

2020



URBAN  
LIBRARIES  
COUNCIL

# INNOVATIONS

**SUBMISSION CATEGORIES**

SUBMISSIONS OPEN SEPT. 1-OCT. 1  
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# 2020 INNOVATIONS

URBAN  
LIBRARIES  
COUNCIL

The annual Innovations Initiative celebrates and showcases the transformational leadership of ULC libraries in addressing race and social equity in our communities, furthering education for people of all ages, building digital equity for tomorrow's workforce and enhancing civic engagement for a strong democracy.

Entries will be accepted from **September 1-October 1**. Approved submissions will be posted **live to the ULC website within a week** of their submission.

This document provides an overview of the 2020 Innovations submission categories. An independent panel of judges will select **Top Innovator** and **Honorable Mention** award winners in each category, and winners will be announced during a virtual event this fall.

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[CLICK HERE TO PREVIEW THE 2020 INNOVATIONS SUBMISSION FORM](#)

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# CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Innovations that help residents address public concerns, understand community issues and exercise their civil rights and liberties, including:

- Census 2020 instruction, promotion and outreach
- Voter registration, engagement and polling safety/accessibility
- Tele-town halls and virtual community forums
- New citizen education and services

**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*



## 2019 TOP INNOVATOR

“Know Your Vote T.O.”  
Toronto Public Library, Ontario

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/know-your-vote-t-o>



## 2019 HONORABLE MENTION

“Youth Candidate Forum”  
San Diego Public Library, Calif.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/youth-candidate-forum>



# COMMUNICATING THE LIBRARY'S VALUE

Innovations that raise the profile and visibility of the library's services, resources and community connections, including:

- PSA campaigns promoting library resources and services
- PR/media campaigns to reposition the library's community role
- Branding updates and extensions, including co-branded partnerships
- Using data to measure and demonstrate the library's impact

**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*



## 2019 TOP INNOVATOR

“Co-Branding Library Cards to Increase Memberships”  
San José Public Library, Calif.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/co-branding-library-cards-to-increase-memberships-2>



## 2019 HONORABLE MENTION

“Riversides: The Capital City Record”  
Edmonton Public Library, Alberta

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/riversides-the-capital-city-record>



## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Innovations that create more enjoyable, valuable or efficient experiences for customers both online and at library branches, including:

- Transitioning in-person programming to virtual formats
- Redesigning the library's website to highlight COVID-19 resources
- Building virtual community spaces
- Curbside/front-door/drive-thru services and new spaces for patrons

**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*



### **2019 TOP INNOVATOR**

"Making Artificial Intelligence Approachable"  
Frisco Public Library, Texas

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/making-artificial-intelligence-approachable>



### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION**

"Curated Museum Pass Messenger Bags"  
Chesterfield County Public Library, Va.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/curated-museum-pass-messenger-bags>



# DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Innovations aimed at closing the digital divide and equipping all residents with the devices, skills, support and internet access needed to achieve 21st-century success, including:

- Partnering with community leaders to ensure public access to broadband internet, digital devices (e.g., Wi-Fi hotspots, technology kits) and guidance (e.g., tech hotlines)
- Providing advanced digital skills training to support workforce development and careers
- Artificial intelligence and algorithmic literacy education
- Programs to build staff data fluency and confidence

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**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*

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## 2019 TOP INNOVATOR

“Tech Navigators: Experts? No. Explorers? Yes!”  
Greensboro Public Library, N.C.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/tech-navigators-experts-no-explorers-yes>



## 2018 TOP INNOVATOR

“Offering Express eBooks”  
Ottawa Public Library, Ontario

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/offering-express-ebooks>



## EDUCATION: ADULTS

Innovations that help adults advance personal and family learning goals and develop literacies of all kinds, including:

- Programs and services for job readiness, GED prep and “adulting”
- Education partnerships
- Reading, digital, financial and other literacies
- Adult STEM education

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**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*

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### **2019 TOP INNOVATOR**

“Welding Class”

Austin Public Library, Texas

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/welding-class>



### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION**

“Creative Aging Program”

Cambridge Public Library, Mass.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/creative-aging-program>



## EDUCATION: BIRTH THRU TEENS

Innovations that help young learners, their parents and their teachers overcome distance learning challenges to engage in robust learning experiences, including:

- Virtual STEM, early literacy and social programming for youth and parents
- Webinars and one-on-one digital support for educators
- Partnerships to increase student access to digital tools and library resources
- Online summer learning programs

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**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*

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### **2019 TOP INNOVATOR**

“Robotics in Libraries”  
Palo Alto City Library, Calif.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/robotics-in-libraries>



### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION**

“Little President Portraits for Black History Month”  
Skokie Public Library, Ill.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/little-president-portraits-for-black-history-month>





# ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE & STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Innovations that utilize fresh approaches to library staff roles and team structures to enhance systemwide impact for team members working from home as well as on-site, including:

- COVID-19 staff working groups
- Redeploying staff and repurposing library spaces to support disaster relief
- Pandemic response plan development and implementation
- Virtual staff meetings, town halls and social activities

**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*



## 2019 TOP INNOVATOR

“Entrepreneur Engagement Group”  
Baltimore County Public Library, Md.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/entrepreneur-engagement-group>



## 2019 HONORABLE MENTION

“A New Era in Staff Communication”  
Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/a-new-era-in-staff-communication>



# RACE AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Innovations that intentionally address structural racism and social divides to foster more just, inclusive and equitable communities, including:

- Programs and messaging designed to directly support vulnerable populations who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
- Building staff capacity to understand and address issues of race and racism
- Increasing community access to anti-racism tools and learning materials
- Targeted services/programming for immigrants, justice-involved residents, people of color, LGBTQIA individuals

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**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*

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**2019 TOP INNOVATOR**

“Women Innovators Fellowship”  
Do Space, Neb.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/women-innovators-fellowship>



**2019 HONORABLE MENTION**

“My Life Experience Mobile Empathy Lab”  
Richland Library, S.C.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/my-life-experience-mobile-empathy-lab>



## WELLNESS, SAFETY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Innovations that help library staff and patrons make healthy choices, keep active, safely engage with library resources and maintain mental wellness, including:

- Repurposing library spaces and building partnerships to collect and distribute meals, PPE equipment and other emergency supplies
- Facility enhancements to ensure social distancing and materials safety
- Communicating the library's commitment to customer/patron safety
- Messaging, programs and direct outreach to support community and staff mental health

**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*



### 2019 TOP INNOVATOR

“Lending Mindfulness: A Mental Health App Pilot”  
Santa Clara County Library District, Calif.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/lending-mindfulness-a-mental-health-app-pilot>



### 2019 HONORABLE MENTION

“Downtown Ambassador Program”  
Cedar Rapids Public Library, Iowa

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/downtown-ambassador-program>



## WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Innovations that help individuals and the local business ecosystem pivot to bring their work online, advance innovation and entrepreneurship, access relief funding and overcome employment barriers, including:

- Resources to help professionals navigate relief funding sources
- Targeted services and support for displaced workers and job seekers
- Virtual skill-building programming for entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Online professional certification programs

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**NEED INSPIRATION?** *Check out these winning entries from past years.*

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### **2019 TOP INNOVATOR**

“Supporting Wonder: AI & Economic Development”  
Roanoke County Public Library, Va.

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/supporting-wonder-ai-economic-development>



### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION**

“New ‘Economic Success Team’ Service Model Excels”  
Toledo Lucas County Public Library, Ohio

<https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/new-economic-success-team-service-model-excels>

