library staff, the realignment led to the creation of three new departments – Access Services, Learning Experiences, and Community Engagement – paralleling the library's core values. Since implementation in January 2014, the realignment has led to a fresh perspective among staff and improved outcomes for customers. For example:

- Access Services, which combined technical services, collection development, and materials handling into one group, is focusing on unifying the library's entire collection, both physical and digital, and growing digital resources.

- Learning Experiences is working on an experiential, interdisciplinary STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) learning lab for middle-school students, establishing more creative learning environments for adults, teens, and youth, and broadening digital literacy initiatives.

- Community Engagement, with more staff assigned to this function, has already built stronger partnerships with local preschools, schools, and a community health center and is developing new virtual resources for community connections.

Honorable Mention:
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, NC
WorkSmart for Process Improvement and Innovation
cmlibrary.org

WorkSmart, a staff-led initiative to create best practices and efficiencies throughout the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, has provided new ways to capture, share, and reward improvement and innovation. The program encourages every library branch to develop and implement innovations and efficiencies that can be shared and tweaked for use in other branches and rewards staff for their efforts. Along with specific improvements throughout the system, *WorkSmart* has empowered staff to offer suggestions for improvement and know that their ideas will be seriously considered.

Inspiring Libraries.

Positioning the Library

Durham County Library, NC
First Library in Space
firstlibraryinspace.org

The First Library in Space (FLIS) has successfully launched and landed. The launch was part of the Durham County Library's effort to take its STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programming for teens to new heights by building and launching a capsule filled with library memorabilia into near space. In addition to teaching participating teens new skills, the FLIS project was designed to build the library's reputation as a STEM resource by involving patrons and community partners in an innovative, high-profile event. The library carried out the goal of building its STEM bona fides by:

- Generating excitement for the project with an aggressive media campaign and a dedicated FLIS website

- Creating a competition among teens at different branches to design the FLIS capsule

- Launching the capsule from a high-profile location: center field of the Durham Bulls Athletic Field

- Engaging the community through tweets and real-time GPS tracking on the website.

While the first capsule disappeared after launch, FLIS2 launched and landed without a hitch a few weeks later. The project's success and visibility led to a $25,000 grant from Duke Energy to support a Teen Tech Learning Lab, new community partnerships for STEM learning, and an expanded library social media audience to increase interest in STEM programming. A documentary video about the launch, with a soundtrack written by two teen patrons, has attracted more than 500 viewers.

Honorable Mention:
Springfield City Library, MA
Imagine: A Peace-Full City
springfieldlibrary.org/library/imagine-a-peace-full-city

Sparked by sadness about the 2012 tragedy in Newtown, CT, and continuing gun violence, the Springfield City Library joined with an Interfaith Council to distribute "peace flags" and carry out programs to get people talking about creating a peaceful city. The project engaged a broad range of community connections including the Springfield Police Department, the Mayor's Anti-Violence Task Force, and the city's Neighborhood Watch Coordinator. With nearly 1,300 program participants, the Peace-Full City initiative reinforced the library's position as a safe, neutral, community gathering place that fosters discussion, learning, and change.

Sustainability

Salt Lake County Library Services, UT
Sustainability Initiative
slcolibrary.org

Following a pattern of rising annual utility costs, Salt Lake County Library Services began a comprehensive sustainability initiative to cut energy consumption in its 18 library buildings, save taxpayer resources, raise public awareness of the importance of energy conservation, and engage library staff in creating a culture of sustainability. To achieve its goal of a net reduction in utility expenditures by 2015, the library is:

- Creating a profile for each building including location, age, square footage, whether it is LEED certified, number of employees, building systems, and utility costs

- Implementing energy conservation strategies such as plug-load control systems, wireless smart plugs, and watt metering devices

- Piloting an employee gardening space

- Using environmentally friendly cleaning products

- Creating sustainable purchasing practices and policies.

One of the library's LEED-certified facilities has already reduced its energy costs by nearly 56 percent. Savings in other facilities are being tracked and compiled. At the same time, the library is engaging and educating staff about the important role they play in ensuring a more sustainable work environment.

Honorable Mention:
Milwaukee Public Library, WI
Better Building Challenge Showcase Facility
www4.eere.energy.gov/challenge/showcase/Milwaukee/central-library

The Milwaukee Public Library achieved a 15 percent energy reduction in its 115-year-old historic downtown Central Library as part of a city-wide energy conservation challenge. The savings were achieved through installation of a green roof with solar panels, repair and replacement of energy-deficient steam traps, and use of more energy-efficient lighting. The library, which was recognized for its efforts by the Better Buildings Challenge of the U.S. Department of Energy, is on track to meet the goal of a 20 percent energy reduction by 2020.

Inspiring Libraries.

