URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL





THE Engaged Library:

Chicago Stories of Community Building

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In late summer, 2005, Co-Director Jody Kretzmann and researcher Susan Rans from the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University agreed to visit several Chicago Branch Libraries to investigate the role of public libraries in neighborhoods. This report illustrates a variety of ways local libraries contribute to community development, looking at multiple layers of involvement: individual, voluntary associations, institutions, economy, place, and, importantly, the stories they tell about themselves in their communities. The Urban Libraries Council hopes this report will spark other communities to investigate the catalytic work of libraries in their communities, to understand the rich contributions being made, and to tell their stories.

THE Engaged Library:

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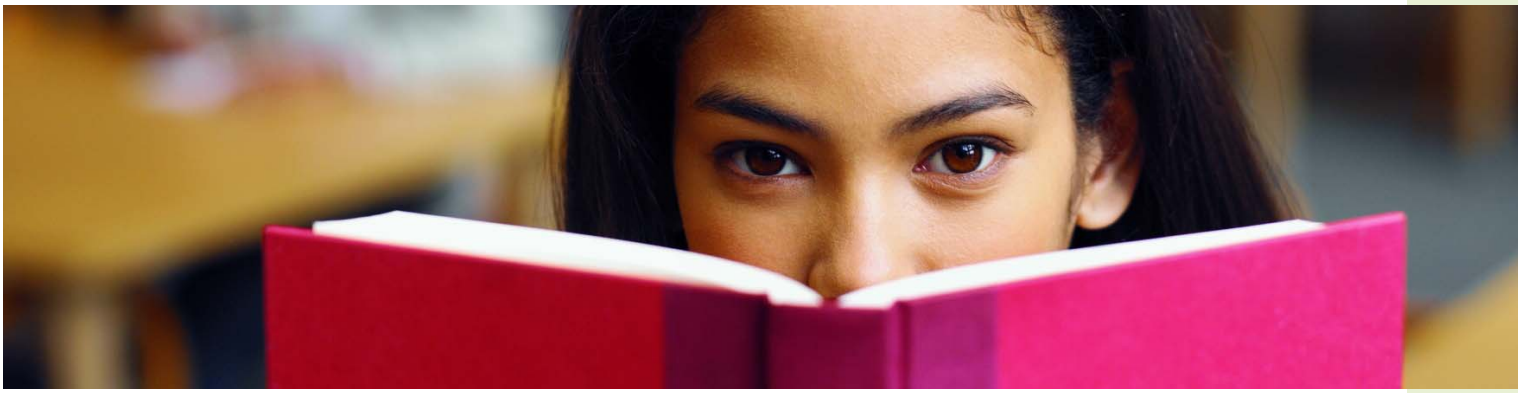

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NO LONGER A PASSIVE **repository of books and information or an outpost of culture, quiet and decorum in a noisy world, the new library is an active and responsive part of the community and an agent for change**.

In *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, Harvard Sociologist Robert Putnam and community activist Lewis Feldstein make this observation, calling libraries a "bridge" for building social connections.

In the world of community building, local libraries have a unique and powerful role. While many places and organizations "bond" together people of like mind, libraries also have the capacity to "bridge" – bring together different types of people who may not share experiences with each other otherwise. Putnam and Feldstein describe how 'planting' a library in a community can turn a place around physically, encouraging new social networks and attracting further reinvestment and development.

This report takes that line of inquiry further. The Urban Libraries Council, with generous support from The Chicago Community Trust and Chicago Public Library Foundation, commissioned researchers in the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University to investigate several branches at the Chicago Public Library, looking closer at the role of libraries in building community. Researchers followed the "people" trail to see how social networks are discovered, nurtured and expanded in different public library scenarios (new, renovated and established) and diverse community settings.

The researchers began with the premise that successful community building involves discovering and mobilizing layers of assets already present in every community:

- the skills and resources of its individuals,
- the power of relationships in voluntary associations
- assets present in the array of local institutions
- the physical infrastructure of the community
- the profile and dynamics of the local economy
- the stories that define the community, its history and its dreams

The stories gathered here uncover webs of connections and successful strategies for building social networks, based on conversations with the administration and several branch managers of the Chicago Public Library. The themes around the lessons learned stimulate thinking about how to position libraries at the center of the local community's life and how to support community engagement in a variety of ways. The "toolbox" at the end of the publication provides exercises, activities, and inquiries that libraries can use to decide how and where to engage in the fabric of community life.

Libraries come to the table with a wealth of assets: free community space, technology resources, connections to the local economy, a sense of ownership by the community and, above all, a level of community trust. With these assets, they can connect to all parts of a community, building those relationships and networks that contribute to strong social infrastructure. They are important community engagement catalysts.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Get outside the doors. Successful community/ library relationships are proactive.

Branch managers and staff that take an active role in the civic life of the community create the 'two-way street' that positions the library at the center of community. This activity outside the library should be encouraged at every level.

2. Find the leaders. A concerted effort to discover who's who in a community makes all the difference.

Reading local papers, asking long-time residents, attending civic events—all can be ways to find and work with the people who are already at the center of community activities.

3. Be creative about what the library can contribute.

Go beyond the obvious and be prepared to say "yes" to new ideas that fall within your mission.

4. Discover and contribute to the unique capacities and conditions of the community.

Cultural attributes, family requirements, the particular situations of neighborhood youth all provide opportunities to make the library indispensable.

5. Support local businesses and institutions.

Set up reciprocal relationships with them, advertise your services to them, spend discretionary funds locally. All of these activities will rebound to the library's and community's benefit.

6. Make the library building a community center.

Public buildings are community assets in many ways beyond simply being meeting spaces. The more people feel ownership, the more integrated the library becomes in community life.

7. Create a community-minded culture among library staff and volunteers.

All staff should be encouraged to learn names, attend events, develop relationships, and pay attention to community issues. Make the library a bridge to and among community populations.

8. Support library investments that jump start community redevelopment efforts.

A new library in a neighborhood brings hope and attention to areas that may have experienced disinvestment. Support new branches with resources for building social networks.

When libraries engage their communities, the best characteristics of both library and community are mobilized. Individual gifts, local associations and institutions, the neighborhood culture, economy and physical environment all come together to create unique neighborhood communities. With supportive leadership in City Hall and at the central library administration, there is no limit to the role local branch libraries can play in building vibrant communities.

Introduction

NOT LONG AGO, a series of funeral announcements were being issued for public libraries. They were dying or already dead — killed by the internet, television, large chain bookstores and cafes. Local elected officials began questioning the outlay of scarce tax dollars for these patients on life support. Hours were cut, staff reduced, acquisitions postponed. Deep sighs and hand wringing accompanied the proclaimed loss of another pillar of community life.

Similarly, much was made of the loss of community in today's busy, impersonal world. We were warned about increasing isolation, disconnection and passivity.

We were bombarded with images and stereotypes of failed communities; impoverished places, dangerous places, neighborhoods that lack vitality. Places that were empty, lacking the buzz of local relationships that make communities thrive.

The future appeared bleak, with the loss of libraries just another symptom of the disease.

BUILDING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The countervailing evidence coming in from hundreds of communities is that active, strong neighborhoods exist everywhere. They come in all shapes and sizes, all economic levels, urban and rural, and they possess many assets, which, once mobilized and connected, make community life rich and vibrant.

Successful community development involves rediscovering and mobilizing layers of resources already present in any community.

No plan, solution or organization from outside the community can duplicate what is already there. Successful strategies for community development in neighborhoods are *asset-based*, *internally-focused*, and *relationship-driven*. Although some resources from outside the community are needed, the key to lasting solutions comes from within. The gifts and skills of residents and the assets of the physical community are always the starting place.

Individuals. Every individual has gifts she or he brings to the group. The best and most creative communities are aware of these gifts and provide opportunities for them to be given. Simply discovering and inventorying individual gifts is not enough. Find ways to create connections between gifted individuals. Making these connections, building relationships, is the heart and soul of community building.

Associations. Individuals who share common interests and goals form associations. Garden clubs, fraternal organizations, bowling leagues, book clubs, and church groups connect individuals to others who share their interests. Associations build long-lasting, multi-faceted relationships where none previously existed.

Institutions. All communities, no matter how poor, have within them a series of institutions that can support the individuals and powerful associations found there. Involve local institutions in the process of community-building. Parks, schools, churches, businesses, and libraries all have a role to play. They can be involved with the local community as property owners, gathering centers, economic entities and incubators for community leadership.

Physical Environment. Other assets include the physical environment of a community; its greenspaces, roads, facilities, transportation centers and gathering places.

Economy. The local economy is a complex web of unique local resources, enterprises, and dynamics that generate wealth and distribute benefits.

Stories. Finally, every community has a rich fabric of stories that define it. Finding a way for a community to tell those stories, to itself and to the world outside it can unleash tremendous potential.

Taken together, all of the assets listed provide strong bedrock upon which any community can build. Finding and connecting existing assets is the most important work a community can do. A growing body of research demonstrates that the more assets that are connected and mobilized, the stronger a community becomes. Vibrant local libraries are critical assets in this process.

NETWORKS, NORMS AND TRUST

In his landmark study, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, sociologist Robert Putnam defines social capital:

Social capital refers to social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness. The central insight of this approach is that social networks have real value for the people in those networks.

Social capital has the ability to transform the lives of those who may not be involved in the community activity that builds social capital. In a community with strong social capital, crime decreases for all residents, economic activity increases, and schools improve.

Putnam's central argument in *Bowling Alone* was that social capital was on the wane in American life. That argument was so carefully researched and statistically supported that it caused many readers to despair for the future of our democracy. Others respectfully disagreed, citing stories from around the country that showed a resurgence in community life and relationships. In 2003, Putnam joined with activist Lewis Feldstein in producing an antidote to his own dire predictions, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*.

In *Better Together*, Putnam and Feldstein collected community building stories from across the country, and one focused exclusively on libraries. In an examination of the Chicago Public Library and its approach to branch library activity and expansion, Putnam and Feldstein showed that libraries are catalysts for building social capital.

No longer a passive repository of books and information or an outpost of culture, quiet and decorum in a noisy world, the new library is an active and responsive part of the community and an agent for change.

In this model of community engagement, local libraries are significant community institutions. They are uniquely positioned to "bridge" – build networks that bring together different types of people who may not share experiences with each other otherwise. Putnam and Feldstein point to the role

branch libraries play in bridging rich and poor residents. They show how 'planting' a library can turn a community around physically, encouraging further reinvestment and development. They reveal that the internet, rather than being the library-killer of the predictions, is drawing people into the library, and keeps them coming back.

ENGAGED LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITY PLAYERS

How do libraries stimulate social networks? It takes a concerted effort, support from administration and elected officials, and some tools for implementing this vision. In this report, commissioned by the Urban Libraries Council with generous support from The Chicago Community Trust and the Chicago Public Library Foundation, researchers from the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University returned to the Chicago Public Library for a closer look, collecting stories from several neighborhood branches that have engaged their communities in a variety of ways. Although each story is unique (as each branch and its facilities and neighborhood is unique), common themes and lessons in community building for library systems are apparent. To test these lessons, they asked Chicago Public Library Commissioner Mary A. Dempsey for her insights and perspective.

