



Travelling Librarian 2015

Community Engagement Projects in
United States Public Libraries

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Travelling Librarian 2015

Libraries need to constantly evolve to stay relevant. To do this we need to invest the time to develop innovative projects. I am particularly interested in enabling communities to use library spaces in new ways, as places where people can share ideas, skills, talents and knowledge helping to build community cohesion and engagement, encouraging participation and offering opportunities whilst putting the library at the heart of the community.

Personal Profile and Context

I am a Community Librarian at North Somerset Library Service. I have responsibility for outreach, equalities and volunteers for public libraries across North Somerset, I also line manage three libraries including the mobile library. I have been in my current post since March 2013.

North Somerset is a small unitary authority with 13 public libraries including one mobile library. It is an area with social and economic extremes, being the only part of the south of England that has areas in the least deprived 1% and areas in the most deprived 1%. Older people make up a larger than average portion of the population (20%) and a significant proportion of the district is rural. These demographics raise challenges for the provision of library services to meet the needs of the whole community.

In my current role I develop community engagement projects and services for our libraries. Recently these have included:

- Increasing visitor numbers by putting the mobile library at the heart of outreach services. Inviting partner organisations to travel with the library to enable them to reach rural communities with information and advice. Introducing weekly stories and rhymetimes on the vehicle for nurseries and children's centres.
- A tablet based digitised reminiscence project 'Memories Shared', using photographs from our local studies collections. The content loaded tablets are used for reminiscence sessions with memory cafes, lunch clubs, care

homes and home library service customers and are delivered through partners, staff and volunteers. The aims of the project are to promote health and wellbeing through reminiscence and to break down barriers to digital inclusion.

- Extending and developing a volunteer programme of roles, recruitment and training. Currently over 250 volunteers enhance our service by providing added value activities to core staffed library services.
- I am an Alzheimer's' Society Dementia Friends Champion delivering Dementia Friends information sessions, raising awareness and understanding to staff and partner organisations for North Somerset Council. For 2015 I aim to ensure that all our frontline library staff are Dementia Friends trained so we can provide a dementia friendly service.

Over the past few years public libraries have experienced significant funding reductions and this is set to continue in the future. Public libraries are now working in an environment where we have fewer staff hours. This creates issues in terms of keeping the doors open and motivating our teams. Our capacity to spend time developing new and innovative services could potentially be impacted, but for me this has created an urgency to do things differently, to question how we work and who we work with. I believe we need to work more extensively with partners and enable others to use our library spaces for community benefit.

Proposal

As an outreach and community librarian I am very keen to research and develop new ways to engage with our communities and keep libraries relevant. In America there have been a number of recent initiatives in libraries and community engagement has become high profile. The study tour would be primarily focused on learning about the wide range of community engagement programmes delivered by public library services in the United States.

I was keen to visit some of the large innovative public libraries but I also wanted to ensure that I visited some smaller branch libraries to see how they have engaged with their communities and to be able to make more direct comparisons to our town and village libraries.

To minimise the amount of time spent travelling I concentrated the majority of visits along the east coast of the United States heading from Boston to Hartford, Hudson, New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC and then moving inland to Chattanooga.

I wanted to arrange the opportunity to speak with senior members of staff to discuss their programmes as well as tour their libraries. I was also interested in meeting volunteer coordinators to find out more about their procedures.

Study Tour Objectives

- Learn about current community engagement projects in public libraries in United States, including projects relating to partnership working, young people, older people, digital technologies, peer-to-peer support and volunteers.
- Build relationships with colleagues in the United States, creating opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practice to enhance library services.
- Understand about the provision of inclusive services for diverse communities.
- Learn about the change management processes used by colleagues in the United States, as public libraries move away from traditional spaces to libraries for the 21st century.
- Identify best practice and gain inspirational ideas that could be introduced to improve North Somerset Library Service's community engagement and outreach programmes.
- Share information about our library service, volunteers, community and outreach projects with colleagues overseas.
- Understand staff roles and the use of volunteers in libraries in the United States.

Research

As research for my application I put together a list of public libraries and community engagement initiatives that I wished to encompass as part of the study tour.

1. The ALA's 'Libraries Transforming Communities' (LTC) initiative and the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation's "turning outward" (community facing) approach are areas that I wanted to explore. The work of the programme is designed to support librarians to become more connected with their communities, building stronger relationships and working collaboratively to improve learning, health and well-being. The approach enables better understanding of communities and putting community

aspirations first. Ten Libraries across the United States make up the LTC Public Innovators cohort. More about the LTC initiative can be found here:

<http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/libraries-transforming-communities>

2. I was particularly keen to visit Chattanooga where public libraries have been re-invented and meet with executive director Corinne Hill, Library Journal's Librarian of the Year 2014. Maker spaces, community collaboration, knowledge sharing and the sharing economy have become the order of the day at the Downtown Library. All four branches have a vast number of daily events and activities including Tai Chi, Yoga, Lego clubs, music clubs, film clubs, sensory story times, writers groups, yarn bombing, sewing and Makeanooga (sounds intriguing!).
3. Boston Public Library's regeneration incorporates a new HOMAGO (**H**ang **O**ut, **M**ess **A**round, and **G**eek **O**ut) space for teenagers.
4. New York Public Libraries offer tech skills; job skills; performance, exhibitions; multi-use IDNYC cards and after school programmes encompassing enrichment zones and innovation labs.
5. The Free Library of Philadelphia is currently undergoing a transformation named "**Building Inspiration: 21st Century Libraries Initiative**". Completed areas include a Central Senior Services space featuring information resources on health, the arts, business and hosting a variety of events for Philadelphia's growing population of older people. Further plans have an entrepreneurial focus with a new 'Commons' community area and a 'Business Research and Innovation Center'.
6. Digital Commons at the DC Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library houses 70 computers, 3D printers, an espresso book machine and meeting spaces to encourage creation and innovation.

