



URBAN  
LIBRARIES  
COUNCIL

2023

INNOVATIONS

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ULC's Innovations initiative was launched in 2010 to recognize cutting-edge programs and strategies. As our world changes, libraries continue to creatively adapt and advance in response to challenges. The winners of this year's Innovations initiative are true trailblazers in meaningful, equitable programming. I am proud to recognize these 16 libraries from the U.S. and Canada for their incredible work advancing equity, education and democracy for all members of their communities.

This year's Top Innovators and Honorable Mention award winners were selected based on the inventiveness of the program or service, outcomes achieved and potential for other libraries to adopt and adapt the innovation. With this Innovations cycle, the ULC website now features more than 2,700 leading practices that reflect library missions, strategies, achievements and community contributions — an extensive archive of industry-leading programming.

Congratulations to all ULC member libraries for the exceptional efforts you put into serving your communities. You play a vital role in strengthening our communities and bringing positive changes in people's lives.

Brooks Rainwater  
ULC President & CEO

## 2023 INNOVATIONS WINNERS

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## Advocacy & Awareness



## Top Innovator

### Louisville Free Public Library

#### "Mobile Newsrooms in Libraries"

Louisville Free Public Library partnered with the state’s largest daily newspaper, The Courier-Journal, to host mobile newsrooms at 5 libraries located in diverse neighborhoods across the city. For one month, a small team of journalists worked out of a library — listening to residents, writing stories, and presenting programs — before moving to another library and neighborhood. The goals of the project were to not only improve positive coverage of the city’s many diverse neighborhoods but to also foster greater civic engagement by amplifying the voices within these communities.

As part of the Mobile Newsroom, libraries hosted a “Meet the Editors” night, where residents could talk directly to the paper’s editors about their community. In addition, the opinion editor held a 1-hour class during the month on how to submit an op-ed. Lastly, library and CJ staff hosted four Public School Board Candidate Forums ahead of the November elections.

Our libraries serve as community conveners - providing safe spaces for the exchange of ideas and information. By having reporters “embedded” in libraries, we helped connect reporters directly to the people in those underrepresented communities. The project resulted in more than 40 positive news stories. The candidate forums brought hundreds of citizens into libraries to ask questions and engage in the democratic process. The op-ed sessions taught residents how to better make their voices heard using the free press.

## Op-Eds on Tour

is coming to an LFPL branch near you in 2022!

### How to Submit a Guest Column to the Courier Journal

Ever wonder how the *Courier Journal* chooses which letters to the editor, guest columns, and op-eds get published? Ever wanted to be an opinion contributor but weren't sure where to start? In these free, one-hour workshops, **Bonnie Jean Feldkamp**, the *Courier Journal's* new opinion editor, will show you how to submit a guest column or op-ed for consideration, walk you through what she looks for, and



Presented by Opinion Editor

## Advocacy & Awareness



## Honorable Mention

### Alameda County Library

#### "Every Month is Pride Month"

In response to a Proud Boys attack on a Drag Storytime at San Lorenzo Library, Alameda County Library launched "Every Month is Pride Month," a year of drag storytimes, and other highly visible LGBTQIA+ programming. During a Pride Month Drag Storytime, a group of Proud Boys stormed San Lorenzo Library. They disrupted the event and shouted hateful slurs at the performer, staff and attendees. The incident left everyone questioning how to move forward.

With the support of Alameda County Supervisor Dave Brown, we doubled down on our vision of Kind, Connected Humans and created a year of LGBTQIA+ programming, proclaiming Every Month is Pride Month. EMPM provided a year of programming supporting our LGBTQIA+ community including presentations by queer authors, filmmakers, and local Youth Poet Laureates; Drag Storytime; LGBTQIA+ crafts; and Name and Gender Marker Change Clinics.