Libraries--if given the resources and support for creativity in programming and outreach, and charged with being more engaged in their communities--can truly build community. They come to the table with a wealth of assets: free community space, connections to the local economy, a sense of ownership by the community and, above all, a level of community trust. With these assets, they can connect to all parts of a community, building those relationships and networks that contribute to social capital. They can make policy makers into avid supporters. They can be network catalysts and community players.

The last section of this report provides a toolbox – activities and inquiries for libraries to undertake in order to decide how and where to engage in the fabric of community life.

Photo: Todd Patrick

Deeply Embedded

CHAPTER 1

ON THE NORTH SIDE of Chicago, a few doors north of the busy intersection of California and Devon, sits the Chicago Public Library's Northtown Branch. Driving in a car on California, you might miss it. The building dates from 1962; it has the low-slung look of a gym or a field house, and it is surrounded on both sides by other commercial buildings.

Appearances are deceiving in this case, however, as Northtown is one of the busiest branches in Chicago. It serves an incredibly diverse community, and has collections in English, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish, Urdu/Hindi, and Bengali. Its Auditorium, with room for 100, is booked everyday with community meetings, library-sponsored programs and classes. And every one of its 10,000 square feet is filled with a variety of patrons at almost any time of the day.

Just to the right of the entrance sits the office of the Branch Manager, Rose Powers. The office has a big glass window from which a visitor can see the whole library space if she looks past the amazing collection of Green Bay Packers memorabilia, bobble-head dolls, trophies and other assorted, well, stuff, that Rose has arrayed on the window sill. Probably the most important part of this big window is that any library patron can also see in, and if Rose is there, they are welcome to drop by.

And lots of people do drop by. In fact, Rose is one of the most recognized people in the West Ridge community. She has been at Northtown for 19 years, first as a children's librarian, then acting Branch Manager, and finally, Branch Manager. But it isn't only her continuous presence at the branch that makes her so much a part of West Ridge. Over the years, she has held Officer and Board Member posts in the Northtown Chamber of Commerce, the Northtown

Kiwanis Club and the High Ridge YMCA. She is a member of the Northtown Garden Club, the West Ridge Historic Chicago Bungalow Club and many other neighborhood associations. It's hard to do anything in the neighborhood without bumping into Rose Powers.

To Rose, this nurturing of community relationships is a central part of her job as Branch Manager. "If I get to know [neighborhood leaders] and they have a good experience with me, then, in most cases, these people are involved in multiple groups, so word spreads," she says. "Who knows where [the relationship with] the Garden Society may go, or the Bungalow group? You never know where it's going to lead. You need to make a positive impression in the community."

A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS

Rose credits her initial involvement in the local community to the Blue Skies for Library Kids project back in the early '90s when she was Children's Librarian. The award-winning project, funded by The Chicago Community Trust through the Chicago Public Library Foundation, combined the efforts and skills of community leaders, businesses and library staff to create innovative programs for the children and families in their communities. Northtown was awarded a Blue Skies grant, and Rose's first assignment was to find out who the leaders in the community were.

"I went to the local paper and read every page for weeks, looking for names I saw over and over. The one that appeared most often was Irv Loundy at Devon Bank, so I called him up and made an appointment." Devon Bank, a local, family-owned institution, had long been involved in the Rogers Park and West Ridge communities, and Irv Loundy is its VP for Community Relations. And it happened that he was working hard to resurrect a dormant Chamber of Commerce at the time of Rose's visit. She asked him to join the Blue Skies advisory board and he agreed. He surprised her by asking her to join the new Board of the Chamber, and she agreed. She has been on the Board ever since and today is its Secretary. "That was how I began to know the business people," she says.

The Blue Skies project also required the input of young people, so Rose went to the place she knew she'd find teens, Warren Park. The Park Supervisor at Warren, Diane Schilz, had started a Teen Board there, so Rose met with them to find out what teens felt they needed from the library. This inquiry was the beginning of a Teen Advisory Board at the Northtown branch, and a long-term collaboration between the park and the branch. Warren Park day campers participate in the CPL Summer Reading Program; the branch refers groups to the park's facilities that can't be accommodated in the branch's auditorium.

Involvement with the park led to involvement with the High Ridge YMCA, a few blocks away. A former Director of the Y was also a member of the local Kiwanis Club and brought Rose to a Kiwanis lunch as guest speaker. One senior member of the Club sponsored Rose for membership; a few years later she served as Kiwanis President. To this day, the Kiwanis Club underwrites the purchase of books for the Summer Reading Program.

Increased visibility led to increased community involvement in the future of the Northtown Branch. The Friends of the Northtown Library group had existed before Rose became Branch Manager, but its activity has increased. "Many people who live in this community grew up in this community and know us from when they were kids. They keep coming back because they were educated to believe that the library is an important part of the community," she says. The Friends raise money for library improvements when Rose asks them, and they don't try to "do my job. They're great."

Mike Moses, a lawyer who grew up in the community and has run for public office, is a founder of the Friends. Rose stays neutral in political matters, as a city employee, but she also has a good relationship with the sitting alderman, Bernie Stone (50th). "He refers to me as 'little Rosie', his girlfriend. If he needs a book or something, he'll call me up."

When Devon Bank had to cut back on the number of meetings it could hold in its facilities, Irv Loundy sent a few groups to Northtown. One was YIVO, a Yiddish Literary Society. "I expanded the Yiddish collection for them." Another was the West Ridge Historic Chicago Bungalow Club. "These are the save-the-world folks in the neighborhood, the earth mothers. And they love those bungalows. We've had programs on restoration and windows and siding and things like that here. Tons of folks show up for that stuff, many of them had never been in here before." The Bungalow owners include some city-wide movers and shakers that Rose hopes will provide a new web of relationships for the Northtown Branch.

The Bungalow owners introduced her to the Garden Club; the Chamber of Commerce gave her contacts in the Indian and Pakistani communities. Her appearances on the local cable access show, North Town News Magazine, not only helps her get the word out about library programs, but it's producer, Avy Meyers, is active in the Community Policing Beat Meetings and got Rose involved in them. That led to new relationships with the Commander of the 24th District and the local police.

The connections go on in an ever expanding web, and all of them increase the visibility, activity and use of the Northtown Branch.

LIKE A FAMILY IN SOME WAYS

In response, Rose keeps a rich variety of programming going at Northtown; "I try to do differing programming to attract people that don't normally come in here". There have been cooking demonstrations from a variety of neighborhood cultures. She brought in the Gethsemane Garden Center to do a workshop on arranging wedding flowers. Through the Blooming Branches partnership with Chicago Botanic Garden, gardening classes were held. She's sponsored workshops on Feng Shui and discussions of Jack the Ripper. These and many other programs, including author appearances, are done on a shoestring with help from the Friends when needed. And all of them fill the Auditorium.

One branch manager whose library was experiencing an influx in South Asian patrons once asked Rose how she programmed for Indian and Pakistani clientele. "I said, exactly the same way I do for everybody else, because they have the same interests. They don't need to learn about their own culture because they already know it and it's been done around here before."

"We have an ESL class from Truman College that meets here twice a week—same teacher. We also have a Truman GED class that meets here twice a week—same teacher. It's like they are part of the staff. The GED teacher lives in the community." And the Internet stations bring in a different set of folks who only use the library for Internet access.

Misericordia, the large group home for mentally and physically challenged adults sits on the eastern edge of the community. For years, Misericordia staff has been wary of bringing their residents off the large campus for events. But a Friends member who volunteered there had organized a singing group made up of residents. He proposed that they sing for the community. The group gave their first concert at library in July 2004 and the Auditorium was packed. "It wasn't just their families, but friends, neighborhood residents, Indian folks, Mexican folks. They all came and loved it," says Rose. Misericordia residents come to library often now, and she'd like to do more programming for them.

For Rose, this is all part of the role of the Northtown Branch. "I want them to know we're here. They can come when they need us. It's like family in some ways."

A WEB OF STORIES

The central role played by the Northtown Branch in the life of the surrounding community might seem to be the consequence of Rose Powers' efforts alone. To be sure, she is a rare kind of person, a connector—someone who knows everyone and introduces them to everyone else. And her longevity in the community is an important part of the success of her efforts. As she says, "Continuity is good."

But a series of conversations with other Branch Managers has brought to light ways in which the process of relationship building has benefited both library and community. Some common threads run through each of the stories told by these librarians, ways to involve community institutions, neighborhood groups, young people, people of diverse cultures and neighborhood businesses. Another thread involves the physical space a library provides. Using Rose Powers as our guide, we will bring in these other voices and examine each of these threads. In this manner, some lessons and replicable tools will emerge for other neighborhood libraries to use in their relationship building process with the surrounding community.

Institutional Partnering CHAPTER 2

"WE'RE ALL IN THIS for the same reason—the connections," Rose can list the movers and shakers of the Northtown community and recount stories of the ways in which the library has interacted with them over they years. These interactions aren't one-way streets, however. Everybody benefits from the engagement.

CONNECTIONS

Making connections is somewhat easier these days for the staff at the Austin Irving Branch, a few miles southwest of Northtown. In 2001, the branch moved into its new home, and in the process went from a 800 square foot storefront to the largest and most striking building on its busy stretch of Irving Park Road. The new library is 15,000 square feet of space spread throughout a two-story structure. In a bit of understatement, Branch Manager Tony Powers admits, "It's very difficult not to feel our presence physically. Our visibility with other community organizations is much higher now."

Austin Irving is now the second largest branch in the city for circulation. Its facilities are used by many communities of patrons—researchers, leisure readers, internet users, folks attending meetings in the new meeting rooms—"groups of users that are distinct and use the library differently at different times." All of this activity can certainly be attributed to the presence of the new building, but a further conversation with Tony Powers and Ramona Thompson, the Austin Irving children's librarian, reveals the important role of connections made long before the new doors opened.

CREATING COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES

The Austin Irving branch serves parts of the communities of Portage Park and Dunning. On the northern edge of the service district is the campus of Wright College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Like all community colleges, Wright serves a variety of constituencies with everything from traditional academic classes to job training and readiness programs to ESL and GED test preparation. The area of the city served by Wright College includes communities where English is not the first language, communities where the dropout rate is high, and communities of working class families for whom tuition at a four-year college might be out of the question. Wright serves approximately 6,500 regular credit students, 6,000 adult education students and 4,200 Adult Learning Skills Program students.

Dr. Charles Guengerich is the President of Wright College. In addition to the classes and training opportunities that his institution provides, Dr. Guengerich has committed the College to building relationships with the local community. Over the years, the college has partnered with a variety of neighborhood institutions. Some important examples are the Northwest Chicago Symphony Orchestra, an annual cultural events series, a resident theatrical company, an annual Art Fair and Neighborhood Ethnic Food and Entertainment Festival, an Adopt-a-School partnership with Gray Elementary School, and the Positive Alternatives Project Partnership with the 15th Police District.

The partnership with the Austin Irving Branch is particularly rich for both organizations. Tony Powers serves on the President's Advisory Board at Wright College, helping the President and the faculty at Wright make decisions on community programs. "Tony serves as a valuable source of information on Wright programs," says Dr. Guengerich. Wright faculty and students use the library as a site for bibliographic instruction. The Wright College camera club displays its work in the library gallery.

And whenever library patrons request ESL classes, or ask where they can study for the GED, library staff refers them to Wright. "There's no need for us to replicate what Wright provides," says Tony. "We have great community resources."