Outline plan of visits

- Boston Public Library
- Hartford (CT) Public Library (pop: 125,000) *ALA LTC cohort*
- Red Hook (N.Y.) Public Library (pop: 1,900) *ALA LTC cohort*
- New York Public Libraries – Mid-Manhattan Library, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building and Bronx Library Center
- The Free Library of Philadelphia
- Washington D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library
- Chattanooga Public Library

Communicating Outcomes

- Travelling Librarian 2015 Tour Blog – From early planning stages and updated regularly while on the study tour. The blog includes photos, plans, ideas, itinerary and reflection. <https://travellinglibrarian2015.wordpress.com/>
- Twitter – @FrancesTout. I am a keen tweeter and used this throughout the tour.
- During the tour I gave a presentation to librarians and interested colleagues in the Hudson Valley and New York State Library.
- Report – A written report for ESU and CILIP, this will also be made available for libraries visited on the tour.
- Articles for CILIP special interest groups.
- Presentations to key members of the North Somerset Libraries' team, councillors and senior management.
- Presentations at CILIP ILIG informal, CILIP PPRG Conference and other ESU and CILIP member groups or library groups as required e.g. SCL SW, SWRLS, CILIP SW.
- I have been asked by colleagues within the LibrariesWest consortium to speak about my findings to groups of librarians in their authorities.
- University of the West of England (UWE) guest lecture to MSc Information Management students.

Planning

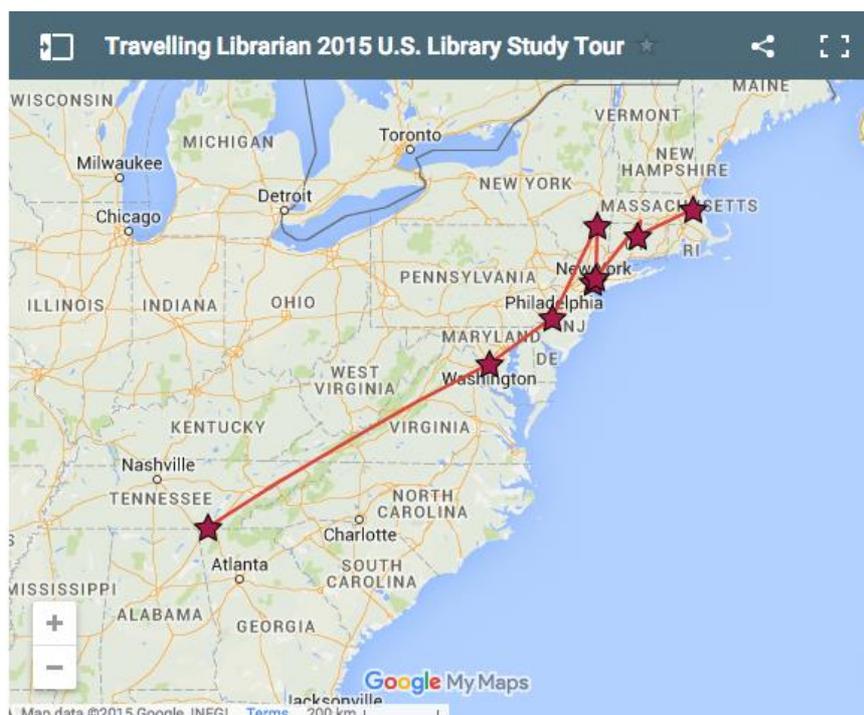
I spent a long time planning my library visits, this included time studying staff profiles on websites and LinkedIn so I could ensure that I contacted the right people, rather than a generic library addresses. I directed my emails to senior members of staff who were responsible for community engagement or the heads of public services. I initially tried to contact all of the libraries that I wanted to visit as soon as I heard that I had been shortlisted for the award. I heard back from most of the libraries and was delighted to have really enthusiastic responses as well as lots of wishes of good luck. It was really worthwhile investing this time, I'm sure it helped me gain the award and it enabled me to look at an itinerary and consider logistics and expenses prior to my interview.

Once I knew that I was the recipient of the award I quickly planned a draft

itinerary, I contacted the libraries to tell them my news and try to confirm dates. There were a lot of emails back and forth and this process took quite a while but by July I was able to book my plane tickets.

As a librarian I love to research and arranging my transport and accommodation within a budget was research heaven! I was starting my trip in Boston and I quickly found that flying from my local Bristol airport via Amsterdam was considerably cheaper than flying from Heathrow as well as much more convenient. A return flight from Boston was cheaper than flying back from a different city so my trip was to start and finish in Boston. I then turned my attention to transport in the U.S. I was clear that I didn't want to drive and so looked at coaches, trains and internal flights. Because I was booking six to eight weeks in advance I managed to book some amazing Megabus deals at \$5 per trip from Boston to Hartford and New York to Philadelphia. I also pre-booked a train from Hudson to New York, which again was much cheaper online, in advance. I needed to book internal flights from Washington, via Atlanta to Chattanooga and then back to Boston. I found the best deal for these was to book well in advance, directly through Delta as a multi city flight.

For accommodation I used AirBnB rather than more costly hotels. I found rooms in people's homes with excellent reviews, a short walk away from most of the main libraries. My hosts were all friendly and gave me advice on where to eat and visit in any spare time I had. I really enjoyed staying in people's homes and felt it added greatly to my cultural experience.



Library Visits

Boston Public Library (BPL) 21st September

Boston Public Library was the first publicly funded municipal library in America, established in 1848. The Central Library has been on the current site in Copley Square since 1895. Charles McKim designed the older building, originally it was known as the “palace for the people”. In 1972 the central library was extended with an additional building designed by Philip Johnson. The two buildings take up one block and cover a million square feet. The Johnson Building is currently undergoing an \$80 million regeneration and renovation project funded by the city. The second floor has been completed and the rest of the building is due to re-open in 2016.

