

# Knight Foundation Invests in Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's Innovation

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CHARLOTTE, NC: The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation is thrilled to be the recipient of a \$250,000 investment from the Knight Foundation. This support comes at a time when Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, at the heart of an uptown redevelopment project, is reimagining how Main Library can push the boundaries of innovation to deliver on its mission of improving lives and building a stronger community for a new generation.

This investment is [one of five grants](#) the Knight Foundation is awarding to projects that focus on libraries as essential to addressing information challenges and creating new opportunities for communities to engage with ideas and with each other. "At a time of rising distrust of institutions, echo chambers and concerns about the accuracy of information, libraries are more essential to

American democracy than ever before," said John Bracken, Knight Foundation vice president for technology innovation. "But in an increasingly digital world, they need the resources, skills, people and practices to embrace new innovations and take on an ever-important role in informing the communities that they serve. The projects and research we're supporting today aim to advance this goal."

The funds will be used to support a design and visioning process meant to transform Charlotte Mecklenburg Library into a leading example of a 21st century urban library. The process will address the development of new partnerships, service delivery tools and staffing procedures to better meet the current and emerging information and education needs of our community. A first step was a series of facilitated visioning sessions held this week with Library users and community thought leaders challenged to "think differently" about Library services. Many of the ideas generated through this process will be prototyped as the design process proceeds. Library CEO Lee Keesler explains, "We learned from ImaginOn the value of a durable, inspiring thematic vision to guide the design and ongoing activities of a place and space. Generous funding from the Knight Foundation will enable us to articulate a similar vision for our new Main Library. We're grateful for Knight's continued investment in our industry and organization."

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has enjoyed a long relationship with the Knight Foundation, funders of Library initiatives including technology upgrades in many locations, the documentation of regional African American history using resources of the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, and the creation of Idea Box, a makerspace for all ages at Main Library. We are proud to be among the national library leaders who are informing the Knight Foundation's current research on innovation and recently released report, "[Developing Clarity: Innovating in Library Systems](#)."

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**About the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation:** The [Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation](#) exists to help the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library improve lives and build a stronger community. Created in 2012, the Foundation supports the Library's programs and services through advocacy, fundraising and building relationships with others who share a passion for the Library's work.

**About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library:** [Charlotte Mecklenburg Library](#) is one of America's leading urban public libraries, serving a community of over one million residents in Mecklenburg County, NC. Accessible and welcoming to all, the Library celebrates the joy of reading, fosters learning and growth, connects people to each other and the world, and inspires individuals with what they can achieve.

**About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** Since 1971, Knight Foundation has made nearly 200 grants totaling more than \$12 million to library projects across the country. The importance of libraries was a key finding of the [Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy](#). More recently, the foundation supported [the launch of the Digital Public Library of America](#); and announced [further support to help it expand](#) in June 2015. The foundation has also funded 36 projects via two Knight News Challenges on Libraries; winners for the first one were announced in [January 2015](#) and winners for the second were announced in [June 2016](#). The [Knight News Challenge on Strengthening the Internet](#) also included the New York Public Library, Chicago Public Library and the Digital Public Library of America as winners.

Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. They invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Their goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which they believe are essential for a healthy democracy. For more, visit [knightfoundation.org](http://knightfoundation.org).

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