Since starting EMPM, we've seen a large, diverse community of members attend these programs, often wearing visible signs of support. We've developed new partnerships with local LGBTQIA+ organizations, poets, and performers including a new partnership with Drag Story Hour. Lastly, the most impacted staff are energized to expand EMPM countywide. We've taken a hateful act and transformed it into kindness, connection and community pride.

Anti-Racism, Digital Equity and Inclusion

Top Innovator

Las Vegas-Clark County Library District

"Cell Phone Lending Program"

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District has taken this approach to technology outreach a step further with a program for our most vulnerable residents. In April 2022, we launched a Cell Phone Lending Program, which provided 435 smartphones to low-income residents, and adults and teens experiencing homelessness.

Those experiencing homelessness use mobile devices as a lifeline — a primary means of staying connected to friends, families, and essential services. The Cell Phone Lending Program puts internet connectivity into the hands of 435 at-risk adults and teens. Phones pre-loaded with contacts for social and employment services, community & library educational resources.

For this program, the Library District partnered with NV Homeless Alliance, NV Partnership for Homeless Youth and Premier Wireless. Funding was sourced through a \$200K Federal LTSA ARP Act grant via IMLS & NV State Library, plus \$20K ALA COVID Library Relief Fund grant.

Pre-screened clients attended an event with one-on-one tutorials, a vendor fair with social service providers, library card sign-ups, immunizations and mobile shower truck. After 18 months, clients can keep their phone and number, and can continue service at their own expense.



## Anti-Racism, Digital Equity and Inclusion



## Honorable Mention

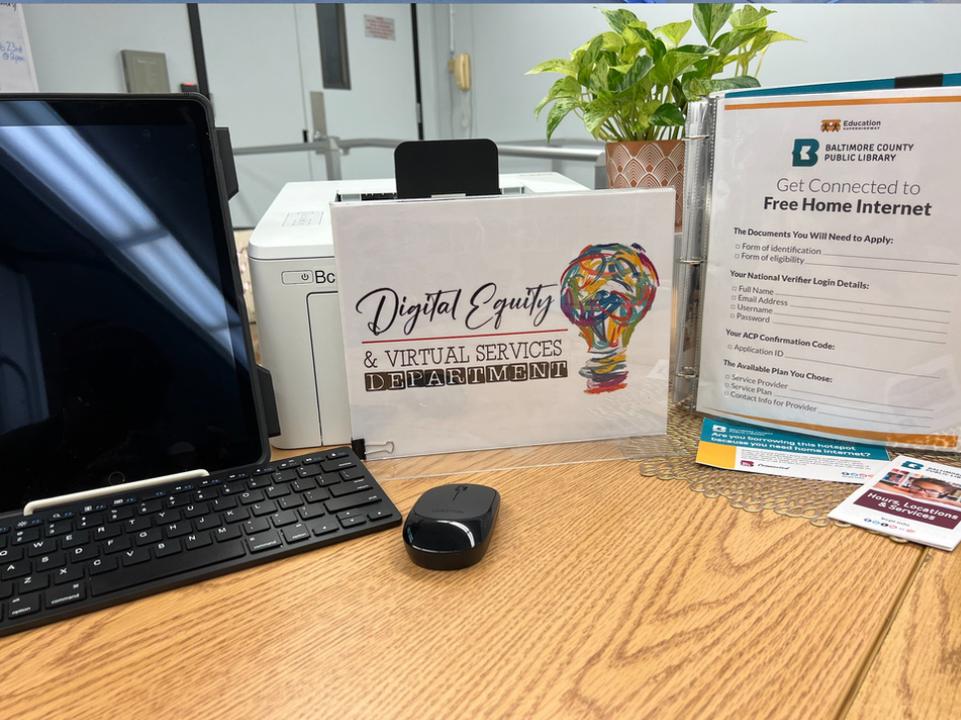
### Baltimore County Public Library

#### "ACP Adoption Events and Kits"

To help close the digital inclusion gap, Baltimore County Public Library developed a program to train staff on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) process. We are including handouts in all our lendable hotspots and Chromebooks directing customers to a trained enrollment specialist in order to get the word out

The library has developed an extensive internal training program for staff, as well as three primary avenues for customers to work with a staff member to sign up for ACP. Additionally, we have created two kits for our staff to borrow that contain four iPads, wireless keyboards, wireless mice, a hotspot, a wireless printer, two mobile phones and a notebook containing resources for customers who are signing up. This kit can be borrowed so staff members can help customers get approved for the ACP during outreach events.