The Central Library is many things, it is a historic building – a museum within a library offering art and architecture tours; an exhibition centre; a research library; a special collections library with holdings of 23 million items

(second only in size to The Library of Congress); a digital repository for the State of Massachusetts; a business centre; a map centre and a public services library. The public library offers a wide programme of events, including lectures, author talks, weekly music concerts, technology training, children's story times and crafts as well as lending and online services. Importantly BPL is proud to offer every service and event for free. The motto *Free To All* is carved in stone above the entrance of the library.



Boston Public Library McKim Building



Boston Public Library Johnson Building

I started my day by meeting with Michael Colford, Director of Library Services and Jen Inglis, Chief of Public Services. They gave me an overview of BPL, the Central Library and its 24 branches.

Branch Libraries

Each branch library usually has a Branch Librarian, a Children's Librarian and three to four Library Assistants. Some branches also have Teen Librarians and Community Outreach Librarians.

One of the busiest branches is in Mattapan, a low-income neighbourhood. The library in Mattapan was rebuilt with a new state of the art building eight years ago and is well used by the local community. Michael explained that in the States a library's success used to be measured by its circulation statistics but they had now moved away from this to use a REACH measurement. The reach statistics are a combination of circulation, physical visitors, programme attendance and computer usage. Mattapan has very low circulation figures but when looking at the reach measurement, the library has very high use for community meetings, programmes and computer use.



Bibliocycle photo credit: BPL

Outreach

Over the past couple of years there has been a significant shift in focus for the branch libraries towards community outreach with Community Outreach Librarians based at some branches. The Outreach Librarians visit senior centres, hospitals, and juvenile detention centres. One extremely successful and popular outreach development is the bibliocycle. The bike has been specially developed with a fold out cart. Carrying between 50-100 books, librarians and assistants, working in pairs, visit farmers' markets, fairs, and community

events. They can join people to the library, promote library services and lend books.

Working with school libraries

BPL provides cataloguing services for its own libraries and all the public schools in Boston. School librarians issue all students at public high schools with a BPL library card. The joint catalogue between BPL and the schools enables the students to

request items from other school libraries or a public library; this will then be delivered to their school or made available to collect at a local library.

Johnson Building renovation

The experience at BPL is that the buildings make a real difference, they believe in investing in building renovation and thinking about the ways in which libraries are used today. When libraries were originally built they were used in a very different way, today much of the work people used to use libraries for can be done on the internet from home. While the Central Library is still also a research library, for specialist researchers, their average library user today wants to attend programmes and events, use the library for group work and take occasional books out. The current renovation of the Johnson Building seeks to address these issues to provide a service for the 21st century.

Michael took me on a tour of the newly opened 2nd floor space in the Johnson building, which incorporates the Children's Library, Teen Central and Adult Services (non-fiction).

Children's Library

This is a space for the very young up to pre-teens (tweens), each age group has its own area. The space includes a fabulous sensory wall for babies and toddlers, a story time area by a large window and a computer and seating area for the tweens. There is an additional learning room that can be used for crafts and author events. The library is large, cheerful and welcoming. The focus is on children and parents being able to use the space in different ways rather than the book stock, which has been reduced by approximately 50% to make way for the new design.



Children's Library



Sensory wall

Teen Central

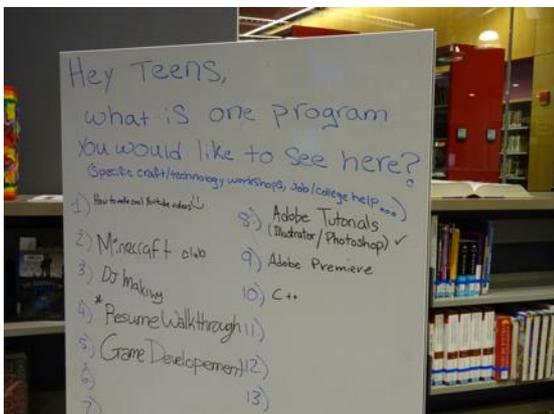


Diner style booths - Teen Central

Teen Central has a far more urban industrial feel. Teens were consulted on what they would like to have in their space, so it has become a HOMAGO space with booths to sit and hang out in, a games and films room, laptops and a digital media lab. Book shelves are on wheels so they can be moved out to open the space up for events. Teen Librarian, Jessica Snow, says that the place is buzzing after school with 60+ teenagers.

Within the digital media lab Youth Technology Librarian Catherine Halpin supports teens and organises workshops on music making, 3D modelling, video editing, programming, Photoshop and graphic design. Community partners often provide workshops. Technology Librarians need to know enough to get people started but don't need to be experts. Many of the teens already have digital skills so peer-to-peer learning is being encouraged and the hope is that teens will also be able to teach the adults when the new Business Innovation Centre opens in 2016. Jessica has developed a paid programme for Teen Tech Mentors who work 6-8 hours a week, during term time, supporting peers with technology.

The picture below shows Jessica's ideas flip chart for teens to fill in with new activities they would like to see in the library – such a simple effective idea.



Teen consultation



Technology Librarian Catherine Halpin with Michael Colford in the Media Suite

Adult Services

The main adult non-fiction area leads on from Teen Central. This is also an area where people can study, use the Wi-Fi or sit and read. The window bar seating area is particularly popular with patrons. Simple ideas such as wayfinding boards work well for orientation.



Adult Non-Fiction area

All three areas have seen a dramatic increase in footfall and usage since the 2nd floor opened in February this year.

Community Learning Centre

When the building is completed in 2016 it will include a Community Learning Centre. Gianna Gifford, Manager of Reference and Instruction Services, produces a programme of workshops for patrons with English as a second language (ESL). These include English classes, citizenship classes and conversation circles.

