

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG
LIBRARY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dena Diorio, Mecklenburg County Manager
Wanda Reeves, Director of Financial Services

FROM: Lee Keesler, Chief Executive Officer 
David Singleton, Director of Libraries 

DATE: August 18, 2014

SUBJECT: FY 2014 Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Accomplishments

FY 2014 was another year of creating and building on momentum at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

At a very high level, we adopted a new Strategic Plan based on extensive community feedback in September 2013, and began to implement initiatives that were fully aligned with that plan. At every level, from the Library Board of Trustees to the front-line staff in the branches, the Strategic Plan has guided every conversation and activity we have undertaken since its adoption. This plan will transport us toward a Library in FY 2017 that for our community is more relevant, more engaged, more accessible, more digital, and more sustainable.

Directed by the Strategic Plan's goals, we increased awareness and engagement within the community, increased access to the Library, and made progress toward increased fiscal stability and financial sustainability. The Library Foundation played an important supporting role in helping advance the organization toward these goals, and transforming the way that many citizens view the Library.

The pages that follow detail FY 2014's new programs, service delivery changes, reduced/avoided costs, and awards and recognition, along with upcoming FY 2015 events. None of this would have been possible without the continued financial support provided by Mecklenburg County, and for that we remain very grateful.

cc: Terri Peters, Senior Fiscal Analyst
Chris Peek, Deputy County Manager/Chief of Staff
Leslie Johnson, Assistant County Manager
Michael Bryant, Director of Office Management and Budget
Monica Allen, Deputy Enterprise Manager
Jennifer Holland, Enterprise Management Analyst

NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

From children's storytimes to new initiatives for adults, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is building on momentum to strengthen successful programs and services and begin new ones. These programs/services have a common theme of supporting the Library's three strategic goals as stated in the strategic plan:

1. Increase community awareness and engagement
2. Innovate to support 21st century access
3. Increase operational excellence, fiscal stability and sustainability

Community Awareness and Engagement

Strategic Plan

More than 5,400 residents provided feedback that informed the Library's new Strategic Plan, adopted in September 2013. Community sessions to talk about the plan and the future direction of the Library were well-attended with highly engaged participants.

Library's "I Can" Marketing Campaign

In November, the Library debuted a new brand, celebrating the world of possibilities that exists in every member of the community when using the public library. It's a look that inspires people to think, "I can" when thinking of their Library. The revitalized brand was a gift from Wray Ward, a leading local creative marketing communications agency. Wray Ward believes in the value of the Library, and wanted to help the Library tell its story. Within the first six weeks, 2.2 million people accessed the new brand.

One Book, One Community: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

The Library celebrated National Library Week, April 13-19, 2014 by hosting the One Book initiative. The initiative gave the Library the opportunity to bring a wide spectrum of people together through reading and discussion. The One Book initiative supported the Library's new mission: "To create a community of readers and empower individuals with free access to information and the universe of ideas." The initiative cultivated reading ambassadors, community volunteers who promoted the initiative within their networks, including educational institutions such as Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Johnson C. Smith University.

Sixth and North Tryon Programming Pilot

The Library collaborated with Charlotte Center City Partners to bring energy and excitement to Sixth and North Tryon through programs and performances. The Library is the primary program provider on Wednesdays. The effort, funded by the Knight Foundation, allows the Library to highlight its services and engage Uptown visitors outside of Main Library. Programming is scheduled through November 19.

Lunch at the Library

The Library piloted a lunchtime speaker series featuring local guests of notable achievement and civic influence, moderated by Library Trustee and civic leader Ed Williams. The pilot achieved its goals of raising the intellectual level of public conversation in the community and drawing new audiences to Main Library.

Library 3.0 Social Media Working Team

The Library 3.0 Social Media Working Group began as a pilot project created by the Marketing and Communications department and recently expanded to a Working Group comprised of about 20 staff members across the library system. The main purpose of the group is to develop and use a set of formalized best practices to contribute interesting and engaging content to the Library's social media and digital platforms. The group also established methods for monitoring and responding to customer engagement. The result has been more frequent and more engaging social media content and increased ability to monitor patron feedback through those platforms.