Since we have started promoting the Affordable Connectivity Program at Baltimore County Public Library, enrollments in Baltimore County have increased by 7,000 households. Baltimore County currently has approximately 1/3 of total households eligible for ACP enrolled in the program. We are continuing to offer training to staff at additional branches that may have programs with New American communities, issues with affordability and other events that specifically target communities with connectivity needs.



## Data & Performance Management

## Top Innovator

### Dallas Public Library

#### "Data-Driven Support for Equity in Budgets"

During the pandemic, library hours were cut drastically. When the Dallas Public Library requested a budget enhancement to reinstate additional hours at some locations, we utilized a scoring approach to select branch locations with the greatest needs that could be met by library services. There would not be enough funding to restore hours at every location, so the Library wanted to ensure locations with the most potential to impact residents are opened first.

DPL used the Equity Impact Assessment tool developed by Dallas's Office of Equity & Inclusion as a starting point. The assessment ranked the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on zipcodes and gave each a score. The Library created its own scoring system that also introduced demographics that directly correspond to marquee library services: graduation rate, low English language proficiency, and Internet connectivity rates. This score prioritized areas that would benefit directly from library services in measurable ways.

DPL not only gained support for opening 9 locations requested initially but also received an additional \$924k to open 6 more locations. Arguing for library openings based on a well-defined data-driven equity lens allowed DPL to retain support from Council Members who would not see additional hours in their district. Using a needs-driven approach for selecting locations also provided an excellent opportunity for DPL to reiterate its economic and quality of life value to residents and council members alike.



# Data & Performance Management

# Honorable Mention

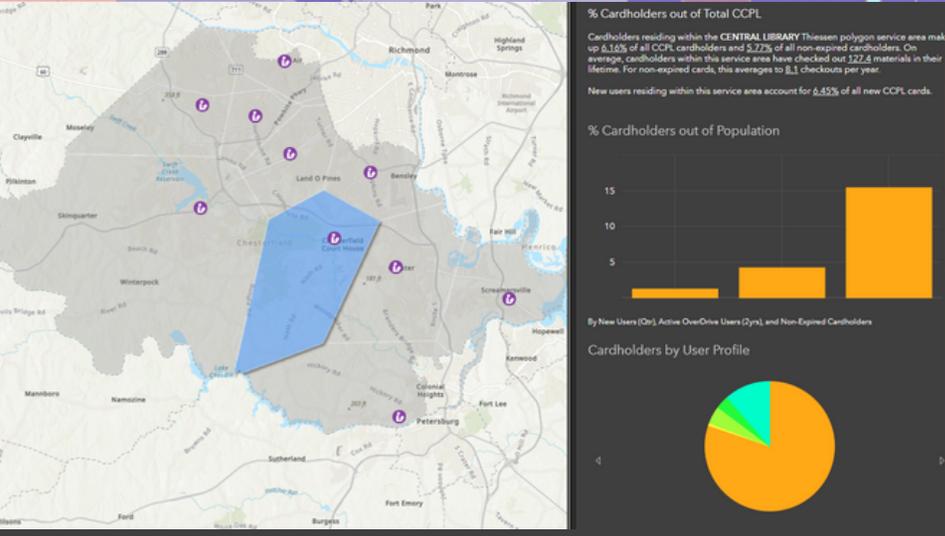
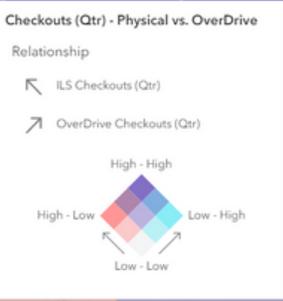
## Chesterfield County Public Library

### "Visual Storytelling Through GIS – Who Do We Serve?"

Using GIS analytics, Chesterfield County Public Library created a tool to tailor outreach activities and services in areas with relatively low cardholders per population. Using demographics at a parcel level, this community-focused approach allows for micro-targeting, with quarterly updates providing a powerful tool for measuring and optimizing sign-ups and outreach impact.