Conversation circles provide an opportunity for ESL patrons to practice speaking English in small informal groups. These sessions take place at the Central Library and a number of the branch libraries. It is one of the fastest growing programmes and also one of the few areas supported by volunteers at BPL.

Gianna also oversees a range of research, technology and career classes and drop in help sessions.

Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Centre

The Innovation Centre will be a major new development. It will be a place where start-up businesses and entrepreneurs can research, network and use meeting



Wayfinding board

spaces. It will house a makerspace where businesses can create their own logos or start Etsy craft businesses from the library. It will provide MOOC sessions where people can take online courses together offering peer-to-peer support. The Centre will provide a very flexible space where a range of demonstrations, workshops and support can take place. Small businesses will be able to use the facilities for free but it is hoped that in return there will be the opportunity for skills sharing and entrepreneurs may be asked to facilitate workshops to share their knowledge and skills with others.

Retail Outlet

The main floor of the Johnson Building will include partnering with a retail outlet; this will provide some income generation. The process is already underway with a request for proposals issued. The prerequisite is that the type of retail outlet has to be compatible with a public library and library services.

Events Management

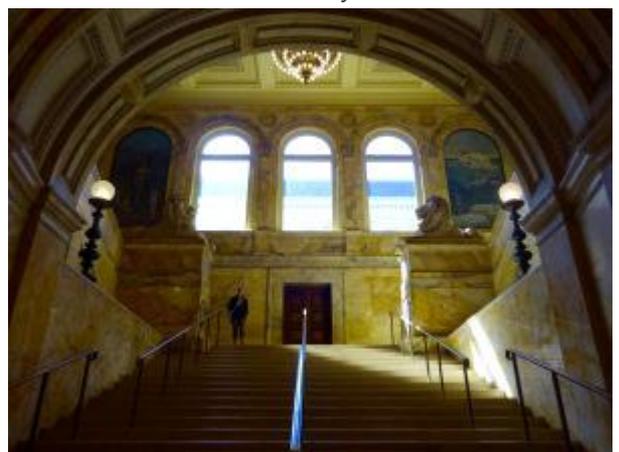
Emily Tokarczyk manages a small events team for BPL, various spaces within the Central Library can be hired for weddings, conferences and other events out of opening hours and it makes a spectacular venue. The team will make all of the arrangements and catering is provided by the library café and restaurant.



Courtyard

Tour of the McKim Building

At the end of the day Meghan Weeks took me on a tour of the historic McKim Building. Meghan has a museum and architecture background and her knowledge is incredible. BPL provides free daily Art and Architecture tours of the McKim Building, which over 10,000 people a year take. I was lucky enough to have a one-to-one tour and the frescos, statues and architecture are really quite magnificent.



Main staircase McKim Building

My day at Boston Public Library was truly inspiring. I'd love to return to Boston one day to see the Johnson Building in its regenerated state. My thanks goes to Michael Colford and his team.

Hartford Public Library (HPL) 23rd September

Hartford Public Library in Connecticut consists of the Downtown Central Library and 9 branch libraries. I was met by CEO Matt Poland who started by giving me a tour of the Central Library. Joining us was Erica Freudenberger from Red Hook Public Library, a small library in the Hudson Valley. Both Hartford and Red Hook are part of the American Library Association's 'Libraries Transforming Communities' (LTC) Programme.

Hartford Public Library is doing amazing things! They are thriving on partnership working including partnering with the Passport Office, a local restaurant, the University and local careers office. The Central Library is a large space of over 60,000 square feet but the total staffing for all branches only numbers 129, over 50 of these are part time and 20 are security staff. Some areas, including the careers' centre, are staffed by partners.

'A Place Like No Other' is Hartford Public Library's motto. Matt Poland wants all of his staff and anyone who visits the library to have this feeling about their library experience.



Hartford Public Library

Teens



HPL's HOMAGO teen space

As in Boston, HPL has a HOMAGO space. The teen area has only been open for a year and it is led by Tricia. There is a strict rule that no adults are allowed. The area consists of a recording studio, games area, maker tables and more. Young people from the community, who specialize in coding, digital skills and studio recording, have been taken on as part time employees to offer expertise and peer-to-peer mentoring. In the summer over 80 teens per day were using the space.

The American Place

This space works in partnership with the Passport Office and is designed to welcome immigrants and ease their transition into their new home city. Legal advice and a citizenship programme are offered as well as help into the workplace.

Café

This vibrant and popular addition in the atrium is the result of a partnership with a local food business. It was decided that a chain would not be suitable with the ethos of the library so a non-profit partner called The Kitchen was chosen to provide a café area. The café trains and employs local citizens who are long term unemployed, giving them new skills in catering and customer service. Food is home cooked and produce is sourced locally. The Café pays 25% of its takings to Hartford Public Library giving the library some income generation as well as providing an excellent additional facility.

Art

The library has a gallery promoting local artists, hosting exhibitions for free. There is also a collection of sculptures and paintings located throughout the library by a variety of well-known American artists. These have been donated to the library.

Technology

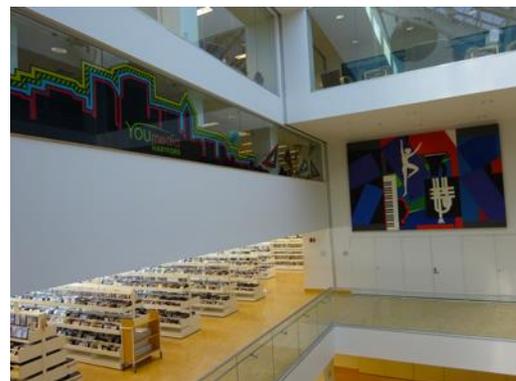
There is some interesting new technology in the library including a touch screen table, which stores a wealth of digitised local studies information. It is available for the general public to use but can be used for presentations and classes, it is linked to a large screen on the wall.