Storyvine: Storytelling in the Schools

Storyvine: Storytelling in the Schools, a reimagined version of the Storyvine Festival, touched the lives of 5,000 students through 37 different elementary schools. Storyvine still utilizes the art of traditional storytelling to cultivate and promote

literacy; however, there has been an added emphasis to reach Title 1 schools where a program such as Storyvine could have the greatest impact. The program now also promotes other literacy programs such as Summer Reading.

Wee Read West

An IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Science) grant allowed for a year-round reading program at West Boulevard Library. At the end of FY 2014, 359 children from birth to age 5 had registered for this program. As a result of the program, 100% of parents reported their child showed a greater interest in reading together at home since attending the Wee Read storytime and they are better prepared to help their child develop pre-reading skills. The success of this program had far-reaching impact, both locally and nationally, as it was featured in *Up Next: The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Blog* and the *State Library of NC Blog*.

Partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

As part of the Library's continued effort to work closely with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), many new initiatives and collaborations were launched this year. The result was an even stronger relationship with CMS, offering increased opportunities to impact children through positive educational experiences. Here are the highlights:

- **Reading and Writing Focus Calendars**, used by K-5th grade instructors in CMS, were shared with Library staff who then coordinated displays and programs at the same time students were learning about similar topics at school. As a result, after school and on weekends, children could find curriculum related library materials to extend and enhance learning.
- **Library Children's Services increased outreach visits to Title 1 schools** in order to promote summer reading from all Library locations.
- **Library staff tapped as a resource providers** in CMS' Summer Learning Day on Friday, June 20, providing materials and resources to more than 120 parents and students.
- **New resource materials were created by a collaboration** between The Lifelong Learning Team and the Marketing and Communications Department. The "Suites of Services" brochures focused on pre-kindergarten to high school students.
- **For the first time, Children's and Teens' Services staff created** suggested summer reading lists for all CMS grades, thus enabling students convenient access to specialized reading materials from expert librarians.
- **Library reading readiness resource materials were made available to 1,600 families** placed on a waiting list for Pre-K services.

Early Literacy Initiatives

- **New Early Literacy Coordinator made strides to align local literacy efforts.** Gathering information from 17 agencies, the Library's Early Literacy Coordinator, Barbara Cantisano, collaborated with others to analyze the data to compile a listing of literacy offerings. As a result, 23 different programs were identified. The information will be used to assist funders, resource providers and the public with learning about what programs are available in the community.
- **Literacy Partnership with Levine Children's Hospital.** With the use of technology provided by Levine Children's Hospital, the Library streamed early literacy programs into the rooms of young patients. This effort allowed families to stay connected with their community while in the hospital, and patients could continue to learn and utilize Library resources and services.
- **The Library designed and implemented the "Learning Together" program**, a 39-week parent/child workshop and early literacy experience at Montclair Elementary to help prepare children for school and parents to support their learning.
- **Financial education grant from PNC Bank** was received by the Library to target children from birth to age 5 and their families with financial literacy programs. During year one of the grant, For Me, For You, For Later™ monthly storytimes and workshops were offered at 12 Library locations and four outreach sites. The grant included technology workshops using iPad minis, working with a consultant from Central Piedmont Community College on program evaluation, an updated education space for the targeted age group in Spangler Library at ImaginOn, summer reading incentives for Wee Read, and additional resources for all Library locations to use to enhance financial literacy programs.
- **Weyerhaeuser Grant funding** for Early Literacy Parent Workshop. The Library provided fifteen early literacy workshops for parents in low-income neighborhoods and for families that speak English as their second language.

After completing these 90-minute workshops, parents and caregivers reported a better understanding of the importance of early literacy and their role as their child's first teacher.