"Clearly, I feel that our interaction with the Austin Irving Branch and with Tony is beneficial to the college," says Dr. Guengerich. "But more important, I think it is beneficial to the community. Working together, I believe that we create opportunities that are designed to maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents of our community."

CREATIVITY IN THE CHURCH BASEMENT

During the years that it took to construct the new library building, the Austin Irving collection and staff moved to the basement of a shuttered church on a residential street, far from the foot traffic on Irving Park Road. But the branch's circulation actually increased during those years, partly due to the popularity of the church's other tenant, the Portage Park Center for the Arts.

The Arts Center moved into the church in 2000, sharing more than the space with the library. The two organizations began to cooperate on programming and offerings. They shared teachers. The children's story times sponsored by the library were greatly enhanced by the participation of the Centers art teachers; writing classes taught by the center used materials from the library. Each enhanced the other during those years in the basement, and now that the library has its new building, the collaboration continues.

Jennifer La Civita, the Director of the Portage Park Center for the Arts, values the energy supplied by the relationship with the library. She admits that both the Center and the Austin Irving Branch could use more resources. "But you don't need money to create community and to interact with other organizations in the community," she says. "You just need to work together". In the Center for the Arts, Ramona Thompson has a partner in her children's programming as well. Tony Powers points out that it all makes sense. "After all, we're both institutions committed to the humanities. And we share a community."

OTHER CONNECTIONS

Tony Powers and Ramona Thompson have built many other relationships in their community. The Portage Park Chamber of Commerce meets in the library regularly, and supports library programs. "Tony Powers and I sit on the Board of the Portage Park Chamber of Commerce," Dr. Guengerich points out. We work with community leaders on community issues. It also serves as a method for

Tony to report on and promote library activities, and for me to promote activities at Wright College."

One board member of the Chamber, Mahmoud Bambuoyani, is a particular friend. He runs a karate school across the street from the library, When Mahmoud had a family tragedy, Tony, Ramona and other library staff helped him recover, as he had helped the library over the years. Ramona has even served as a judge for his annual karate tournament.

"That's the fun thing about working at a branch," says Tony. You have a different relationship with your users. There's a lot of the 'Mayberry Syndrome' to the Branch Librarian—you are the very visible presence of the library in the community."

Other Branch Managers we met are also building relationships with local institutions.

Keisha Garnett, Branch Manager of the West Englewood Branch, notes that her immediate neighborhood has over 300 churches, important institutions in any community. She plans to visit each one, and has already begun to collaborate with one church group that brings members to the branch to do community and cultural research each week.

Teresa Madrigal of the newly reopened Toman Branch collaborates with the Principal and Local School Council of a new high school in the Little Village community. When the new school opened for the 2005-2006 school year, collections on curriculum topics were featured at the new branch library. The addition of two new community institutions was a cause for celebration in the largely Mexican neighborhood.

Collaboration, complementing each other's programming, not duplicating efforts and staying engaged with other local institutions amplifies the good work done in a community. As Rose Powers reminds us, "we're all in this for the same reason."

Culture Connections

CHAPTER 3

"AFTER 9/11, a lot of people assumed there was going to be trouble in this neighborhood." Back at Northtown, Rose Powers remembers a difficult day. "She considered getting permission to close the branch, as tension seemed to be rising during the day and people of Arab descent were under suspicion. But the strength of neighborhood networks made her reconsider, and she's glad she did. "All the years I've been here, with all the different groups that are fighting each other overseas, everybody seems to make an effort to get along around here. It's really very nice."

The West Ridge community finds strength in its diversity, and the Northtown Library has tried to celebrate the neighborhood's cultures in obvious ways, like growing its collections in languages other than English. But Rose is adamant that the library also reflect the unity of the community. All of her programs welcome the entire community.

The diversity of the local community does require Rose to keep learning and changing, however. After hearing from a community contact that the number of Bosnian refugees in the community was growing, she began to research the culture and is planning to expand Bosnian collection. Her contacts at the Chamber of Commerce are helping to develop outreach strategies to the library's new neighbors. "If you've got community leaders who are willing to work together and try, then you've really got something special," says Rose.

WORKING TOGETHER IN LITTLE VILLAGE

On the opposite side of the city from West Ridge lies the enormous community of Little Village, or, as neigh-

bors call it, La Villita. Stretching along the Chicago River all the way to the city limits, Little Village takes quite a while to traverse, even in a car. It is home to one of the city's fastest growing populations, mostly Mexican-American; it has one of the youngest populations in the city, with almost 60% below the age of 25. Little Village is a destination for people of Mexican heritage no matter where they live as they fill the 26th Street shopping district every weekend to buy the goods and foods they associate with their culture.

A few blocks south 26th Street on Pulaski Road is the Chicago Public Library's Toman Library. The Toman Branch building reopened in June, 2005, after a complete renovation. Although the original library opened in 1927 and is considered a historic building, it had outgrown itself as the number of people in the community grew. Toman is the only library in the community.

As a visitor approaches from 26th Street, she first sees the beautifully restored old building, with its brick and terra cotta façade and high windows. Then the new addition comes into view, with similar stone arches, a bright atrium and a welcoming sign in English and Spanish. The expansion created a library of over 15,000 square feet, with all the necessary technological upgrades needed in a modern library, but with the warmth and dignity of the old building. It is a truly spectacular place.

Teresa Madrigal is the Branch Manager of the Toman Library. She is eager to show off her new facility, as it was a long time coming. Because the reconstruction required the old library to be emptied, Little Village went without a public library for three years. Teresa, who had started at Toman as a children's librarian, spent those years at a nearby branch in the McKinley Park community across the river. Now that the new Toman has just opened, everything sparkles with potential for her.

RE-ENGAGING

Teresa is quick to point out that even though she has deep connections to the community, "the community has changed since the library closed." Because of the growth of the community, many people who now live there don't even remember the old library. "I am reintroducing myself," she says. And because she was born and raised in Mexico, she sees this process as one that has special requirements.

"The first day the library reopened, people were waiting at the door. In Mexico, families are not used to getting things for free—they asked 'what does it cost?'" Teresa introduced many first time library users to the concept of a free, public library—this beautiful building was theirs to use.

She is trying to design a broad array of programming that meets the needs of her community based on its culture. So she is starting adult book clubs and internet classes in English and Spanish. She is promoting E-mail use as an inexpensive way to communicate with relatives in Mexico, a service many patrons did not know existed. She also encourages folks to come to the library to read the Mexican papers to find out what's happening there. She is planning literacy and financial literacy programs as well.

All of the children's programming is also bi-lingual, and Teresa and her long-time Children's Librarian, Rosa Reyes-Sanchez, are trying to schedule children's events at the same time as adult events. "Moms can bring kids to story hour then go to their club or class, or work on the internet," she says. "I'd like to do family reading days as well." In a community filled with children, these are necessary accommodations.

Although there are many outlets for ESL classes in Little Village, Teresa would like to provide them anyway, as it will bring in more people who might not otherwise know about the library or how to use it. All of these are ways to bring the library back into the life of the community after its time away, she says. "They waited for three years. It was a long time without a library."

A PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Teresa feels a special dedication to the women of Little Village, mothers who struggle to keep their family together while making their way in a culture so different than the one in which they grew up. She tells of her arrival in Chicago. "I came here as an adult, and I already had a college degree. But I didn't know the language, so I felt like I was back in kindergarten."

She tells of the many ways in which she felt inadequate as she tried to learn the language and find a home. "The library should be that place for them," she says. "I want this to feel like the place where they can find strength." Teresa wants to use her

story and her accomplishments to show the women she encounters in the library that anything is possible. "I learned the language; I got an advanced degree. Here I am running this library, and I am just like them."

Teresa and her 11 staff are committed to making the new Toman a cultural celebration in Little Village. Although none of them are residents of the community, Teresa and Rosa are old-timers at Toman and know the community well. "What's special here is the people on the staff—come see us again in a year."

CULTURE REFLECTIONS

It may seem obvious that a library should reflect the cultures of the community around it, but often the way to accomplish that reflection is not all that obvious or easy. Librarians we talked to named a few of the extra efforts they have made.

Tony Powers echoed Teresa's experience as he talked about the mostly Polish immigrants that use the Austin Irving library. "The idea that the library is open to everyone amazes them. They ask 'how much?' And when you tell them it's free, their eyes light up." For Tony, this idea—the free public library—brings a sense of responsibility. "Think of it in the larger context. There are not many public buildings that you can go into, 65 hours a week, and you don't have to sign in—we're just here. Come on in. Nobody asks what you are doing there. There aren't many places like that. We have a very unique role to play."

At the Vodak Branch, Richard McLelland sees the work he does outside of the library as essential to his understanding of the "pulse of the community". That pulse then requires him to create ways to meet the information and learning needs of the Mexican community on the Southeast Side.

Keisha Garnett, the Branch Manager of the West Englewood Library, does programs on African American culture, carries an extensive collection of African American fiction, and connects with neighborhood activists that work on issues related to the community. "This is all a major consideration for me—how to best serve the African-American community," says Keisha.

Even as Rose Powers reminds us that folks of different cultures are all interested in the same things, how a library engages within diverse cultures depends on how well it understands that 'pulse of community.' To understand that cultural pulse, says Rose, "You have to get out the door."

Photo: Todd Patrick

For the Young People

CHAPTER 4

EVERYTHING is changing in West Englewood. "The Englewood community is undergoing a massive redevelopment project that will bring a sense of unity and wealth back to this once-prominent neighborhood," says Stephen Hunter of Rebirth of Englewood Community Development Corporation.

One of the first things a visitor notices driving east on 63rd Street is all the open space. Some blocks have only one or two remaining homes. Englewood has suffered from disinvestment and abandonment over time; now some parts of it appear cleared for redevelopment. In the midst of this scene sits the brand new West Englewood Library. "Since the public library is a place of educational empowerment, its role in the community will become even greater." Hunter calls the new library "a community pillar."

"A BETTER PLACE FOR THEM"

Keisha Garnett is the Branch Manager of West Englewood, and has been since the building opened in 2003. Prior to its construction, there was no library in West Englewood. The closest branches were a mile west or east. The decision to place a new branch in West Englewood was a conscious effort to spur redevelopment, says Keisha, by creating a community anchor.

"Since the library is new, the neighborhood had to be introduced to what a library is—especially the kids. But there was great excitement over the prospect of the opening before it opened. And now the community has fallen in love with the library."

Some long-time residents worry that the redevelopment efforts will leave them out of the picture as wealthier folks move into new housing. Rumors are rife, and since the library is seen as the neighborhood information source, Keisha finds herself putting out small brush fires of rumor. In order to do that, she has to keep in touch with local organizations like Rebirth of Englewood CDC and Neighborhood Housing Services that let her know what's going on.

Keisha points out that the long-time residents are almost all adults. Young people, she says, are very transitional. "We have a huge population of foster kids in this neighborhood, and they get moved around." Many live with extended family or relatives; all need to feel something like stability. "We try to make the library that place. It's a better place for them than the streets."

Last fall, Keisha noticed a group of kids at the internet stations every day. They were truants. Somehow, the library seemed a better place to go than school. "The police came and found them, and took them to school. But, they were drawn here by the internet, and to use the internet, they had to get library cards. So, now they come back and use the library."