The American Place



Non-profit partner café



A Romare Bearden painting on permanent display



Touch screen table

Branches

After lunch in the Kitchen cafe, Public Services Director Corey Fleming took us on a tour of some of the branches. The branches are usually staffed by a Branch Manager, a Teen/Youth Librarian, a Library Assistant and a Security Guard.

We started at the small Park Library with its mainly Hispanic community. This is in a socially deprived area, so additional provision is put in place to support the community. While I was there a busy homework club was taking place. The site is located near to schools and children arrive immediately after school for support with homework from library staff. The stock in the library also reflects the needs of the community with a large quantity being in Spanish.



Park Library



Dwight Library

Next we visited the Dwight Library, which has recently been extended. The site is co-located with a community centre, a senior centre and a school. The newer part of the building can easily be cleared to be used as a performance space. Homework clubs are very popular in the branch libraries.

Our final branch visit was to the Albany branch, a new library that is conveniently located next to two schools. The branch has a large meeting room that is used and valued as a community space.



Shelving on wheels to clear the space for performances

Libraries Transforming Communities Meeting

In the afternoon Erica and I were lucky enough to be invited to attend the weekly LTC meeting with the Senior Leadership Team. The meeting was held in the Bubble Up Room, this room is an innovation space and has been designed out of the LTC coaching. It is a space to be used for brainstorming. The idea is that the room should be used to explore ideas rather than action ideas; it includes a full wall of chalk board and a shelf of play-doh.



LTC meeting in the Bubble Up Room

The LTC meeting discussed the neighbourhood security project that had developed from the LTC's 'turning outward' approach developed by the ALA's LTC partner Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. More can be read about this initiative in American Libraries Magazine: <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/hartford-public-library-builds-strengthens-community-police-relationships/> .

Itty Bitty Hartford



CEO Matt Poland with architectural model of Itty Bitty Hartford

An exciting new development that will be taking place next year is Itty Bitty Hartford. The space for 0-4 year olds is being re-designed. A model street will be installed in the children's library to enable experiential learning. 67% of children in Hartford do not have the motor skills or vocabulary expected of pre-school children. The new space will allow children and parents/carers to learn about and experience everyday activities in a fun way and familiar setting. Funds have already been raised for the \$500,000 project and construction will start in the New Year.

Thank you to Matt Poland and his team for a fascinating day and for sharing your ideas and experiences.

Mid-Hudson Library System – Future of Programming

Workshop 24th September

After visiting Hartford I went home with Erica Freudenberger to her beautiful house in Catskill, New York State. Erica had very kindly offered to put me up for a few days and introduce me to librarians in the Hudson Valley region as well as show me her own fascinating library at Red Hook.

On Thursday Erica took me along to the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) Future of Programming Workshop, in Ploughkeepsie.

In the United States many public libraries have Programming Librarians with the responsibility of creating and organising all activities and events run in libraries. The MHLS consists of 66 public libraries and it was great to be introduced to key library personnel from the area.

In the United States, much like in the UK, there is a downward trend in footfall and circulation. Programming, for all ages, is a growth area and is a way for libraries to further a core activity of facilitating knowledge creation. The workshop aimed to promote increasing community connections through programming.

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Co-ordinator for Library Sustainability, introduced the session. Rebekkah explained the importance of focusing on community needs rather than a library's needs and wants. Libraries need to help build communities by continually looking for new ways and ideas to meet ever-changing community needs.



MHLS panel L to R Janie Hermann, Erinn Batykefer, Erica Freudenberger, Patti Haar, Sue Ray.

Janie Hermann

The first speaker was Janie Hermann, Public Programming Librarian at Princeton Public Library, New Jersey. Janie told us how adult programming had been

minimal at Princeton, however programming for all ages has grown in recent years and the library now offers over 1,700 public programs per year. The programming team is cross-departmental with Janie being the full time lead but 14 other team members each participating for a variety of hours to produce a wide range of events. She said that there had been a culture shift and there was now a greater emphasis on programming at Princeton Public Library than anything else.

Key tips Janie made were:

- Just because something is free – you don't have to offer it. Running events and activities is never free, staff time needs to be considered. Set goals and objectives for events.
- Find a balance – what is too much and what is not enough? Princeton runs free events 5 – 6 nights per week.
- Princeton sends out a weekly newsletter 'This Week in the Library' at 7am every Monday. This enables people to set their calendars every week.
- Think thematically, programme in quarters so people can take part in a series of events.
- Check that the collection can back up and support the programme.
- Work with the collection development librarians; if you are thinking of an author event, do their books circulate in your libraries?
- Do some blue sky thinking with your team – nothing is too outrageous, be adventurous, it doesn't mean that every suggestion has to run.
- Play, Pause, Rewind, Delete – weed your programmes just like a collection, get rid of what's not working to make way for the new.
- Be flexible and spontaneous.
- Take ideas from the community – listen to the community.
- Have good PR, good staffing and a programming budget.

Some of the successful programmes put on by the Princeton team include:

- Election Night at the Library – big screen
- World Cup football – big screen
- Rubik's Cube competition
- Royal Wedding guests – dressing up and big screen
- Opera at Princeton – partnership with University
- Environmental Film Festival – invite entries, screen films
- Student Film and Video Festival – children to 24 years
- How to – skills sharing festival
- Civic Hackathon – designing apps for the town.

Erinn Batykefer

The second speaker was Erin Batykefer, co-founder of The Library as Incubator Project and Programming Librarian at New Canaan Library. Erinn suggested that we need to re-frame what we do in the library, to connect people to information. The purpose of libraries is to exchange information and books are not the only way to do this. The reference section is no longer relevant we now have more up to date information on the Internet but we should also recognise that sometimes information is held in people. Libraries should see the people we serve as collaborators in the information exchange.