- **Jump Start Reading at Home.** This strategic early literacy program for children, parents, preschool teachers and caregivers promoted and sustained early literacy experiences in high-need preschools and daycare centers. Parents and teachers gained a better understanding of the importance of early literacy, and Library staff observed children demonstrating early literacy skills.
- **ALA American Dream @ Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.** Adults who speak Spanish as their first language had the opportunity to participate in Library staff-led technology workshops in community locations. From January through March 2014, the Library offered four classes per week, focused on basic computers skills to help search for employment and enhance electronic communication, serving 135 individuals. This program was funded by the American Library Association and Dollar General.

Adult Services Partnerships and Programs

- **Worked closely with community partners** as an Affordable Care Act (ACA) **information access point.** With 125,000 County residents potentially eligible for reduced health care costs, the Library acted swiftly to prepare for the ACA rollout. Working with Legal Services of the Southern Piedmont, Enroll America, Dept. of Social Services, Mecklenburg County Health Department, and Cognosante, the Library was fully prepared. AARP provided 18 information sessions at library locations for families and older adults throughout Oct., Nov., and Dec. In early 2014, information sessions expanded into ACA enrollment sessions. Legal Services and Cognosante signed up 225 patrons for health insurance in libraries. Afterward, info sessions for the new ACA enrollees were held.
- **Established a partnership with AARP.** AARP viewed the Library as instrumental to the success of the organization's expanded role in the community. Through the partnership, information sessions were held around AARP's "livable communities" program where discussions took place about the impact of sidewalks, public transportation, crosswalks, etc. on the collective community. The Library partnership with AARP has also provided Senior nutrition programs, financial literacy sessions, and informational meetings on planning and long-term care preparation.
- **Partnership with NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund.** Assisted residents in the hardest hit zip code areas for foreclosures.
- **Hosted numerous activities in support of the 100,000 Poets movement,** a movement to recognize the impact of poetry on the community. For example, adults were invited to a poetry slam outside of Plaza Midwood Library on a busy Friday night. NC Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti provided an outstanding wrap-up program where he shared his writings and poetry with a large crowd at Morrison Library.
- **Expanded tax assistance offerings from two branches to five,** incorporating a free online filing product. Beatties Ford Road, West Boulevard and Sugar Creek joined Main Library and University City, as assistance sites.
- **Partnered with the Arts & Science Council** to provide impromptu Acts of Culture at all 20 library locations, with generous assistance from the Knight Foundation. These acts encompassed a variety of cultural programs held spontaneously. Some libraries enjoyed a quick a jazz band performance, some branches experienced live opera performances, while others enjoyed modern interpretive dancers. Patron and staff response was outstanding.
- **Worked with Central Piedmont Community College to bring MAD Magazine Senior Editor Joe Raiola to the CCCC campus** for a lively and entertaining discussion about censorship. Participants learned about MAD Magazine's beginnings, and discussed issues and articles that reflected the times in which they were created.
- **Collaborated with the Harvey B. Gantt center to grant visitors with a Library card free admission.** If they did not have a card, visitors had the opportunity to sign up for a Library card, meet Library staff members and learn about the Library's programs and services. They also had the opportunity to participate in family storytelling sessions.

Financial Services

New Finance Director Angie Myers took the helm this fiscal year and her expertise from years spent with County Financial Services proved to be a plus. Significant new initiatives include:

- **Facilitated a more transparent budget process** for stakeholders (Board of Trustees, Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Library employees);
- **Developed initial finance processes** for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation in coordination with the Foundation for the Carolinas;
- **Collaborated with Mecklenburg County** Business Process Management and completed process mapping for finance purposes; and
- **Improved cost recovery** on retiree medical insurance and E-Rate revenue.

Innovate to support 21st Century Access

Digital Strategy Project

The Library launched a large Digital Strategy project in November 2014, involving more than 70 Library and County staff. Workgroups developed recommendations which were used by IBM to create an implementation plan as part of a consulting grant. Significant improvements to the Library's digital resources webpage have already been made in response to the recommendations, and intensive work will continue in FY15.

