The Future of ULC

Brooks Rainwater
President and CEO
Urban Libraries Council

Roosevelt Weeks
Director
Austin Public Library
ULC Board Chair

#ULCForum23
Our Reach

171 MEMBER LIBRARIES

44 STATES & PROVINCES are represented in ULC membership

2,700+ LIBRARY BRANCHES
Our Reach

42,000+ library staff that can benefit from ULC membership

ULC member libraries serve nearly 30% of the entire population of the U.S. and Canada!

SERVICE POPULATION: 105M

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National Recognition of Members

2023 IMLS Medalists

LA County Library

Toledo Lucas County Public Library

2023 IMLS Medalists
National Recognition of Members
In the Media

Urban Libraries Council
@UrbanLibCouncil

#ICYMI - On Saturday, ULC President & CEO @BrooksRainwater sat down with @Capehart to talk about the devastating impacts of book bans on young readers, marginalized authors and librarians across America. Watch the full segment: buff.ly/3y8UfY

The Saturday/Sunday Show with Jonathan ... 😊 @weekendcap... - Mar 11

"We've really seen an acceleration of book bans across the country...Librarians are feeling incredibly challenged. @BrooksRainwater on the right-wing attacks on libraries. "We haven't seen anything like this since the McCarthy era." 
#SaturdayShow

GOVERNING

STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS AND POLICY

Public Libraries Step Up Help as Food Insecurity Rises

Pandemic assistance to families at risk of food insecurity has ended. As a "hunger cliff" looms, programs in public libraries can fill gaps.

March 13, 2023 • Carl Smith

The Washington Post

Rooftops, cafes and Zoom rooms: Libraries evolve to serve remote workers

Centrally located and replete with resources, libraries have become a favorite co-working space for workers in the hybrid era

By Taylor Teford

June 29, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

Students pick up free lunches at the Mason Square Public Library in Springfield, Mass. (Dan Treger/TNS)
ULC Member Engagement

- More than 100 events in 2023
- 4,000 ULC participants in online and in-person events
- 99% of member libraries have actively participated in these events, through listserv, monthly member calls or issue-specific action teams.
Barbershop Books Pilot Program for Libraries

Participating Libraries:

- Cleveland Public Library
- Columbus Metropolitan Library
- Shreve Memorial Library
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Supported by:
Building Equity: Amplify Summer Learning

Participating Libraries:
- Algona Public Library
- Boise Public Library
- Boston Public Library
- Cedar Rapids Public Library
- Central Arkansas Library System
- Cincinnati & Hamilton Public Library
- Edmonton Public Library
- Enoch Pratt Free Library
- Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library
- Halifax Public Libraries
- Harris County Public Library
- Jersey City Free Public Library
- La Porte County Public Library
- Lexington Public Library
- Milton Public Library
- Orange County Library System
- Pima County Public Library
- Portland Public Library
- Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County
- San Mateo County Libraries
- Schaumburg Township District Library
- Scottsdale Public Library
Creating Youth Opportunities Initiative

Participating Libraries:
- Cedar Rapids Public Library
- Chicago Public Library
- Columbus Metropolitan Library
- DC Public Library
- Enoch Pratt Free Library
- Greensboro Public Library
- Memphis Public Libraries
- Oak Park Public Library
- Pioneer Library System
- Prince George's County Memorial Library
- Richmond Public Library (Va.)

Supported by: Walmart.org
Innovations Initiative

2023 TOP INNOVATORS:

- Cambridge Public Library
- Dallas Public Library
- Kansas City Public Library
- Las Vegas-Clark County Library District
- Los Angeles Public Library
- Louisville Free Public Library
- Prince George’s County Memorial Library System
- Queens Public Library
Innovations Initiative

2023 HONORABLE MENTIONS:

- Alameda County Library
- Baltimore County Public Library
- Chesterfield County Public Library
- Edmonton Public Library
- Richmond Hill Public Library
- Salt Lake County Library
- San Diego Public Library
- Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library
Preview: Library Insights Survey

Nearly 100 ULC members provided data for their libraries:

- Attraction and Attendance
- Location Experience / Use of Space
- Programs and Service
- Staffing and Budget
Preview: Library Insights Survey

In-person visits to libraries are gradually recovering from pandemic lows

- **2019**: 2.9M average in-person visits
- **2022**: 1.6M (44.5% drop)
- **2023 (projected)**: 7% gain
Preview: Library Insights Survey

eResources continue to be very popular for library patrons

- **2019**: 1.8M average eResource use
- **2022**: 2.4M
  - 33% increase since 2019
- **2023 (projected)**: 37% increase since 2019
Post-pandemic computer usage is significantly evolving

- **2019**: 1.3M average computer use
- **2022**: 900K, 31% drop
- **2023 (projected)**: 60% decline since 2019

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Preview: Library Insights Survey

Has program design caught up with post-pandemic demand?

- 2019: 19,700 average programs, 265K average program attendance
- 2022: 71% drop in programming, 58% decline in attendance
- 2023 (projected): 22% attendance difference since 2019
Library budgets are expected to continue to see some growth.

- **2019**: $42M average library budget
- **2022**: $45M, 8% increase
Thank you, Strategic Planning Task Force!

Brian Bannon  
Brigitte Blanton  
Paula Brehm-Heeger  
Joey Crawford  
Heidi Daniel  
Karl Dean  
Mary Lomax-Ghirarduzzi  
Pilar Martinez  
Darren Solomon  
Roosevelt Weeks

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Strategic Planning Process

Project Immersion
December 2022

Task Force Engagement
Ongoing

Qualitative Interviews
Jan. to Feb. 2023

Survey
March 2023

Strategic Planning Session
July 2023

Strategic Plan Development
Aug. to Nov. 2023

Market Testing Interviews
Sept. to Oct. 2023

Operating Plan & KPI Dashboard
December 2023
Developing the Strategic Plan

What are the top trends or challenges that will have the greatest impact on the urban library community in the next 3-5 years?

- Threats to intellectual freedom / Politicalization of libraries: 69%
- Social Issues (substance abuse, homelessness, etc.): 58%
- Funding / budget: 34%
- Safety of staff / patrons: 27%
- Recruiting / retaining employees: 23%
- Staff burnout: 18%

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Anticipated Strategic Priorities

- Further support for the urban library professional
- Drive advocacy for urban libraries
- Center the transformative role of urban libraries

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