Special Honors: Serving Communities in Crisis

Pioneer Library System, OK
PLS Virtual Response: May 2013 Oklahoma Tornadoes
pioneerlibrarysystem.org/pls/111-press/4805-tornado-relief-information

The Pioneer Library System has established itself as a vital resource for both immediate response and longer-term recovery from natural disasters. When tornadoes tore through three county service areas over several days in May 2013, the library instituted on-the-fly changes to its virtual platform to keep vital communication channels open. After back-to-back tornadoes on May 19 and 20, the library moved its official communications to social media and managed to create a tornado relief site before a third tornado hit on May 31. The library's website was used by the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management to create the statewide "Oklahoma Strong" site. The experience of being a vital communication resource during and after the May 2013 tornadoes prompted the library system to implement new disaster preparedness strategies including remotely hosted online services and to improve its emergency communication methods with library staff.
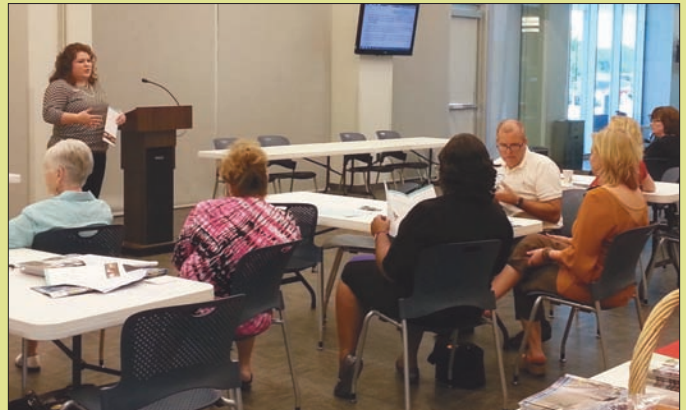
The tornadoes also reinforced a long-standing need for financial literacy training, particularly to help tornado survivors figure out how to recover financially from the crisis. Using a *Smart Investing@your library* grant, the library created a series of special programs on financial and mental health needs titled "Resilience in the Heartland." The programs provided both specific recovery guidance and mutual support for people who experienced losses during the tornadoes.

Transforming Communities.

Special Honors: Serving Communities in Crisis

Calgary Public Library, AB
Come Hell or High Water
Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Center
calgarypubliclibrary.com

A newly created collaborative center to provide services for vulnerable, marginalized, and homeless individuals and the Calgary Public Library's capacity as an essential community resource combined to provide vital services when the city experienced the worst flooding in Canada's history. Despite significant damage to many of its facilities, Calgary Public Library opened branches quickly in evacuation centers and implemented strategies to support residents during and after the crisis. Once technology infrastructure was restored, library branches provided computer access to displaced residents and offered a welcoming, comfortable place and friendly staff to share in the hardship. A flood recovery resources brochure was created, and the Calgary Public Library Foundation provided additional resources to all library locations to support services to customers in need.

The Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Center (SORCe), a collaborative effort of 14 organizations including the library where people can access programs and services to meet immediate needs, opened on June 18, 2013, two days before the massive flooding began. During the recovery period, many library users were seeking help that was beyond the scope of traditional library services. Being part of SORCe gave the library a new way to provide services to Calgarians in need.

Inspiring Libraries.

Participants in the 2014 ULC Innovations Initiative:

Alameda County Library, CA
Alexandria Library, VA
Allen County Public Library, IN
Anne Arundel County Public Library, MD
Arapahoe Library District, CO
Aurora Public Library, CO
Boston Public Library, MA
Broward County Library, FL
Calgary Public Library, AB
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, PA
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, NC
Cleveland Public Library, OH
Columbus Metropolitan Library, OH
County of Los Angeles Public Library, CA
Cuyahoga County Public Library, OH
Dallas Public Library, TX
Dayton Metro Library, OH
Denver Public Library, CO
District of Columbia Public Library, DC
Durham County Library, NC
Edmonton Public Library, AB
Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library, IN
Free Library of Philadelphia, PA
Fresno County Public Library, CA
Frisco Public Library, TX
Grand Rapids Public Library, MI
Gwinnett County Public Library, GA
Hartford Public Library, CT
Hennepin County Library, MN
Houston Public Library, TX
Howard County Library System, MD

Indianapolis Public Library, IN
Jacksonville Public Library, FL
Kansas City Public Library, MO
King County Library System, WA
Lexington Public Library, KY
Los Angeles Public Library, CA
Loudoun County Public Library, VA
Madison Public Library, WI
Memphis Public Library & Info Center, TN
Mid-Continent Public Library, MO
Milwaukee Public Library, WI
Nashville Public Library, TN
Oakland Public Library, CA
Orange County Library System, FL
Ottawa Public Library, ON
Palm Beach County Library System, FL
Palo Alto City Library, CA
Pasadena Public Library, CA
Pierce County Library System, WA
Pikes Peak Library District, CO
Pima County Public Library, AZ
Pioneer Library System, OK
Portland Public Library, ME
Queens Library, NY
Rangeview Library District, CO
Richland Library, SC
Sacramento Public Library, CA
Salt Lake City Public Library, UT
Salt Lake County Library Services, UT
San Antonio Public Library, TX
San Diego Public Library, CA

San Francisco Public Library, CA
Santa Clara County Library District, CA
Skokie Public Library, IL
Sno-Isle Libraries, WA
Springfield City Library, MA
St. Louis County Library, MO
St. Paul Public Library, MN
The Public Library of Cincinnati
   & Hamilton, OH
The Seattle Public Library, WA
Topeka & Shawnee County Public
   Library, KS
Torrance Public Library, CA
Virginia Beach Public Library, VA
Wichita Public Library, KS
Worcester Public Library, MA

All submissions can be found on the ULC website, urbanlibraries.org.

Learn More about Innovations in Libraries throughout North America

Visit the Urban Libraries Council website at urbanlibraries.org to learn more about these and other exciting innovations underway in high-performing libraries. On the website, you can review all of the 2014 submitted library innovations that are transforming communities across North America. All submissions from 2010-2013 are also available at urbanlibraries.org.

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