SCHOOLS IN TRANSITION

It is no surprise that kids in West Englewood might skip school to go to the library. Both high schools and two grade schools in the branch's service area have been or are being closed and restructured under the Chicago Public Schools Renaissance 2010 initiative. Uncertainty about what will happen and who will be able to re-enroll surrounds this process, and Keisha has attended community meetings and Local School Council meetings to keep current with the plans.

Under Renaissance 2010, Lindbloom High School is about to re-open. This means a new faculty, curriculum and administration has been put in place, and now the students are about to return. Throughout the last year, West Englewood Library has been the site for planning meetings for the new Lindbloom. Keisha has stocked the books on summer reading list for freshmen, and many neighborhood youth have been in and out of the branch getting ready for school. "I've met often with the new principal there; he is really excited." They have made plans for cooperative activities for students and their parents or guardians and are exploring ways to work closely as the new school year gets underway.

Things aren't so hopeful at the other high school, Harper High. Harper has been under fire from parents for its failing school report card, and there is some discussion that it too might be closed. Keisha has also attended meetings of Harper parents. "There's a neighborhood suspicion regarding the ability of local kids to return to Harper. Folks are afraid," she says. "But it might be for the better—sometimes change hurts…"

DRAWING TEENS INTO THE LIBRARY

Any librarian will tell you it isn't always easy getting teens through the door. Keisha is no exception. She hopes to do outreach through the 300 local churches to reach their affiliated young people. "Summer is a hard time to get teens in, but we try."

Teens do approach her to volunteer at the library. They need to meet community service requirements at school, and often have waited until the last minute and want to do all 40 hours at once. "I tell them we are only open so long each day," she laughs. Approximately 15 young people have passed through The West Englewood Library this way. But a few of these desperate 'volunteers' have stayed on to become paid pages.

When she was assembling the library collection, Keisha focused her ordering on young people's fiction with African American themes. But when she analyzed circulation, she discovered that the real draw for teens were the self-help books. "That stuff flew off the shelves", she marveled. "But then it made sense. They are at that age where they feel insecure and they want to make themselves perfect. Books on body-building and how to apply make-up were what they were reading. So I ordered more of it."

Slowly but surely, adults in the community have volunteered to assist in programs for teens, like the Summer Reading Program. And more foster parents and grandparents are coming in to learn the internet with their kids. Keisha tells of a lady in a wheelchair who brings her two grandchildren in almost everyday. Both boys have learning disabilities, and their grandmother works with them on the internet, beaming when they do well.

Of course, the West Englewood Library also has adult patrons and provides many unique resources for them. But the needs of local youth are great, and Keisha connects with all levels of neighborhood organizations to figure out how to make the library a welcoming place in the midst of the upheaval of their lives. For her, it is all part of her mission: "My goal for the library is to get information into peoples' hands—however we need to do it."

PROGRAMMING BEYOND POLICY

Our conversations with Branch Managers were rich when it came to young people and schools.

Cooperation with local schools and programming for young people is a staple for all CPL branches. The Children's Librarians uniformly conduct story hours for many age groups. They visit all local schools, public and private. They organize the Summer Reading Program, in which kids win prizes for the number of books they read and report on at the library. They have to be arts and crafts specialists, dramatists and sometimes babysitters.

Within this rich foundation of programming for children and youth, the extra connections are those that stand out.

Ramona Thompson at Austin Irving Branch visits every classroom in every school in her service area. "The school librarians are my best community contacts. One of them actually dressed up in a costume to promote the Summer Reading Program," she says. She also points to the benefits for parents that her children's programming provides. "Some moms' whole social world is the library's pre-school story time. They form friendships there, and some of them have gone off and started a mom's group to support each other." Those story time presentations draw 75-90 parents with young kids every week.

In Little Village, the brand new high school is the result of a decade-long struggle by neighborhood groups to site a new school to relieve overcrowding as the number of high school age students skyrockets. Now, the same activist groups are pressuring the Chicago Park District to build a new park in the community. The Toman Branch community room is the site of all their meetings, and Teresa Madrigal attends them.

Everyone shared stories about youth volunteers. Some are 'mandatory volunteers'—assigned by the court to do community service to clear their record. Tony Powers says "One of our best pages came to us that way." Others come through the door to fulfill the community service requirements at school, "but we never turn them away," he says. At Toman, Teresa Madrigal has some teens that volunteer for the Summer Reading Program every year. So does Ramona Thompson at Austin Irving. "We'd never survive without our volunteers," she says. Giving young people a place to contribute and be employed benefits everyone, it seems.

Back at Northtown, Rose Powers worries about latch-key kids who wait for their parents at the library although she understands that the parents have no choice. "I'd never leave my kids alone and unattended in a public library," she says. "It's a public place and anyone can come in. We try to let parents know that we can't watch them."

Rose was the Children's Librarian at Northtown before becoming Branch Manager. Often, the Children's Librarian pops up in the Branch Manager as she speaks: "I can be pretty mean; I make them behave when they are here."

She is quick to show off the colorful murals painted on the walls of the auditorium. They were put there by the Teen Advisory Council that emerged from the Blue Skies project and has existed since 1993. This display of public art was designed and executed by the young people who saw a need for an attractive space in their library. "The murals were their idea, but we all benefit. People come in here and admire their work."

Later, her eyes light up with the fun involved in connecting kids and books as she tells a long, shaggy dog story about creating a lottery for kids to check out the 10 copies of the new Harry Potter book on the day it was received.

Fitting Together

CHAPTER 5

"SOMETIMES it depends on the community. You'd have to work harder to make it happen. But you still have to get out the door…" In a contemplative moment, Rose Powers wonders how things might have been different for her had the West Ridge community not been so rich in organizations.

In a community with lots of opportunities for connections, the role of the library is often to find ways to support work already undertaken. One such community—three distinct neighborhoods, really—is on Chicago's far Southeast Side. One community leader wistfully joked, "Just maybe there are too many organizations in this neighborhood." In the midst of this profusion of activity, the CPL's Vodak Branch and its Manager, Richard McLelland, have an unusual challenge.

IDENTIFYING LOCAL CONCERNS

The Vodak Branch opened in 1955, and expanded in 1993. Vodak is currently located on Ewing Avenue in the part of the Southeast Side known as East Side, once a mostly eastern European neighborhood that now is majority Latino. It also serves the historically Latino community of South Chicago, and the mill town neighborhood of South Deering. All of these communities have experienced the disinvestment caused by the loss of steel industry jobs, once the economic lifeblood of the region.

Because of the steel industry, the neighborhoods surrounding them have a history of being organized. Union activity touched most households. In the years since the closing of the mills, new community organizations have emerged to support jobless workers and advocate for redevelopment. In addition, the area has long suffered from a host of environmental challenges—

illegal landfills, hazardous waste sites and pollution of sensitive wetlands. Active environmental organizations address these local issues. Finally, local residents are deeply proud of the history of the community, its ethnic groups and its contributions to labor and industrial history. So several projects have been undertaken by local and institutional historians to document and teach this history.

Into this organizational mix, the Vodak Library is about to add a new anchor. Construction is almost complete on a brand new building, due to open at the end of 2005. At 15,000 sq. ft., the new building will be three times the size of the storefront Vodak now occupies. Accompanying this new space will be a larger staff, a better meeting room, a more expansive collection of materials and enhanced opportunities for community outreach. Richard McLelland welcomes this change, and has already begun to prepare for the new contributions the library can make.

He is working to expand the new library's collection, responding directly to the interests and needs expressed by the community. "In this new library, we are spending $400,000 on new materials, so we're focusing especially on materials that would support our outreach."

Small business development and environmental education and preservation are two hot topics in the community. They will be showcased in the expanded new collection.

McLelland would also like to expand Vodak's programming to better reach the Hispanic, predominantly Mexican, community in East Side and South Chicago. A Spanish-speaking book club will be actively pursued. Linking up with Olive-Harvey City College to offer GED and ESL classes is also of interest.

CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY ACTIVITY AND HISTORY

Carrying the community connections of the old library into the new building is critically important to Richard McLelland. The Vodak Branch has two staff members that have worked on the Southeast Side for over 30 years. People who enter the Vodak Branch, will most likely be greeted by their first name, by a staff member who probably knows their family and background. The Vodak Branch library staff and security guards often draw upon their expansive community knowledge to assist library patrons. The staff are not only equipped to share information about the social services and organizations that are available to Southeast residents but are often willing to personally arrange visits or meetings with these organizations.

Over the last three years, Richard McLelland has engaged in the community's organizational life, and sees the new facility as a chance to expand this engagement. McLelland is Vice President of the East Side Chamber of Commerce, and he is a member of the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce as well. He has used the library as a resource for both Chambers.

McLelland is also a member of the East Side Lions Club, and has used his connections there to bring benefits to the Vodak branch. This past year, the Lion's Club gave $150 to support the summer reading program for young people. John Clarke, President of the East Side Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club member, praises Richard McLelland's involvement in these organizations. "He hit the ground running," says Clarke, "and he has stayed involved and kept a high profile."

John Clarke also commented that because of Richard, the Chamber has become a conduit to promote library programs. They are also considering moving their meetings to the library, once the new building is opened.

McLelland also partners with local environmental organizations. Tom Shepard of the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF) recalls his early involvement with the group. "He was eager to become involved in community affairs, attending our banquets and participating in events and meetings. Now, we're close socially. We often have lunch together and discuss community matters." McLelland has done research for possible grant opportunities for SETF, and "always features books that SETF views as environmentally important," says Shepherd. "He does a fine job and is always cooperative with us."

Recognizing the importance of preserving and sharing the community's rich history, McLelland also works with Southeast Historical Society. The Southeast Historical Society and its extensive collection are currently housed in a room at the Calumet Park field house. Because the room has limited space, it is only open to the public one day of the week. McLelland hopes that the new library building will provide a more accessible venue for these valuable historical materials. In addition, McLelland also spreads the community's rich history through presentations to community groups and organizations. "We are trying to be an integral part of the community," he says. "So that whatever the community groups want, whether its environmental cleanup or local history, [we seek to have] not just an okay collection but a phenomenal collection in those areas."

All three community interests are included in a new initiative supported by the Chambers, SETF and the Historical Society. The last steel mill to close in the community, Acme Coke plant, is still intact. (Others have been torn down and sold for scrap, leaving large areas of undeveloped land and some dangerous brownfields in the community.) Several Southeast Side organizations are trying to preserve the steel equipment that is still functional at Acme to create a museum and learning center. They have undertaken a campaign to purchase the land and the equipment to provide the community with an educational resource focusing on the history of the steel mills. Richard McLelland hopes to involve the new Vodak Branch in this endeavor as well.

BEYOND THE WALLS

Richard McLelland believes that libraries must expand beyond their walls as libraries are currently in a competitive struggle. "Libraries face competition from book stores, peoples' schedules, the internet," he says. He likes to refer to an article by Sharon Campbell, Public Library Consultant, called "Librarianship as a Business".

In order to address its competition and to remain relevant and appealing in the community, the Vodak Branch works actively "beyond the walls" of the library. According to McLelland, it is important for the library to build partnerships within the East Side and across the neighborhoods' boundaries. "With groups like the East Side Chamber of Commerce, what we try to do is help them in their mission but also help the library."