Previous evaluations of who CCPL actively serves in the population were missing the crucial aspect of location. Managers had no way of geographically identifying underserved pockets within their communities or determining where to target outreach. CCPL's web mapping app visually narrates who lives and uses library services within branch service areas or grouped parcels. Staff can analyze cardholder data alongside demographics and forecasted population growth to identify areas with expired cards or low sign-ups, or areas with barriers to access. Cardholder information like user type, checkouts and OverDrive usage. Demographics like income, race, age, and internet access can also be filtered on.

CCPL's mapping tool is helping design and improve outreach initiatives, allowing managers to identify vulnerabilities, disparities, and opportunities for action unique to their branch. From a broader perspective, the tool assists with system-wide planning and decision-making for equitable resource allocation across all CCPL branches.



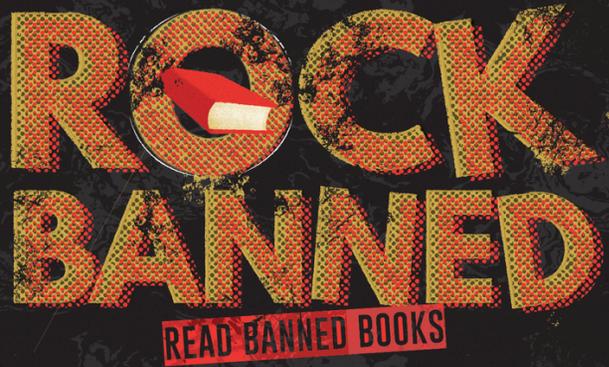
## Computer & Internet Access

80.1% of households residing within the **MEADOWDALE LIBRARY** service area own a computer. The market potential index (MPI)\* for this is 99.

72.7% of the population within this service area have internet access at home. The MPI for this is 100. 70% have broadband / high speed internet connection. The MPI for this is 100.

\*The Esri Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the relative likelihood of the adults or

## Democracy



**ROCK BANNED**  
READ BANNED BOOKS

Prince George's County  
Memorial Library System

## Top Innovator

### Prince George's County Memorial Library System

#### "'Rock Banned' Intellectual Freedom Campaign"

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System Communication and Outreach Division developed a public awareness campaign called "Rock Banned" to inform customers about intellectual freedom and draw attention to the increase in book challenges nationally. The campaign included digital content, an advocacy call to action and keynote event with Pulitzer-winning writer Leonard Pitts Jr.

PGCMLS activated the Rock Banned campaign through numerous points of engagement for customers on a year-round basis. Digital engagement included building an intellectual freedom advocacy call to action at [pgcmls.info/activate](http://pgcmls.info/activate), a social media campaign, and bonus content of the PGCMLS "These Books Made Me" podcast. Staff curated Rock Banned book displays with materials for all ages. Special events: keynote on "The Library's Role in a Misinformation Age" with Leonard Pitts Jr., storytimes and public Board briefings.

The Rock Banned campaign has engaged more than 95,000 customers in all age ranges in informal learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of the role of intellectual freedom in society, and the role of libraries in protecting democracy. The anticipatory advocacy and engagement work conducted since early 2022 has played an essential role in ensuring that customers clearly understand the Library's stance on intellectual freedom, mitigating potential local unfounded book challenges taking place nationally.



