



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12, 2019

ULC Press Contact

Curtis Rogers

(202) 750-8658

crogers@urbanlibraries.org

New ULC Leadership Brief Calls on Public Libraries to Lead on AI

The Urban Libraries Council provides targeted strategies for public libraries to ensure an equitable and inclusive future for communities in the Age of AI.

WASHINGTON – The Urban Libraries Council has published a new Leadership Brief on “Libraries Leading AI and Digital Citizenship.” With the quickly growing impact of artificial intelligence on economies, societies and cultures, libraries remain at the forefront of ensuring no one is left behind by this wave of technological transformation.

“The impact of AI reaches far beyond technology – it is causing a foundational shift in how people learn, work, connect and grow,” said ULC President and CEO Susan Benton. “This new Leadership Brief provides a vital resource for libraries to confidently face these changes and to lead their communities in shaping an equitable and democratic future for AI.”

AI’s transformative power has already been seen, and is expanding at a rapid rate, across central focus areas for libraries, including education, employment and civic engagement. While AI promises to enhance our communities in remarkable ways, it also poses significant threats to the prosperity, privacy and security of individuals who do not understand or cannot access these new technologies.

“AI is happening faster than most people think, and the public is not adequately prepared for it,” said Palo Alto City Library Department Director Monique le Conge Ziesenhenne. “Everything we do will somehow be impacted by AI. The public library, in our teaching role, can play a very important part in preparing the public for what’s ahead.”

In January 2019, a working group of library leaders from across the U.S. and Canada launched a new ULC initiative to explore and develop the role of the library as a critical resource in the AI revolution. The new Leadership Brief is the latest resource produced by this initiative, and it is informed by multiple webinar sessions, blog posts and original research about opportunities for

libraries to get ahead of the potential risks presented by AI. Further, ULC will convene its 2019 ULC Forum: Preparing to Lead on AI + Digital Citizenship on October 16-18 in Salt Lake City. This event will bring together public library and community leaders in expert-led discussions and activities to elevate a shared understanding of the economic and social implications of emerging technologies.

About the Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America’s leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st-century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today’s communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital inclusion, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.

###