While Branch Managers librarians have always been encouraged to attend community meetings. McClelland and his staff try to go one step further. His workday often begins and ends with community meetings, which he feels positions him as an equal partner in the community. Likewise, McLellands's staff has built strong relationships with the local schools and parks and often represent the library in other community meetings.

"You are out in the community just like they are, so you are an equal rather then just an attendee," he says **"We are able to solve a lot of problems locally because we have such strong networks."**

WORKING IN BUSY COMMUNITIES

Keisha Garnett speaks of West Englewood as a community rich in organizations. "Adults are the core of the community, and they are concerned about the community's future, especially with the redevelopment that's going on," she says. The library serves two functions in this environment. First, it is an information exchange. Local leaders visit the library to drop off information about meetings and opportunities and, at the same time, pick up information about library programs to make sure the word gets out. Ms. Jean Carter-Hill, Director of the organization *Imagine Englewood If*, puts it this way: "I'm a community person concerned about resources of the community and the library is an important resource. Keisha is very friendly and helpful too. She has agreed to be part of the new high school council, and she provides information for community efforts, like lead poisoning awareness."

A second function of the West Englewood Branch is to open its doors to community events, according to Keisha. Rebirth of Englewood, a Community Development Corporation across the street from the library, uses it for job training classes. Neighborhood Housing Services does housing workshops there. The new building is "like a handshake", she says, introducing the existing organizations to library services and to each other.

At the Toman Branch, Teresa Madrigal produces a handful of business cards provided by all of the representatives of organizations in Little Village that either use the library's meeting room or have expressed a desire to collaborate with the library. She is eager to involve Toman with as many organizations as she can. Existing or planned collaborations include after school programs, college preparedness classes, housing advocacy, and working for the new neighborhood park. "When we work together," she says, "We can accomplish much."

Rose Powers has to think a minute before she starts to list all the organizations that Northtown Branch is working with in some fashion, but soon a list starts to tumble out: the Indo-American Society, an Assyrian ESL Citizenship group, a Jewish social service agency, ORT. Finally, she invites a visitor into her office and prints out a long list of monthly activities at the branch. "This will give you an idea, but it's not everybody. This is a busy community."

Fueling the Economy

CHAPTER 6

MONEY SPENT locally creates jobs, provides an active streetscape, and creates investment in the common future by both consumers and business owners. But times are hard for local economies; big-box competition threatens some places and larger forces slow the flow of money locally in others.

Libraries are uniquely positioned to contribute to the local economy. They are local employers. More often than not, libraries bring foot traffic to the neighborhood commercial district. Library neighbors are merchants and service providers as well as residents. Not only does the library provide services to business owners, it can learn and benefit from them. The Branch Managers we met understood the necessity of engaging and contributing to the local economy.

CHAMBERS AND CHEESECAKE

Rose Powers is a leader of the business community in the Northtown area; her long-standing role as an officer in both the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club has kept her in contact with business owners, job providers, and purveyors. But she is quick to point out that the relationships she has built are completely reciprocal. It's never just about what a business can do for the library; the library must also support local businesses. "If I need something done, I'm more likely to take it to a business in the community."

Teresa Madrigal, Branch Manager of the Toman Library in Little Village has built relationships with business

owners through the La Villita Chamber of Commerce. In her community, the 26th St. business strip is the most thriving retail economy in Chicago with the exception of Michigan Avenue. 26th Street is the "Mexican Michigan Avenue", and its shop owners are logical partners for library programs. "When we all work together," she says, "we can accomplish much."

Richard McLelland of the Vodak Library is on the Board of the East Side Chamber of Commerce in his library community. He also regularly attends the small business sessions hosted by the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce to further his own knowledge and to actively promote the business resources available at the library. After Vodak moves into its new building, McLelland hopes to expand the library's business and management collection to better support the growing economy.

At the Austin Irving Branch, the interaction with a major community business has aided the library in several important ways. Eli's Cheesecake isn't just the most delicious treat Chicago has to offer. It is also a major employer and a destination of sorts for people from all over Chicago. Its factory and adjacent café are constantly busy hosting tours, as groups come to see the cheesecake being made and to get a chance to taste it. The owner of Eli's, Marc Shulman, is a very civic-minded business person, supplying fundraisers around the city with Eli's Cheesecake for raffle prizes or refreshments.

The Austin Irving Branch is a favored local connection for Marc Shulman's civic activity. He has made his café available for branch programming, especially during the time before the new building opened. He sponsored author talks there, providing cheesecake to attendees. He has also promoted programs at the branch to the young people who constantly pass through his facilities. "Mr. Shulman is a great friend of the library," says Ramona. In recognition of his involvement in promoting the programs of the branch, Ramona consults with him regarding their content, especially those programs related to teens. The relationship is one that each party has nurtured and the benefit to the library is on-going. And, of course, each one of the several hundred people who visited the new library building on its first day got a taste of Eli's Cheesecake.

CREATING A NEW BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

A different kind of contribution is taking place in West Englewood. The construction of the new branch was part of a larger vision for a redeveloped community that the City of Chicago is promoting. The library was the first of several new public spaces that are meant to anchor new business development on West 63rd Street. Its construction removed a building that housed a liquor store, an eyesore that kept foot traffic from the block. Keisha Garnett knows she will be called upon as a leader in the rebirth of West Englewood, and so she is involved in all aspects of the community now.

All of the branches also serve the local economy in a very basic way: they are local employers. Young people who volunteer for the Summer Reading Program are often hired as pages, opening the door to a library career. At Vodak and West Englewood, clerical employees are long-time residents that know their neighbors names and welcome them into the library as friends. These employees spend their money in the community, building other businesses. The importance of this contribution to community economies can't be overlooked.

McLelland points out that "Librarianship as a Business" by Sharon Campbell calls on librarians to learn agility and customer relations from businesses.

"The most influential people in your community may be the business or governmental leaders. How can you provide a unique service to them? We talk about partnerships frequently, but all too often we are actually talking about getting something from someone else rather than a true partnership. For example, 'Oh, yes, we partner with the local bank. They buy us bookmarks with the library name, address, phone number, web address, and hours listed on them. We let them put the bank's name on them too and we hand them out.' Or, 'We partner with the schools. The art students come to the library and put displays of their work in our window.' It is possible that neither of those situations are true partnerships as only one of the partners receives significant value or benefit from the relationship."

At Northtown, Austin Irving, Toman and Vodak, the partnerships with local businesses are truly reciprocal and constantly evolving. At West Englewood, the very existence of the new library is bringing back a business climate.

Community Space

CHAPTER 7

"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT to not feel our presence physically." Tony Powers refers to the Austin Irving Branch conversion from a small storefront to a two-story building which has raised the profile of the branch. People who may never have used the library before are drawn to it just because it became so visible.

Relocated to a stretch of Irving Park Road that already had heavy foot traffic, the new building invites passersby to step inside. The bright, airy lobby has a large bulletin board with community information and nearby collections of flyers and brochures advertise events for community organizations. "Some people just stop by to read that bulletin board, to learn what's happening, and don't ever come into the library itself," says Tony. But that is still an important role for the branch to play—provider of community information on that very basic level.

PHYSICAL SPACE AS EXPRESSION OF COMMUNITY PRIDE

Once someone comes through that door, the expansion of the community resource becomes clear. "It really is a point of pride for the community." Business people stop by because the library has wireless internet access, "and you don't have to buy a cup of coffee!" he laughs. Public computers, Ramona's storytime sessions and the free use of the meeting room all have changed the relationship between the community and the library. Tony and Ramona admit that their work is both easier and harder since the arrival of the new building. On one hand, folks are naturally drawn to the library in ways they never were at the old storefront. On the other hand, the increase in patrons, circulation and activity in the building can make each day exhausting. Tony is adamant, however. "I wouldn't have it any other way. I love this job."

In Little Village, the Toman Branch expansion is still so new, neighbors stop to stare at it. Others wander around looking for the entry. Teachers bring their classes for tours. Teresa Madrigal is happy to show the building off. "They waited for three years. It was a long time without a library."

The new Toman has a symbolic importance as well. Not unlike Austin Irving, it evokes a level of community pride. In a community where public resources are overburdened—only one large park serves all of Little Village, schools are overcrowded—the new library and new high school represent community accomplishment. Add to that the sense of cultural celebration of Mexican heritage found at Toman, and the symbolic importance of the library grows.

Finally, in a crowded, older community like Little Village, the mere fact of an addition to available public space provided breathing room. That the meeting room schedule filled up almost immediately is a testimony to this fact. There's now a much-needed large space for any community activity.

PHYSICAL SPACE AS REDEVELOPMENT SPARK

The West Englewood Branch didn't replace an older building; it is a completely new community asset. It is also the only piece of new construction in the area.

A number of redevelopment efforts are taking place in Englewood and West Englewood, but the addition of public investment can only aid in these efforts. Infrastructure improvements and new public buildings not only provide anchors, but they also provide hope. Keisha Garnett points out that the empty lot just east of the library is soon going to be developed as a Parent and Child Center of the Children's Home and Aid Society, providing day care and parenting services to residents of West Englewood. "People stop by all the time, asking when it will be open," she says. "When it opens, that will be great for the community. And I can't think of a better way for us to get to parents than with tons of them dropping their kids off next door every day."

"Any time a new library is built, things change," she says. And things are changing in Englewood. A new campus of Kennedy King College of the City Colleges of Chicago is also planned for the community. New housing and commercial development is being envisioned in a community planning process funded through the New Communities Program. All of these activities combine to inspire local residents.

Jean Carter-Hill describes why her organization is called *Imagine Englewood If*. ""We walked around to see what was going on, what was there and what needed to be done to make it a better place to live," said Jean. ""People just need to communicate, connect and collaborate. It is only then that they will feel differently towards each other and be able to transform the communities they call home."

The new library helps people feel differently. Jean Carter-Hill says she sees everybody there, all the time. Her only wish is that it was bigger.

PHYSICAL SPACE AS ANCHOR

Richard McLelland knows that when the new Vodak Branch opens, the meeting space will be used in hundreds of ways. He hopes the new building can provide space for the Southeast Historical Society's collection. He'll be able to improve the access he currently provides to other services, such as the Mobile Driver's License, Circuit Breaker applications, CTA/RTA passes, and the Cook County Assessors tax services. Vodak will be able to continue to allow the local hospitals to use the library to educate people and provide health screenings. Many things will change when those new doors open. "When a new library goes in, it generates an economic boom," he says. "It generates a lot of support for local business to improve how they look or to move into a neighborhood."

PEOPLE PLACES

Communities connect to their public spaces in real and symbolic ways, and libraries are centers for those connections. But buildings don't serve communities; people do. Rose Powers is an example of that truth.

She is a little defensive about her library's physical space. Two brand new library branches have been built in neighborhoods nearby, but Rose likes her building just fine. She likes the sightlines, the windowed office, the constant bustle of the room.

She does sigh with a bit of envy of the new buildings. "We don't have a parking lot. Lots of people won't use this space because we don't have parking." She points out that West Ridge is a walking neighborhood, however, and longtime users of the library don't seem to mind that much. As a public space for information exchange, the library is by definition an engaging place that brings together people.

Bridges and Webs

CHAPTER 8

A CONNECTOR IS a special kind of community leader who opens doors for other people. A connector is a person who is trusted, is influential, and has a wide circle of relationships. A connector is always developing other people's opportunities to contribute, connecting people to new possibilities. Connectors are very valuable people in any community's life.