## Democracy

## Honorable Mention

# Let's Be Neighbors

## Salt Lake County Library

### "Let's Be Neighbors: Connecting to Civic Engagement"



With much misinformation, division, and fracturing within our communities, Salt Lake County Library saw a unique opportunity to connect and unite individuals together by using the knowledge, resources, and experts local to our state. We hosted a virtual series focused on timely and relevant areas of public concern, presented by local experts. These impartial sessions headed by multiple panelists give residents knowledge and skills to address issues and elevate their community.

This digital, community platform empowers residents with next steps they could take away to make a difference on an intimate or large scale. Experts gave 3-5 suggestions of actions individuals can take to spark change. We have a bright talent pool of incredible local individuals deeply invested in the problems - and solutions - for everyone. We wanted to offer a platform where individuals could be heard and have answers from knowledgeable experts.

The library hosted 15 community programs that garnered: 1,555 views, 42 unique partner presenters and 3,175 community engagement take-and-make kits. More than 100 fleece hats, scarves, and mittens were then returned from take-and-make kits for individuals in need, paired with our Homelessness: The Unseen Neighbor program.



## Education: Children & Adults

## Top Innovator

### Queens Public Library

#### "The World of Work for Teens"

Figuring out a post-high school future is hard enough for teens, but deciding what to do next is even tougher while managing the emotional and mental effects of a global public health crisis. Queens Public Library saw an opportunity to help teens move forward by restoring a sense of possibility and hope for the future and the present.

World of Work leveraged the knowledge and experiences of QPL staff, college faculty, and the library's corporate partners, including Capital One, to design a comprehensive curriculum to ensure maximum engagement. It is a combination of virtual and in-person coursework and experiential learning to teach students about starting a career, college planning, becoming financially literate and developing civic leadership skills. Students were required to apply to the program and articulate their goals for their next chapter.

Over two years, WoW has received over 100 applications for entry and accepted 40 students from a variety of different ethnic and racial groups and schools. Collectively, participants have completed over 900-course hours and donated nearly 100 hours of community service. Participants report increased comprehension of basic financial literacy, college planning and career readiness and gained more self-confidence about the future. Several students even found employment because of the skills they learned in the program.



# Education: Children & Adults

# Honorable Mention

## Richmond Hill Public Library

### "Library Programming Partnership"

Public libraries collaborate on policies, advocacy, and experiences. But operationally, we all tend to work independently even though we offer the same services. That led to a new Library Programming Partnership - 18 systems across the Greater Toronto Area that pool resources to offer more and higher quality programming to their users. This was co-founded by Richmond Hill Public Library and Pickering Public Library.

Our collaborative programming model is rooted in two key insights. First, it's hard for small/mid-size library systems to attract top talent for programs on their own because they don't have the budgets or audience reach. Public libraries offer similar services, share the same values, target similar audiences, face the same budget and resource constraints, and are not competitive with each other. Yet, we all duplicate our programming work - developing the same programs on our own and often even hiring the same partners.

Working together, we plan and deliver bigger and better programs that reach a wider audience - all with existing people and money. The network equitably pools human and financial resources, shares contact databases, leverages each other's ideas and strengths and co-brands marketing materials. This is a multi-sided business model innovation in the library sector that both captures and creates new value.

Join us this summer for spectacular virtual children's author visits • July 6 - Aug 17 • Check with your library system for further details!

**Superstar Storytellers Summer Series**

Presented by the Public Libraries of Durham and York Region

Authors featured: Gordon Korman, Sayantani DasGupta, Vicky Fang, Tracy West, Aron Nels Steinke, Justin A Reynolds, Jess Keating, Pablo Leon, Katy Farina.

## Health & Wellness

## Top Innovator

### Cambridge Public Library

#### "A Library That Reinforces Community + Wellness"



In 2015, the City of Cambridge committed to an Action Plan to become a Net Zero community by 2040. The Valente Branch Library is one of the City's first projects to be built under this mandate. With 2022 being its first full year in operation, the building serves as a model for integrating sustainability and wellness into library design. The building responds to the community's demand for a healthier and more resilient city. The Valente Branch proves both are possible.