Treehouse

The Library now offers a free service called Treehouse. Treehouse is an interactive e-learning website that teaches residents computer programming skills that range from building a simple website with HTML all the way to using CSS3, JavaScript, PHP, and Ruby on Rails, and even creating an iOS or Android app.

American Disabilities Act (ADA) Action Plan

To ensure that all Library customers have access to Library resources and services, the Library has begun a process of identifying barriers to access as well as health and safety concerns for customers with disabilities through the creation of an ADA Action Plan and Transition Plan. All branches have completed checklists of barriers and health/safety issues, and each of these is being addressed and corrected by Library and Mecklenburg County staff. Progress to date includes increased awareness of disability-related technology and adaptive equipment availability and staff training on the use of specialized applications and equipment, as well as increased sensory programming, and staff training on how to answer calls from relay operators. In addition, a new policy outlining recruitment of interpreters for the hearing impaired for Library programs was adopted this spring. Finally, the Library is ensuring that there are wheelchair-accessible facilities as well as buildings that are safe and accessible for customers with sight and hearing impairments.

IMPACT Survey

The Library participated in the IMPACT Survey (sponsored by the Gates Foundation) in June 2014 to assess how patrons use Library technology services. Understanding how customers use technological resources helps the Library make purchasing decisions about equipment and applications that customers currently need and to determine future needs. The IMPACT Survey asked patrons about how they use Library technology services like public computers, wireless networks, online resources, digital literacy training, as well as outcome-oriented use in the following areas: education, employment, entrepreneurship, health and wellness, e-government, civic engagement, ecommerce and social inclusion. Over 1,200 Library customers took the survey. Examples of support and impact areas include:

- Nearly half the respondents used a Library computer in the past 12 months;
- 23% of Library technology users are low income (below 200% of poverty line);
- 87% of respondents said that it is important to have technology resources available to the community; and
- 35% of respondents said that they used technology resources for employment needs

Increase operational excellence, fiscal stability and sustainability

Library Foundation

After its official launch in November, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation went to work, setting a goal to raise \$1 million within its inaugural year. As of June 30, the Foundation raised \$1,069,562 in gifts and grants, exceeding its goal by almost \$70,000. The gifts and grants will be used by the Library to fund programs, collections and other areas of need, thus helping the Library to optimize private and public resources for a sustainable future. Many of the funding efforts have enhanced the library across almost all areas of the strategic plan. Examples of support and impact areas include:

Early Literacy and Educational Success

- **\$20,000 from the Charlotte Hornets and Lowe's** to support free online tutoring (tutor.com) for K-12 students.
- **\$200,000 from PNC** for a two-year financial literacy program for young children and their parents.
- **More than \$32,000 in prizes** from sponsoring businesses to help encourage Summer Reading participants to keep reading all summer long.

- **\$50,000 from the State Library of NC** to re-imagine storyplace.org, the Library's virtual early literacy storytime site.
- **\$10,000 from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Foundation** to support a PreK-3rd grade Library card campaign in partnership with CMS.

Digital Strategy

- **\$33,000 in-kind service grant from IBM** provided technical and project expertise in developing the Library's new digital strategy plan.
- **\$50,000 from the State Library of NC** will fund the initial planning for a new Integrated Library System (ILS), a key component of the Library's new digital strategy.

Increased Individual Support and Community Engagement

- **A \$175,000 challenge gift** from Bank of America and Library leadership resulted in an additional \$184,000 raised in 6 weeks from individuals in the community.

Library Mentorship Program

The Library is dedicated to an employee's growth, training and continual learning and one way that is accomplished is through the new Library mentoring program. The mentoring program offers support for both new and current employees who are seeking a mentoring relationship with another employee to help them with professional development, personal advancement, leadership skills and shared mutual interests.