All of the librarians interviewed spoke to the importance of making connections, both for the benefit of the library and for the benefit of the community. Here's a bit more of what they had to say.

"People have a deep sense of ownership of the library. Not long ago there was a library promotion, celebrating people who had had library cards for over 50 years. In order to use the library effectively, I think the patron has to have a certain amount of trust. We have a very special relationship with people because of that trust. And in order to keep relationships up, it's important to go outside of the library and participate in the community." (Tony Powers, Austin Irving Branch)

"I'm very excited [about the new library] and can't wait to get my new plans going. I want to go to meetings, to the churches. I want to tell everybody, especially the women, that this is a place they can make their own. Just wait. Come back in a year and see what we have done together!" (Teresa Madrigal, Toman Branch)

"I want to be a full member in the community. Joining an organization allows people to know you socially. Like in the Lions Club–these people are now my friends, but I also represent the library at the same time. So if we need money for the opening of the library to fund refreshments, I can ask the Lion's club, or the alderman. It's easier to ask." (Richard McLelland, Vodak Branch)

"I think every community deserves a library. They should be like Walgreens—put one on every corner. I really enjoy working for an organization that has such a commitment to communities. To work in the library and see the changes that we can make—when a person comes in and asks you how to use a computer, and six months later you see them checking their e-mail. It brightens my day. If you can go home at the end of the day knowing you made even one change, that makes it worth it. (Keisha Garnett, West Englewood Branch)

And to bring this story full circle, the last word goes to Rose Powers:

"You have to balance [being a community leader], but it's an important part of the job. A lot of librarians don't realize how important it is. They stay inside their building and check out books and buy books, but we are so much more than that now.

"If you sit in the library all day at your desk, you see some of the community changes coming through your door, but you don't see all of them. Here, you know what's happening and why it's happening. You get the inside scoop. You can adjust your services, your displays.

"[Connecting with community leaders] should almost be a requirement for new branch managers. You can give [managers] the tools, set up the guidelines about how to do it, you can give them an idea of the questions to ask—but until they actually start doing it, they don't know.

When I became Branch Manager, if all I had ever done was visit schools, what would I have done? Now, even with all this, I still find myself reading the neighborhood newspaper, looking for new streets to go down to find people that might not know we're here. So, you could [train managers], I suppose, in that you could tell them what we recommend that you do to get it started. But once it starts, then it snowballs."

Photo: Todd Patrick

Lessons Learned: "Good Things Happen Here"

ACROSS MOST or all of these stories common themes emerge, even as each one stands alone as a successful response to a particular community with particular circumstances.

Rather than simply lift up these themes as lessons learned, we decided to bring them to an expert for commentary. Successful branch libraries cannot exist without the support of city government and its library administration, so we turned to the Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, Mary Dempsey, to help us make the connections between success at the neighborhood level and support from the policies and priorities of political and administrative leadership.

What follows, then, are eight lessons and Mary Dempsey's exegesis of each.

1. Get outside the doors. Successful community/ library relationships are proactive.

Branch managers and staff that take an active role in the civic life of the community create the 'two-way street' that positions the library at the center of community. This activity outside the library should be encouraged at every level.

"CPL is really strong at doing this. Our folks realize that we could have the greatest program in the world, but if nobody knows about it or if it doesn't serve the needs of the people in our neighborhood, it's as if we never did it or as if it has no value," says Mary Dempsey. "We serve as 'value added' to a neighborhood when the community feels welcome in our doors and we feel welcome in their doors."

CPL hiring and promotion policies support this focus. "You can be the smartest person in the world, but if you don't like the public, don't come here." Engaged librarians become local leaders, says Dempsey.

"When I go out to a neighborhood meeting or I'm with friends, I have people come up and say to me 'I know so-and-so', their neighborhood librarian. That to me is just exceptional."

2. Find the leaders. A concerted effort to discover who's who in a community makes all the difference.

Reading local papers, asking long-time residents, attending civic events—all can be ways to find the people who are already at the center of community. Rose Powers show how this activity can benefit the library in ways that increase exponentially, as connections to community multiply.

"We encourage [CPL staff] to invite the local alderman, the local community leaders, the local natural leaders into the library—to be part of a planning committee, to see what's going on, to help hand out the prizes for the Summer reading program," says Mary Dempsey. "When I go to the annual budget hearings and the aldermen thank me for the programs at their library I think 'Don't thank me, thank the branch managers or children's librarians who brought them in.'"

3. Be creative about what the library can contribute. The obvious contributions aren't the only contributions.

Mary Dempsey points out that creative contribution to community is at the core of public library services. "[The people outside the doors] are the people who fund us. If it isn't useful to them, then we aren't doing our jobs. You have to build this idea with everybody–the library is an essential part of the life of the community."

"If you want to be seen as a creative community player, then you have to be willing to say "yes" and find a way to do it, if it is within your mission," she adds. One such "yes" moment was the CPL's creation of a Financial Literacy program in branches with large immigrant communities. "If Chicago truly wants to be a part of the global economy, then the Chicago Public Library has to be at the forefront of educating people about what it means to be a global citizen. We started doing financial literacy in immigrant communities. Then, the Federal Reserve Bank came to me and said 'Hey, we have this good idea about financial literacy" and I said, 'Well, we're already doing it. Want to get on board and help?'"

Now, the Smart Money Program is being copied by Federal Reserve Banks in other parts of the country.

4. Discover and contribute to the unique capacities and conditions of the community.

Cultural attributes, family requirements, the particular situations of neighborhood youth all provide opportunities to make the library indispensable. Much of the creative activity mentioned above can find its roots in these aspects of community.

Mary Dempsey agrees. "It's so important to respect people's cultures. If there are science experiment books in Polish, let's buy them…The strength of this city is its unique neighborhoods."

Having culturally sensitive staff is critical to this. "Our staff knows what is needed; we don't have to tell them. For some groups, the government is not the most welcoming thing in the world, so the more we can look and talk like the community, we obviously think it's a bonus. So we do a lot of 'growing our own'".

The City of Chicago offers a tuition reimbursement for those who'd like to get an MLS, but CPL administration is more proactive than simply offering tuition help. "Sometimes we're not so subtle. Sometimes we say 'You. You have a future here. You need to be part of this. You love this. You need to go on to school. We'll make sure you can go to school.'"

5. Support local businesses and institutions.

Set up reciprocal relationships with them, advertise your services to them, spend discretionary funds locally. Employ locally. All of these activities will rebound to the library's benefit.

Mary Dempsey picked up on the story of Marc Shulman, Eli's Cheesecake and the Austin Irving branch. The cheesecake at the branch opening has turned into cheesecake at all CPL opening ceremonies. "He's such a great supporter," she says. "And we're happy to support Chicago companies. We let kids know—this is a company from Chicago."

Larger corporate connections are welcome as well. Local libraries can be good placements for corporations. "We have the advantage of being everywhere. Some of the bigger businesses in town understand that. We're comfortable with that if they believe in what we do."

Another reciprocal relationship with mutual benefits has been the CPL's Great Kids Museum Passport program, funded by Kraft Foods. Chicago's major museums, although supported with public money, charge admissions that are prohibitive to some families. So, the Library has partnered with them to provide free passes that can be checked out of local branches for use at the museums. "It's a great reciprocal arrangement," says Dempsey. "We bring them neighborhoods that would never come through their doors otherwise, and they get to build a lifetime relationship with them." In return, CPL has another popular service that brings patrons through the doors.

Knowing the community and its business life is a key to library success in building relationships. "Every neighborhood in Chicago has its own little downtown. So we have to ask 'How do we make sure that what we do doesn't detract from that? How can we support it?'"

6. Make the library building a community center.

Public buildings are community assets in many ways beyond simply being meeting spaces. The more the public feels ownership, the more important the library becomes to community life.

This just makes good sense to Mary Dempsey. "Every one of the libraries has a community room that's flexibly laid out so it can be configured for anything you want—CAPS meetings, the book club, the stamp club, whatever. My feeling is, the more people say 'I'm going to the library for…', the more comfortable they will feel in the library and the more they will feel it is theirs. So anything that brings them in is OK with me."

Collaboration with the Chicago Botanic Garden brought gardening programs to branch libraries and had the secondary benefit of highlighting the new gardening books and periodical acquisitions. And all CPL branches are polling places. "We are happy to be a polling place…while you're in line waiting to vote, you can check out the books."

7. Create a community-minded culture among library staff and volunteers.

For all staff, learning names and attending events should be encouraged. "Lots of people who work in the library live in the communities they serve," says Mary Dempsey. "They already know the grocery guy, the hardware store owner."

But a City of Chicago policy also instills a sense of community. "We are required to live in the city of Chicago, and that ingrains the neighborhood focus in all our employees. They say 'These are our neighbors, these are our friends.'"

8. Investment in libraries can jump start community redevelopment efforts.

A new library in a neighborhood brings hope and attention to areas that may have experienced disinvestment. Planners and library administration need to work together for this to happen, and support for this collaboration has to come from the highest levels of government.

The Chicago Public Library has built 40 new branch buildings in the last 11 years. Many of these buildings have gone into areas previously avoided. Mary Dempsey laughs. "We go in first and then the police station comes. That sends a wonderful message: the first thing we are building for your neighborhood is a library."

Often, CPL has used its capital investments to buy sites that have been neighborhood eyesores. Liquor stores or abandoned buildings are torn down to be replaced with public libraries, changing the streetscape completely. For this strategy to be successful, library administration and planners have to tap into community knowledge and listen to community requests.

Sometimes, this gives CPL the chance to make more community changes. To illustrate, Mary Dempsey tells the story of the new Logan Square Branch, in a neighborhood that has been seen as dangerous but is now experiencing an upswing. At a function with Cardinal George of the Archdiocese of Chicago, she took the opportunity to lobby him not to close the local Catholic school. "'You've got to keep that school open,' I said. 'We just spent a million dollars on property there. Things are changing. New people are moving in, young families.' And they kept it open."

"We always have to talk to each other about this. We have an obligation to know what's going on in our neighborhoods," she says. That includes the parts of the city formerly made up of public housing, like the far south Atlgeld Gardens community. The previous branch library there had been in a building owned by the CHA. "When they started boarding up those buildings, I went to their next meeting because we have to know where they are headed. We have to work with the City's Planning Department and the CHA and ask "Where are you going next?'"

The West Englewood Branch is the perfect example of all of these factors coming together. "The City Planning Department said to go right there, because they are going to rebuild 63rd Street," says Dempsey. The CPL got permission to blockade a street so that the new day care center and the new West Englewood Branch could be connected by a garden, making it easier for parents to bring their kids to the library. The Library came first; the rest of the development is following.

Mary Dempsey is quick to point out that all of this development has to be done with real care. "We have to be good neighbors." Minimizing the impact on residents, working with community groups, replacing damaged property—all are essential to community relations. But the result is undeniable. "In the end, they have this beautiful new library."

When libraries engage their communities, the best characteristics of both library and community are mobilized. Individual gifts, local associations and institutions, the neighborhood culture, economy and physical environment all come together to create a unique neighborhood environment. With supportive leadership from City Hall and the central library administration, there is no limit to the role local branch libraries can play in building community.