Connecting with nature, providing thermal and acoustical comfort, and modulated daylight were incorporated into the Valente Branch library design. Five play spaces, a reading garden, and a bocce court support physical and emotional wellness. The building integrates durable and healthy materials with a variety of seating options to create a comfortable space for everyone. The library was built with a focus on flexibility allowing the community space to open up for larger gatherings.

Today, library circulation, programming, and patronage have more than doubled. The building's amenities - auditorium, cafeteria, pools, and gyms have been drawing people of all ages and abilities to engage with their city library. This project has become an exemplar of how to achieve an inclusive Net Zero building, not only in Cambridge but throughout the country. The building has been toured by institutions and presented at conferences around the world as a model library of the future.



## Health & Wellness

## Honorable Mention

### Edmonton Public Library

#### "Taking Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn to Families"

Edmonton Public Library's Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn (SSLL) is a highly successful early literacy program offered since 2005 to enhance communication and social connection in young children. EPL expanded offerings in the community through partnerships to target families at greatest risk of negative impacts of COVID-19. In 2022, EPL and its partners in education, health and learning identified a need for free and inclusive early literacy programming for children 0-3 to alleviate developmental delays, social isolation and parental stress caused by the pandemic.

Six staff skilled in SSLL formed a dedicated mobile team. Each staff was outfitted with all supplies required to lead multiple classes a day in the community. Staff worked independently at community agencies to offer the program where socially vulnerable families felt comfortable, making the program more accessible. In addition, the team led extra classes in branches and coached staff to develop skills that increased the capacity to deliver early literacy programming across the city.

Between August and December, 809 additional SSLL offerings (equating to a 55% increase), including nine new sites in high-risk areas. 9,860 parents and children participated noting a 99% satisfaction rating, valuing the high quality and positive impact on language and social development. The pilot's success secured funding for the ongoing expansion of the program through the City budget process.