Erinn's view is that programming should be treated as collection development. The events calendar needs to be representative of the community. Libraries should respond to suggestions from the community and provide events in a range of formats. Ideally thematic suites of programmes should be created so people have the opportunity to join at multiple points.

Erinn's key areas to consider when organising a programme calendar are: Subject, Format and Diversity. Examples at New Canaan Public Library include:

- Skill Shares – e.g. knitting and crocheting, intergenerational, peer to peer learning, the library acting as facilitator.
- Workshops – e.g. paper making workshop
- Classes – e.g. IT, WordPress bootcamp followed up by monthly blogging get together.
- Lectures – e.g. Birds of Prey, Bee Keeping
- Author talks – partnering with schools and colleges

Erinn's tip for ensuring diversity in the programming schedule is to 'shelve' programmes in Dewey. She does this simply by putting programmes under subject headings and colour coding the subjects. If the programme calendar is in a range of colours, diversity should be achieved.

Hudson Valley Libraries – early adopters, investing staff time in programming

The final session looked at three MHLS libraries that successfully use extensive programming as part of their core service.

Erica Freudenberger – Director of Red Hook Public Library

Patti Haar – Director of Patterson Library

Sue Ray – Director of Catskill Public Library

Some of the great suggestions and ideas shared by these librarians were:

- Use your community's skills – people like to be asked to share their skills
- Listen to your community and do it for them
- Serve the entire community not just those who use the library
- Use community spaces for events – get out of the library, leave the building and meet people
- Collaborate – run programmes with school librarians or local groups
- Take story times out of the library – visit local businesses, learn about baking, police, fire services
- Successful programming takes commitment, funding, time and food – always serve some food!
- Programming is about experiential learning
- The library is a venue facilitating knowledge creation
- It will take time to build a public following
- Don't charge for anything
- CANI – constant and never-ending improvement
- Hire the right people with shared vision and values
- Proper outreach – there is no limit!



L to R Erinn Batykefer, Janie Hermann, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Frances Tout.

Red Hook Public Library 25-26th September

Red Hook Public Library is situated in Red Hook Village, Dutchess County, New York State. The population of the village is under 2,000; the library serves a community of approximately 4,000 with out-lying areas.

Red Hook Library is run by director Erica Freudenberger with a team of two full time staff, seven part time staff and five pages. Pages are teenage staff, aged 14+ working 3-5 hours a week. There are 12-15 volunteers giving a few hours each, the volunteers usually help with shelving but may help to run or lead activities.



Red Hook Public Library



Children's library

Although only just over 4000 square feet, there is space for a children's library, a tween room, a teen area, adult library, study areas, three public computers and a children's learning garden.

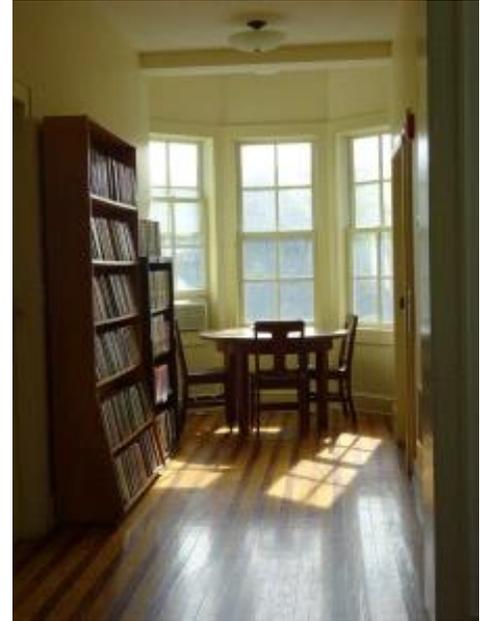
This small library is based in a historic octagonal building, with limited space the team have found plenty of innovative ways to engage with their community. Red Hook Library has been nationally recognised for the work they have done, it has been designated a five star library by the Library Journal and was a 2015 finalist in the Best Small Library of America Award.



Circulation desk



Trustees' monthly meeting



Study area

Trustees

Red Hook is a municipal library that has a Board of Trustees. The Trustees act as governors of the library, dealing with finance and policies, they are appointed by the Mayor of the village. Erica reports to the trustees at the monthly board meetings. The library is funded by local taxes. The funding system relies on residents voting in local elections for the amount they are prepared to spend on their library. This means that in order to secure appropriate funding it is imperative that the library demonstrates its value to the community.

Programming

As one of the ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) cohort Red Hook Library have been working hard on their community engagement activities, much of the programming is based on experiential learning. The amount of programming they achieve is truly impressive. On average they put on about 15 programmes per week. Usually the planning is done in 6-8 week cycles. Programmes include:

- Romp and Stomp – pre-school
- Toddler FUNdamentals – playing and developing fine motor skills
- Petite Picasso – art for pre-schoolers
- Story time – pre-school
- Spinning yarns – knitters group
- Libratory – STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) based maker sessions, after school
- Crafternoon – for grade school children

- Lego Club
- Curators of the Lost Art – hands on art history and practice, after school grades 6-9
- Minecraft
- Two monthly book groups – adults afternoon and evening
- Colour Club – adult colouring
- Teen Tech Help – Saturdays, help with digital devices by pages and teen volunteers
- Farmers' Market – Children's craft activities and stories weekly at the village market
- Homeschool Discovery Zone – for home-schooled children and families
- Learn conversational Italian – 8 week course for adults – beginner and intermediate classes
- Learn Japanese for fun – introductory course for adults and high school students – volunteer led
- Latin for teens – volunteer led
- Shakespeare Discussion Group – monthly
- Job Search Clinic- partnering with local careers centre
- Health Exchange Navigators – private sessions with navigators – partnership
- After school sessions held at the High school, currently web design and graphics – weekly partnering with school.