Not all aspects of urban life are as straightforward. Cities are faced with tough choices in times of shrinking revenues and other pressures. As Mary Dempsey points out, Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley has some difficult issues on his plate. But his support for the library is unwavering, and each time Mary Dempsey accompanies the Mayor to the opening of a new branch, she reminds him why he is such a big fan of libraries. "'It's the library. Good things happen here.'"

Engaged Library Toolkit

THESE STORIES from the Chicago Public Library show that engaging the community is a two-way street with two-way benefits. The community improves as the library becomes an active and creative player. The library is strengthened as it becomes more relevant and integrated into community life.

Your stories in your communities may tell similar tales. By paying attention to this "line of business," public libraries can grasp opportunities to build new connections that matter and nurture those important relationships already in place. This section provides a collection of simple tools to use to discover and expand your efforts to become an Engaged Library, helping you:

- Identify and connect your library's assets to the community
- Assess and strengthen your library's connections with and use of community assets

RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS:

In many communities, voluntary networks of associations - large and small, formal and informal - are overlooked. Sustainable and effective libraries work to engage these associations.

Example: The Friends of the Library might be connected to block clubs, service clubs, faith-based groups, etc., to enhance community support of the library

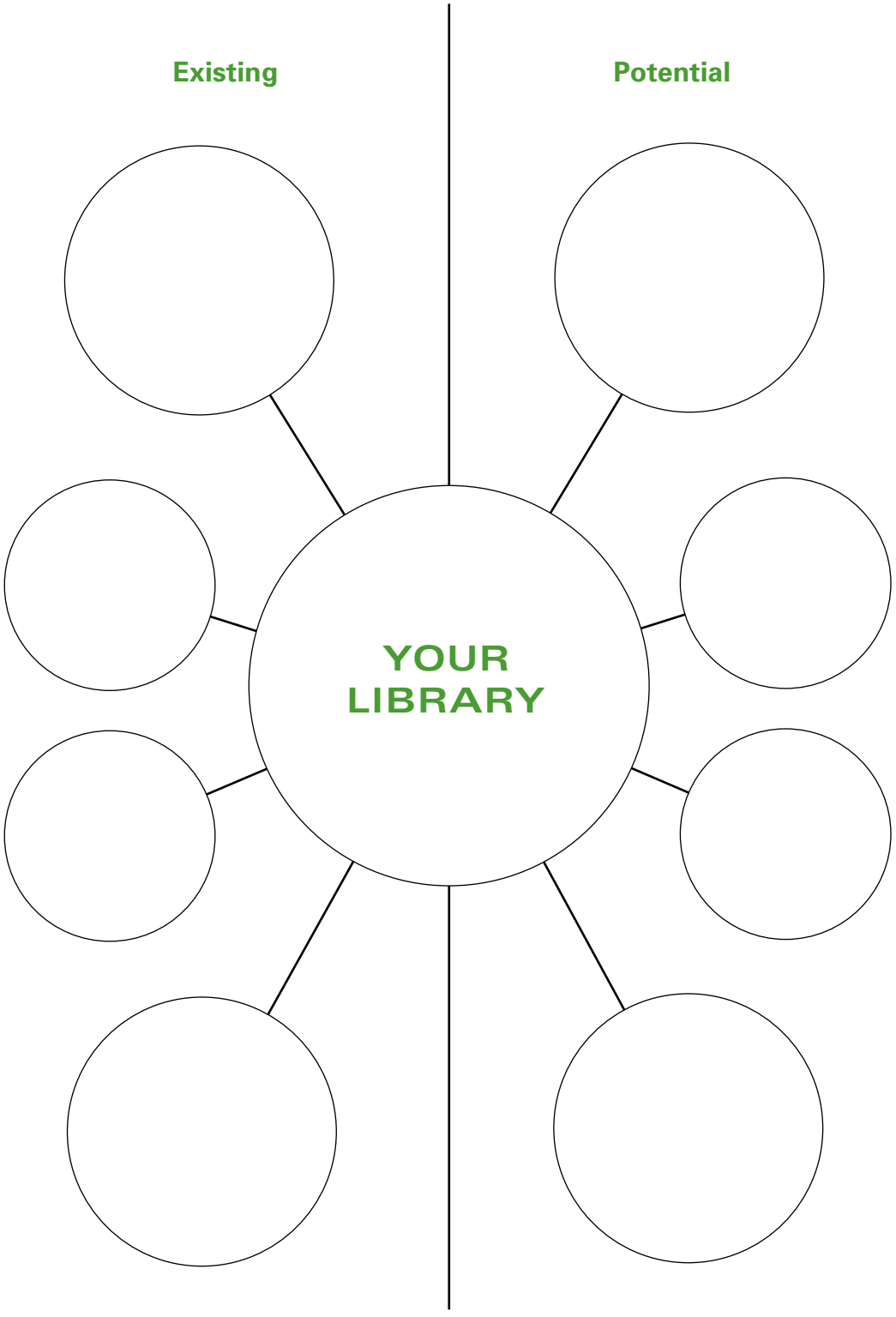
The questions below ask about your library's relationship with local associations.

* For a Master List of Associations, see pages 3 & 4 in the tools section.

Our library has relationships with:	**Not at All**		**Some**		**A Great Deal**
Faith-based groups Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Health groups Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
School groups Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Outdoor groups Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Block clubs Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Service clubs Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Youth groups Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Arts organizations Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Other Describe:	1	2	3	4	5

PARTNERSHIPS WITH ASSOCIATIONS

Use this tool to illustrate partnerships that your library already has with associations in your community and to think about new partnerships which might be useful to your library.



EXAMPLES OF ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. **Addiction Preventions and Recovery Groups**

   Drug/Ministry/Testimonial Group for Addicts
   Campaign for a Drug Free Neighborhood
   High School Substance Abuse Committee

2. **Advisory Community Support Groups (friends of…)**

   Friends of the Library
   Neighborhood Park Advisory Council
   Hospital Advisory Group

3. **Animal Care Groups**

   Cat Owner's Association
   Humane Society

4. **Anti-Crime Groups**

   Children's Safe Haven Neighborhood Group
   Police Neighborhood Watch
   Senior Safety Group

5. **Block Clubs**

   Condominium Owner's Association
   Building Council
   Tenant Club

6. **Business Organizations/Support Groups**

   Jaycees
   Local Chamber of Commerce
   Economic Development Council
   Local Restaurant Association

7. **Charitable Groups and Drives**

   Local Hospital Auxiliary
   Local United Way
   United Negro College Fund Drive

8. **Civic Event Groups**

   Local Parade Planning Committee
   Arts and Crafts Fair
   July 4th Carnival Committee
   Health Fair Committee

9. **Disability/Special Needs Groups**

   Special Olympics Planning Committee
   Local American Lung Association
   Local Americans with Disabilities Association
   Local Muscular Dystrophy Association

10. **Cultural Groups**

    Community Choir
    Drama Club
    Dance Organization
    High School Band

11. **Environmental Groups**

    Neighborhood Recycling Club
    Sierra Club
    Adopt-a-Stream
    Bike Path Committee
    Clean Air Committee
    Pollution Council
    Save the Park Committee

12. **Education Groups**

    Local School Council
    Local Book Clubs
    Parent Teacher Association
    Literacy Council
    Tutoring Groups

13. **Elderly Groups**

    Hospital Seniors Club
    Westside Seniors Club
    Church Seniors Club
    Senior Craft Club

14. **Family Support Groups**

    Teen Parent Organization
    Foster Parents' Support Group
    Parent Alliance Group

15. **Health Advocacy and Fitness Groups**

    Weight Watchers
    YMCA/YWCA Fitness Groups
    Neighborhood Health Council
    Traffic Safety Organization
    Child Injury Prevention Group
    Yoga Club
    Hospitals
    Health Care Corporations

16. **Heritage Groups**

    Black Empowerment Group
    Norwegian Society
    Neighborhood Historical Society
    African American Heritage Association

17. **Hobby and Collectors Group**

    Coin Collector Association
    Stamp Collector Association
    Arts and Crafts Club
    Garden Club of Neighbors
    Sewing Club
    Antique Collectors

ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS (CONT.)

18. Men's Groups

Fraternal Orders
Church Men's Organizations
Men's Sports Organizations
Fraternities

19. Mentoring Groups

After School Mentors
Peer Mentoring Groups
Church Mentoring Groups
Big Brothers, Big Sisters
Rights of Passage Organizations

20. Mutual Support Groups

La Leche League
Disease Support (cancer, etc.)
Parent-to-Parent Groups
Family-to-Family Groups

21. Neighborhood Improvement Groups

The Neighborhood Garden Club
Council of Block Clubs
Neighborhood Anti-Crime Council
Neighborhood Clean-up Campaign

22. Political Organizations

Democratic Club
Republican Club

23. Recreation Groups

Kite-Flying Club
Bowling League
Basketball Leagues
Body Builders Club
Little League

24. Religious Groups

Churches
Mosques
Synagogues
Men's Religious Groups
Women's Religious Groups
Youth Religious Groups

25. Service Club

Zonta
Optimist
Rotary Clubs
Lions Clubs
Kiwanis Clubs

26. Social Groups

Bingo Club
Card Playing Club
Social Activity Club
Dance Clubs

27. Social/Cause/Advocacy/Issue Groups

Get Out the Vote Council
Peace Club
Hunger Organizations
Vigil Against Violence
Community Action Council
Social Outreach Ministry
Soup Kitchen Group

28. Union Groups

Industrial (UAW)
Crafts Unions (Plumbing Council)

29. Veteran's Groups

Veterans of Foreign Wars
Women's Veterans Organizations

30. Women's Group

Sororal Organizations
Women's Sports Groups
Women's Auxiliary
Mother's Board
Easter Star

31. Youth Groups

After School Group
4-H
Girl and Boy Scouts
Junior Achievement
Campfire Girls

RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Every community has an array of local public, private and non-profit institutions. Each of these institutions has resources – such as personnel, space, expertise, equipment, and economic power – that can be contributed to your library.