Library as Leader

Library as Leader is one of the four focus areas established in the Strategic Plan. Several staff members have helped the Library to meet its expectations by leading important discussions in the community both locally and nationally. Highlights of these efforts include:

- **Director of Libraries David Singleton** continues to serve on many state and national boards, including the Public Library Association Task Force on Measurement and Outcomes; the LYRASIS Board; the EBSCO Advisory Board; and the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Studies Board of Visitors.
- **More than 25 Library staff members presented at state and national conferences during FY14**
 - **Children's Services Manager Emily Nanney participated on a panel** at the North Carolina Library Association conference regarding the Campaign for Grade Level Reading. She also serves on the Youth Services Advisory Committee (YSAC) which develops Youth Services Standards for the State.
 - **Director of Libraries David Singleton** presented at multiple conferences, including the North Carolina Library Association, the Georgia Library Association, the American Library Association, and the Public Library Association conferences. He is frequently asked to present to graduate-school classes and regional associations.
- **Collaborating** with Marketing and Communications, Library staff were positioned as subject matter experts in the community, contributing content to radio shows and publications such as *Little Ones*. These efforts helped raise public awareness about the importance of early literacy and Library resources.

Volunteer Efforts

1,329 Library volunteers gave 56,056 hours, valued at \$1,235,474.24 according to values defined by the Independent Sector. These hours were equivalent to 27 FTEs.

SUBSTANTIAL SERVICE DELIVERY CHANGES

By leveraging collection dollars, the Library was able to purchase more digital content which is likely related to significant growth in digital circulation seen below. Aware of the demand for children's materials, the Materials Management department targeted resources to the necessary areas. Results for FY14 include:

- Circulation of children's materials increased by 6.5%;
- Circulation of traditional books and materials increased by 3.7%;
- Digital circulation grew by over 43%
- Digital content grew by over 300% and digital circulation was 7.1% of total circulation of all items.

REDUCED/AVOIDED COSTS

Reduced and avoided costs for FY 2014 are in alignment with Library strategic goals, with an emphasis on increasing operational excellence, fiscal stability and sustainability.

WorkSmart Initiative

The award-winning WorkSmart initiative created best practices that benefited the Library by leveraging resources, thus saving staff time and increasing efficiency. These best practices were shared across locations, maximizing the cost-saving and customer experience impacts. Examples include:

- **Morrison Regional** established a WorkSmart goal to shelve all popular materials within 2 hours of check-in so that those materials most in demand by customers were turned around faster for check out
- **ImaginOn** began pre-teen programming in the Loft which had been difficult in the past due to staffing limitations. A WorkSmart goal required the cross-training of staff, enabling them the capability to work at any service point in the building. The result was a more efficient use of staff, which almost doubled staff capacity and enabled increased programming efforts such as programs for pre-teens;
- **North County** created a WorkSmart process that eliminated an inefficient staff task. Instead of calling or mailing customers to notify them of their materials hold status, staff opted to collect email addresses, using electronic notifications. This proactive move helped staff to focus on other customer service tasks such as Reader's Advisory and collection maintenance, tasks which research shows can have a positive impact on circulation.

Edge Initiative

Edge, a national coalition of leading Library and local government organizations led by the Urban Libraries Council, helped the Library make strategic decisions and identify potential improvements in the technology area. Edge features an easy-to-use toolkit giving libraries a look into their local data to assess how their community is using the technology. As a result, the Library was able to develop best practices for technology in alignment with community priorities, available County resources, and future growth.

Marketing and Communications' reorganization of staff resources

Mid-fiscal year, Marketing and Communications carried out a staff reorganization that allowed for an increased focus on library priorities. Several efficiencies resulted, including a cost savings of \$45,000 in the strategic marketing and printing budget.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has received several awards this fiscal year, including recognition for its new brand and new marketing campaign provided pro bono by Wray Ward, as well as recognition of other innovations.