In addition to these regular sessions there are many one-off adult evening events usually led by members of the community sharing their skills. These talks and workshops have included bee keeping, gardening, brewing and maple tree tapping.

Community Partnerships

The work that Erica and her team do is inspiring; they work extensively with partners, including the nearby University, Bard College and the High School. There is a monthly meeting with village organisations and businesses “Red Hook Together” where there is an open dialogue and organisations share what they are doing, giving further opportunities for partnership work.



Erica Freudenberger with Red Hook Mayor Ed Blundell



Story time at Red Hook Farmers' Market



Library craft event at the Farmers' Market

Programmes are often held out of the library in community venues because of the limitations of space. This allows extensive outreach work, for all ages, and increases the visibility of the library and their work. Erica is constantly talking with her community; many of the events the library delivers have been suggested by community members keen to share their skills.

Red Hook Library is thriving with over 150,000 visits and 11,000 attending programmed events in the last year as well as increased issues. Erica is convinced that the book issues will take care of themselves if you have people attending the programmed events. This library is highly valued by its community.

Thank you to Erica and all of her team at Red Hook, for the few days I spent with you. Red Hook Public Library is a shining example and demonstrates what can be done by the smallest of libraries.



With the library team at the Farmers' Market

New York Public Library (NYPL) 28-29th September

Mid-Manhattan Library

I started my visit to New York City at Mid-Manhattan Library on Fifth Avenue. The library is a six storey building of approximately 25,000 square feet, situated virtually opposite the central flagship library, The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building.

The Mid-Manhattan Library is open for longer hours than any other of the 91 NYPL locations. It is open for 88 hours a week, with extended hours until 11pm on Mondays to Thursdays. The library houses NYPL's largest circulating collections including an extensive World Languages Collection catering for over 50 languages. The library also houses NYPL's Picture Collection, about 1.5 million pictures clipped from books and magazines and organised in subject order, broken down by decades.

Managing Librarian Billy Parrott showed me around.



Mid-Manhattan Library



Managing Librarian, Billy Parrott in the picture library

IDNYC



Mid-Manhattan Library is an IDNYC Centre

The library is one of the biggest centres for the New York City Identification Card (IDNYC). This scheme is run from the library by the City and has proved hugely popular. The free card is for anyone who lives in New York and can prove they have an address regardless of immigration status. It is accepted as ID for entrance to City buildings, opening a bank account and can be used as a library card. It also gives one year's free entry to many cultural institutions.

Programming

On the top floor, the Mid-Manhattan Library has a large space used for hosting free author talks and lectures, three to four evenings per week. Film shows are screened on weekend afternoons.

There are 50 free computer classes held per month on the fourth floor computer lab. These range from the basics, to using the Cloud, social media, using apps, safety and maintenance and much more. Classes are usually 2 hours in length and are delivered by librarians and information assistants, whoever has the skill set to run a class. Registration for classes opens one week prior to the class, customers are allowed to register for three classes per month. Because the classes cover most topics and are very frequent, customers are usually signposted to a class rather than given extensive one-to-one help. Very quick, instant, computer help may be available if time allows but most of the floors have only one member of library staff on duty at any time and a security guard.

The library also employs pages (entry level shelvers, usually young people), circulation staff on the ground floor and welcome volunteers at the entrance. Partners deliver some programmes, such as the SingleStop sessions which offer help and advice on healthcare, health plans, citizenship, and a nutrition assistance programme.

The after school programme, the Innovation Lab (creating blogs, podcasts and videos), is run by a central NYPL team of specialist educators, they work closely with schools and students can earn high school credits for completing the programme.

Other programmes run by the library include contemporary classic book discussions, story times for adults (short stories read at lunch times) and an English Conversation Hour, held twice weekly as a drop in, for anyone who wants to practice their English.

Stephen A. Schwarzman Building

At the Central library – the one with the famous lions, Patience and Fortitude, I met up with Michelle Misner (Manager of Library Services Coordination), Carolyn Broomhead (Research Community Manager), Maura Muller (Volunteer Manager) and Susan Rabbiner (Assistant Director of Exhibitions).

Volunteers

Maura Muller manages volunteers for the four research libraries and the 88 branch libraries. Volunteers can only assist staff, not replace staff. Volunteer roles include tour guides, literacy tutors, ESOL tutors (English for Speakers of Other Languages), knitting and crocheting, events, shelving, welcome desk, map division, homework help mentors, job coaches and special projects e.g. pre-prep and digitising. NYPL has high numbers of volunteers, fluctuating between 1,100 and 1,500. Many are high school students who volunteer for 20 hours as part of their school community service. This means a high turnover of teenagers, which can put extra pressure on staff with volunteer training, to combat this problem Maura and a group of volunteers produced a video on how to shelve.



NYPL flagship Central library with lions Patience and Fortitude

There are some corporate volunteering days, giving businesses the opportunity to take part in some community work whilst encouraging team building and giving the libraries some corporate sponsorship. Corporate volunteers are encouraged to watch the training video prior to their volunteering day.

Volunteers in the research libraries often belong to the Friends of the Library; they are mostly retirees who donate money to NYPL. Volunteers in the branches may be teenagers doing their community service for school or volunteers in social housing who give eight hours a month community service in exchange for lower rents.

Maura and a retired librarian volunteer handle all of the recruitment and selection but individual departments provide the volunteer training at a local level.

Research Programmes

Carolyn Broomhead co-ordinates programmes and services for the research libraries with a focus on expanding the use of the research



Michelle Misner and Carolyn Broomhead

collections, she also works with the outreach team encouraging both branch and general public use of the research collections. Carolyn and her team often work in the universities, supporting graduates and students around the city. She promotes their digital collections and the hope is that eventually all of the digital collections will be open access across the world.

A current project is the Community Oral History Programme, this is operating in the branch libraries and has proved very popular. Volunteers are collecting oral histories of community members and these can be heard on the NYPL website. The demand for this project has been so high that they are now looking to expand it using the research collections to support memory circles, and link it with ancestry databases, map and photography collections.