# Operations & Management

# Top Innovator

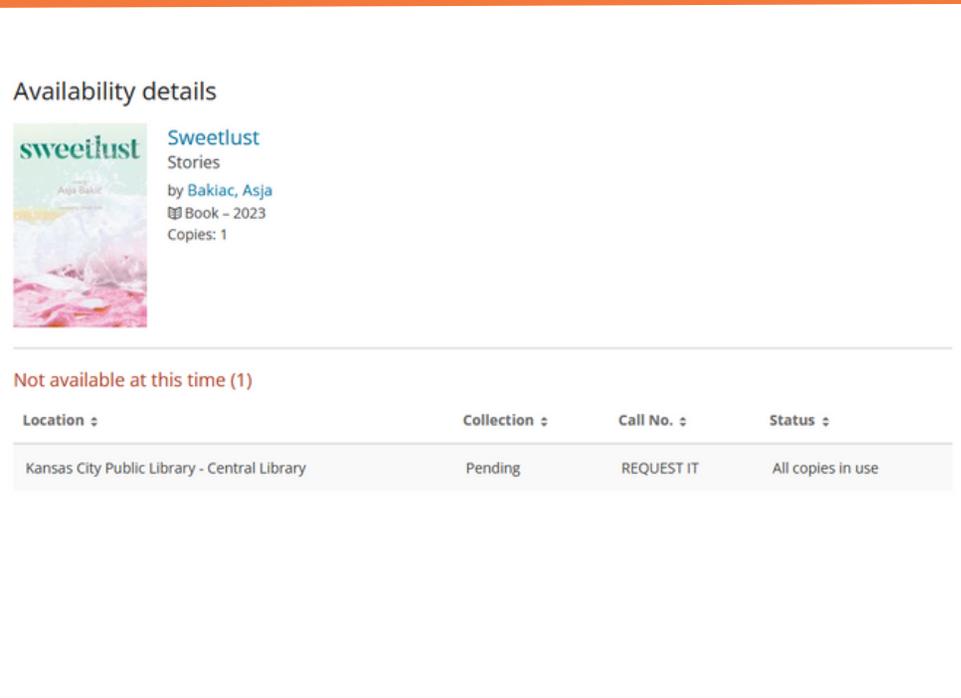
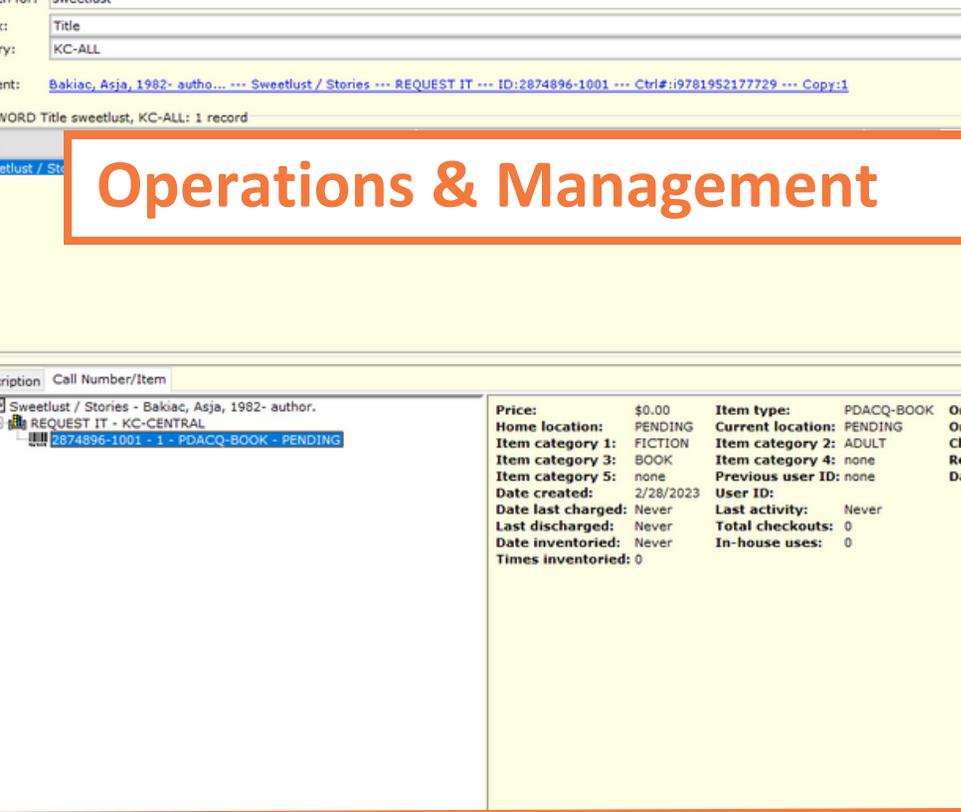
## Kansas City Public Library

### "Request It: Collaborative Acquisitions"

Request It reimagines two patron-driven acquisition models, Suggest a Purchase and Interlibrary Loan. It fosters participation, builds relevant and diverse collections, streamlines processes, and decreases costs. It features holdable non-owned items, purchase requests within user accounts, and Interlibrary Loan as a last means of acquisition.

This platform aimed to replace the reactive and inefficient Suggest a Purchase (SP) and Interlibrary Loan (ILL) models with one responsive and efficient service. Overall, the goal was to create a one-stop shop for requests, make it easy to use, expand eligible materials, have a consistent lending policy and reduce high cost per use.

Request It has 3 elements: 1) catalog discoverable and holdable unowned items, 2) buy all appropriate requests with minimal cataloging/processing time and 3) uses Interlibrary Loan as a last resort. Over 12 months, KCPL added 1,518 titles, had an 150% increase of requests, saw a 700% increase in unique users and reduced the average ILL cost per use from \$110 to \$20 per item. Additionally, our collection expanded through noticeably more diverse titles suggested by patrons which directly supports the library's DEI initiative.