ULC Top Innovator Honorable Mention, WorkSmart

The Library's WorkSmart initiative received the Top Innovator Honorable Mention award from the Urban Libraries Council in the area of Organizational Change and Strategic Management. WorkSmart offers new ways to capture, share, and reward improvement and innovation. The program encourages Library branches to develop and implement innovations and efficiencies for their library to improve customer service, and then share them with other locations.

Addy Award, "I Can" Marketing Campaign

The Library's new "I Can" campaign earned two 2014 Charlotte ADDY awards for Wray Ward. The integrated campaign won a gold award and the video received a silver award. The campaign supported the Library's Strategic Plan goal to increase community awareness and engagement.

NACo Achievement Award, Library's Strategic Plan

The Library's Strategic Plan won a National Association of Counties Achievement (NACo) Award in the category of Civic Education and Public Information. The annual National Association of Counties Achievement Award Program recognizes innovative county government programs.

No. 1 Children's Library, ImaginOn

ImaginOn was named the nation's No. 1 children's Library by Livability.com, a website that writes about America's best places. Livability editors looked at 500 communities and consulted Library experts to determine criteria for their ranking. Among them: The Library's responsiveness to community needs. ImaginOn "is the model of what a children's Library can be," said Livability editors.

Best of the Best (BOB) Awards, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

The Library received three Best of the Best (BOB) Awards from Charlotte Magazine this year, including Editor's Picks for Best Culture for Kids (ImaginOn) and Best Storytime (Free Kids Yoga, University City). The Library was a Reader's Pick for Best Storytime (All Branches).

SIGNIFICANT UPCOMING EVENTS (PROGRAMS/SERVICES)

In FY 2015, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library will continue to focus on activities and initiatives that align with the strategic plan and will help the Library reach its FY 2017 outcomes as outlined in the attached Program of Work.

Expanded Hours of Service

Thanks to the support of Mecklenburg County, the Library will expand service from **five to six days a week** for the community/neighborhood libraries and from **six to seven days** a week for the central libraries, Main and ImaginOn. In addition, all libraries throughout the system will have consistent hours of operation. Library services like job searching, homework support, early literacy programs, and the Internet will be more accessible. The addition of a day of service for 14 libraries will increase access, provide consistent hours of Library service across Mecklenburg County and support the Library's strategic goal of increasing Community Awareness and Engagement.

Library/CMS Partnership for Library Card Campaigns

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is partnering with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools for two strategic initiatives that will benefit both organizations and the community by increasing literacy and educational success. As a result of these initiatives, students will be better prepared to succeed in school because of access to Library materials and resources.

- **Pre-K – 3rd grade library card campaign.** During the 2014-2015 school year, all 51,000+ Pre-K to 3rd grade students will receive an invitation letter and a library card application in their first-day package.
- **E-card campaign for sixth to twelfth graders (pilot).** Students participating in the Project LIFT Learning Community from 6th – 12th grades will have the chance to obtain an e-card. The e-card will allow students access to the Library's electronic resources and digital materials free of charge for the entire school year.

Digital Strategy Implementation

Now that conceptual planning has concluded, the implementation of the Library's digital strategy will begin to take shape. During the next fiscal year the Library will identify areas where digital access can be improved upon, so that customers can access and utilize the digital content, virtual programming, and customer service within a comprehensive online environment. Library administration will identify and acquire the talent, resources, and leadership needed to make these conceptual ideas developed within the Digital Strategy Project a reality.

Main Library Reinvention

The Library established a Main Library Reinvention Advisory Committee in June 2014 to examine options for the future of Main Library as a 21st century library and an integral part of the North Tryon Redevelopment Project. Recommendations are expected in late 2014.

New Signature Fundraising Event

Verse & Vino, the Library's new signature fundraising event, will feature five NY Times bestselling authors who will engage readers, community leaders and Library supporters for an entertaining evening to benefit the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. The first Verse & Vino is November 13, 2014, with a goal of 700 attendees and \$125,000 raised after expenses.