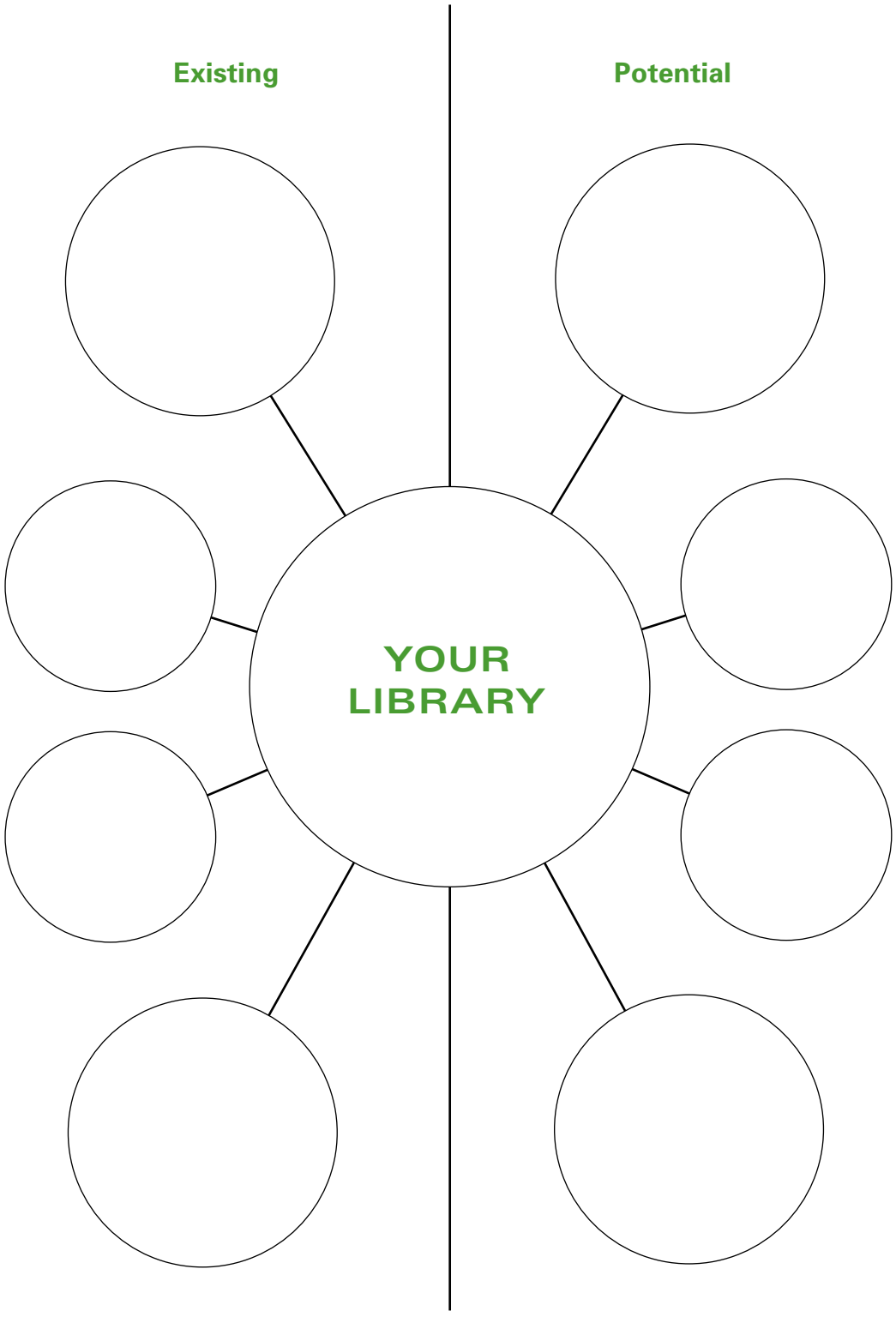
Example: In Chicago, the Austin Irving Branch has benefited from its relationship with Eli's Cheesecake and their generosity in supplying delicious cheesecakes for the library's special events.

The questions below ask about your library's relationship with local institutions.

Our library has relationships with:	**Not at All**		**Some**		**A Great Deal**
Schools Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Hospitals Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Police Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Service Agencies Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Other Non-profits Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Business Describe:	1	2	3	4	5
Other Describe:	1	2	3	4	5

PARTNERSHIPS WITH INSTITUTIONS

Use this tool to illustrate partnerships that your library already has with institutions in your community and to think about new partnerships which might be useful to your library.



A SAMPLE COMMUNITY ASSET MAP

This is a sample community asset map. Use the next page to document the assets of the local community surrounding your library.

Associations

Animal Care Groups
Anti Crime Groups
Block Clubs
Business Organizations
Charitable Groups
Civic Events Groups
Cultural Groups
Disability/Special Needs Groups
Education Groups
Elderly Groups
Enviromental Groups
Family Support Groups
Health Advocacy and Fitness Groups
Heritage Groups
Hobby and Collectors Groups
Men's groups
Mentoring Groups
Mutual Support Groups
Neighborhood Improvement Groups
Political Organizations
Recreation Groups
Religious Groups
Service Clubs
Social Groups
Union Groups
Veteran's Groups
Women's Groups
Youth groups

Individuals

Gifts, Skills, Capacities, Knowledge and Traits of:
Youth
Older Adults
Artists
Welfare Recipients
People with Disabilities
Students
Parents
Entrepreneurs
Activists
Veterans
Ex-offenders

Physical Space

Gardens
Parks
Playgrounds
Parking Lots
Bike Paths
Walking Paths
Forest / Forest Preserves
Picnic Areas
Campsites
Fishing Spots
Duck Ponds
Zoos
Wildlife Center
Natural Habitats - costal, marine, amphibian
Bird Watching Sites
Star Gazing Sites
Housing
Vacant Land and Buildings
Transit Stops and Facilities
Streets

Institutions

Schools
Universities
Community Colleges
Police Departments
Hospitals
Libraries
Social Service Agencies
Non Profits
Museums
Fire Departments
Media
Foundations

Stories

Of background and personal history
Of what you like to do and contribute
Of realizing and engaging skills and capacities
Of successful community development
Of economic growth
Of addressing racism
Of including those who are marginalized
Of recognizing the value of everyone
Of a time when you or your group felt appreciated and valued
Of a time the community was at its best

Local Economy

For-Profit Businesses
Consumer Expenditures
Merchants
Chamber of Commerce
Business Associations
Banks
Credit Unions
Foundations
Institutional - Purchasing Power and Personnel
Barter and Exchange
CDCs
Corporations and Branches

YOUR COMMUNITY ASSET MAP

Please fill in the types of assets that can be found in the community surrounding your library. How can these assets strengthen your library?

Associations

Individuals

Physical Space

Institutions

Stories

Local Economy

A WINDOW INTO MY LIBRARY

Review the types of assets that can be found within a library.

Use the next page to document your library's assets.

Personnel

Expertise In/Outside of Job; Ability to Teach:
Art
Music
Athletics

Individual Abilities:
Finances
Community History Writers
Health Care

Individual Traits:
Ideas
Energy
Enthusiasm

Technical Training:
Computers
Communications
Investigation and Research

Networks of Connections

Knowledge of Community

Leadership Development

Constituents

Individual Abilities and Interests

Individual Traits:
Ideas, Energy, Idealism

Linkages to Community

Collective Abilities and Interests

Space and Facilities

Meeting Rooms

Break Rooms or Kitchen

Glass Display Cases

Computer Rooms

Drinking Fountains

Gardens

Bulletin Boards

Lobbies

Parking Lots

Bathrooms

Expertise

Classes:
GED, Literacy, Language

Education Workshops:
Crime Prevention
Computer Literacy
Healthy Eating
Storytelling
Leadership Skills

Knowledge of Community

Education and Training Courses

Networks of Connections

Private Institutions

Public Institutions

Associations

Individuals

Materials and Equipment

Books, Magazines, and Newspapers

Computers and Software

Scanner

Desks, Chairs, and Other Furniture

Fax and Copier

Digital Camera

Telephones for Hearing Impaired

Artwork

Literacy and GED Materials

Community History Files

Information on Community Organizations

Social Service Resources

Economic Power

Job Training

Sponsor Fundraisers

Hire Local People

Assist in Writing and Submitting Grants for Community Projects

Purchasing Power

Power to Generate and Receive Special Funds Through Bond Issues, Government, and Foundations

INVENTORY YOUR LIBRARY'S ASSETS

Your Library is filled with people, knowledge, and materials that should be recognized and shared.

- Identify your library's assets
- Document these assets
- List the ways in which these assets can be shared with the surrounding community

A WINDOW INTO MY LIBRARY

Personnel

Space and Facilities

Materials and Equipment

Expertise

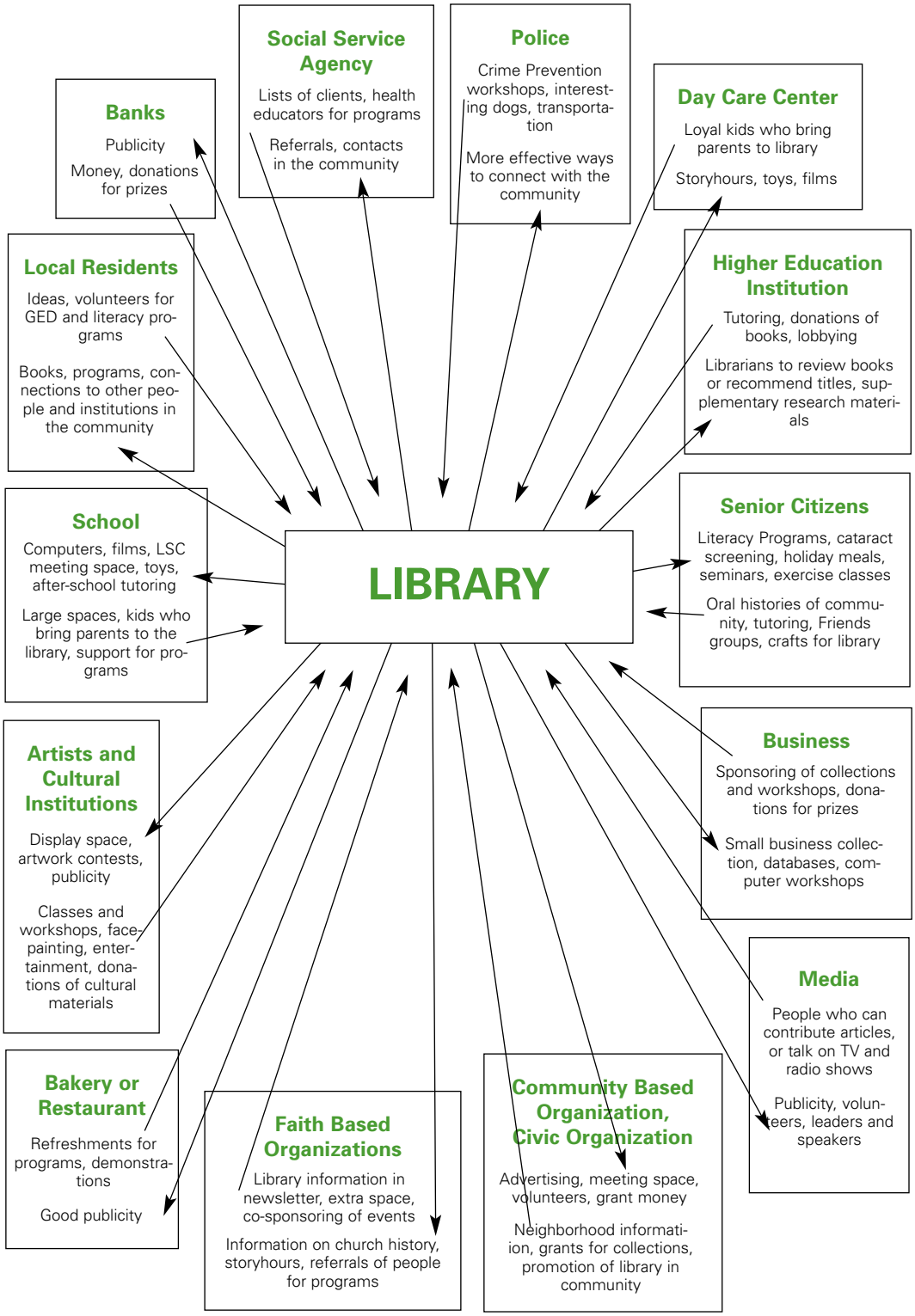
Economic Power

Constituents

Networks of Connections

THE ENGAGED LIBRARY

The engaged library builds mutually beneficial relationships



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