## Operations & Management



## Honorable Mention

### Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library

#### "Functional Mentoring for Practical Success"

To further invest in our employees and improve upon the overall success and diversity of our organization, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library developed a functional mentoring program to enable staff to learn successful strategies to positively impact their work experience and collaborate with colleagues for enriched and inclusive opportunities and experiences.

In lieu of the pandemic and the overall national employee shortage, we found ourselves in need of staff in supervisory roles. To develop practical leadership skills we focused on communication, relationship-building, decision-making and project management in monthly interactive sessions. Participants were encouraged to actively contribute, ask questions, and share experiences. At a kickoff event, staff gave elevator speeches about the unique assets they bring to the organization, and we concluded with mock interviews and feedback which all found very beneficial.

To gauge the program's success, we surveyed staff at its conclusion and overall, comments affirmed it was an effective initiative that benefitted those seeking leadership skills. 94% of participants responded they would recommend it to others, and many said it helped develop successful interview strategies that reinforce our organizational values of literacy and access to information for all. Two staff were promoted after the program, others made significant career changes, and all had an enriching experience.

**Workforce & Economic Development**

**Top Innovator**

**Los Angeles Public Library**

**"Be a Successful Street Vendor"**

The Los Angeles Public Library built a mobile program for street vendors to learn business, digital and English-language skills to be successful business owners. LAPL worked with Cell-Ed to build micro-lessons that vendors can complete on a mobile phone. Lessons include basic Internet skills; business, sales, vending; and community safety.

. Street vendors are often excluded from resources due to their lack of access to and understanding of the formal systems to operate legal businesses in Los Angeles. The requirements to become a proprietor are new and complex and many vendors are monolingual Spanish speakers with limited literacies.

By incorporating street vendor dialogue and feedback, the units in Cell-Ed reflect their concerns about safety and need to understand elements of small business ownership like budgeting or pricing items to pay taxes. Digital literacy units help vendors create email addresses and navigate the Internet. Providing micro, mobile learning units via a smart or flip phone in easy-to-understand English and Spanish meets the Vendors where they are at and gives them a sense of agency in unfamiliar processes.

Data metrics of vendor participation in microlearning mobile units can be viewed via Cell-Ed's portal and to date, more than 110 users have enrolled in these courses in Los Angeles, and more than 4,600 users have enrolled in them nationally.



## Workforce & Economic Development

## Honorable Mention



SUMMER PROGRAM

### PAID OPPORTUNITY

\$550 Workforce Training & \$6500 Internship with the City

START GETTING PAID TO LEARN NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY, DOCUMENTARY STORYTELLING, AND CAMERA BASICS

City Heights Library  
3795 Fairmount Ave  
San Diego, CA 92105

June 12 - July 21 2023

Thank you for your interest in our Workforce Development program and Internship with the City of San Diego!

The Media Arts Center's mission is to provide new media tools and channels to create equitable and engaged communities where underserved voices are heard.



## San Diego Public Library

### "San Diego Creative Economy: Library Filmmaking"

With Media Arts Center, SDPL launched a quarterly workforce development program to train young adults aged 16-30 on filmmaking. After graduating from the six-week training program students are deployed into branches to complete a paid internship program creating videos highlighting programs, capturing patron anecdotes and telling the library's story.

Our branches need assistance capturing and communicating their story, our entry-level positions have high attrition, and we have a need to support the creative economy workforce. To address these challenges, 29 interns went through the filmmaking training. Interns were selected by meeting equity-based metrics, including participating in the foster system, justice-involved, low income, unemployed, or residing in or attending school in a community of concern. Interns were deployed to our branches to capture and share stories.

Our collaboration with Media Arts allows us to train the next generation of library workers in a documentary style of storytelling that we desperately need in our field. The program pairs the intern with a mentor in the creative economy that assists them throughout their internship with technical advice on their media projects. While in training the interns receive a stipend, transit passes, and a clothing allowance. The intern graduation includes a red carpet, film festival-style screening of their documentaries.