Hanging a new exhibition

Exhibitions

Susan Rabbiner told me about the exhibition programming at the Schwarzman Building. In the main gallery they hold four major exhibitions per year using items from NYPL collections. In other exhibition spaces they deliver flash exhibitions, these are put on at short notice, responding to news and events, for example the death of someone famous or celebratory anniversaries.

Exhibitions play a really important role in getting people into the library; they are the primary way that the general public, those who are not researchers, learn about the library's extensive collections.

Tour

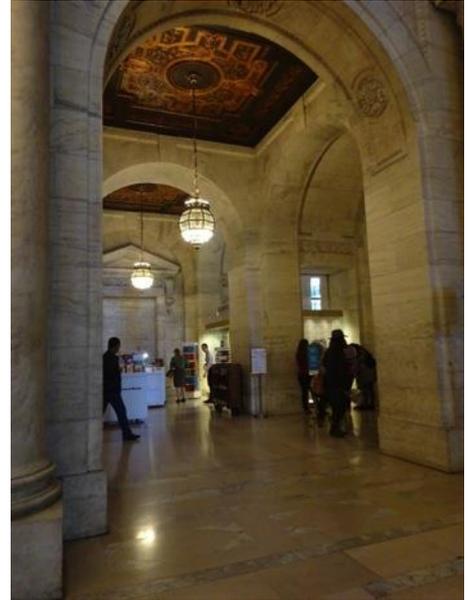
At the end of the day Michelle Misner gave me a tour of this very impressive iconic building. Unfortunately the Rose Main Reading Room was closed for repair but we were able to view the rest of the building, which includes reading rooms, study centres, a large children's lending library, historic collections, a library shop and cafe.



Reading room



The Central Library, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building



Library foyer



Bronx Library Center

Bronx Library Center

The Bronx Library Center is a modern building of 78,000 square feet, which opened in 2006. Chief Librarian Michael Alvarez showed me around.



Book stock has made way for tables and seating as use of Wi-Fi has increased

The library is open from 9am-9pm Monday-Saturday and 12pm-6pm on Sundays. Opening hours have been extended since it first opened from 8pm-9pm. The library is especially well attended in the evenings and the later opening time allows for more evening programming. Circulation is not increasing at the Bronx Library Center but attendance of programmes is very much on the rise.

There are 130 computers, a mixture of desktops and laptops; the free Wi-Fi is used extensively. Shelving and book stock has been reduced to make way for more tables, seating and study areas. A greater part of the budget is now spent on digital resources. During my visit it seemed that the seating areas were well used with people on their laptops, phones, gaming devices and tablets but there were very few people browsing the books.

Careers Service

The library has a specialist careers area offering classes, help with resumes (CVs), one-on-one coaching for job seekers, online resources, computers and three job fairs are held each year. The careers centre is open seven days a week.



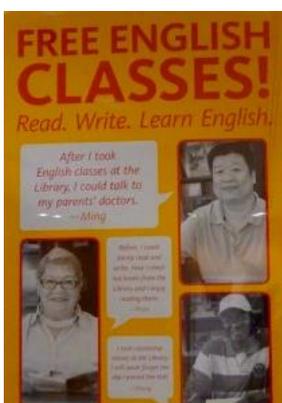
Careers area

TechConnect

Bronx Library staff deliver a wide range of computer classes; librarians from the TechConnect programme, a central NYPL team, teach additional classes. Over 80 free technology classes are offered from the basics to coding, using Skype to photo editing, business applications to purchasing a tablet and much more. The team also provides classes on using the catalogue and library online resources. Where possible patrons are signposted to sign up for a computer class, if it seems that they need support on the PCs.

BridgeUp

The Bronx Library Center is one of five NYPL sites to host the BridgeUp programme, an after school educational programme for at risk youth, funded by a legacy trust donation. Partnering with local schools, specialist educators are employed by NYPL to work with selected young people over a five year period.



ESOL English classes

Adult Learning Centre

The library provides free adult literacy classes delivered by library staff and volunteers. It is the biggest centre for these classes in the NYPL system, the demand for adult literacy classes is extremely high and the library currently delivers 24 classes per week. It has been one of the largest growth areas for the Bronx Library Center. There are also free courses in English for speakers of other languages, to improve speaking and listening in English as well as a young adult literacy programme.

Teen Area

The teen area of the Bronx Library Center is popular and welcoming. The staff are young and adults are discouraged from regularly using this part of the library. Teens are consulted on what they would like to see in their library. A monthly teen council is held, any teen can take part so they can have a voice on future programming and library services.

Teen programmes at the time of my visit included author events, a coding game competition, design a leather bag workshop, graffiti workshop and a travelling zoo in the library. NYPL also host regular TeenLIVE cultural, artistic and technology programmes across the branches, these are funded through a family endowment left to the library for young audiences.



The children's library is a popular place to do homework after school

Children's Area

The children's library has its own floor. During my visit children flooded into the library at the end of school to do homework and use the computers and Wi-Fi. Homework help was available if needed. The children's library has its own room for events, story times and school visits and a smaller room for hands-on maker programming, both crafts and technology. There are extensive activities available for children including video games (Xbox, PS3), crafts, story times,

puppetry, e-book discussions, science Tuesdays, family sessions, computers and board games.

Additionally The Bronx Library Center hosts a free after school programme, Innovation Lab, which runs at selected NYPL sites, delivered by staff and volunteers. The Innovation Labs are aimed at tweens (8-12years) and encourage them to deal with issues they may be facing by using blogs, podcasts and technology.



The busy children's library

Auditorium

In the basement there is a large auditorium. This can be hired out to host events for other organisations but there is a regular programme of events including film shows, concerts, author talks, poetry and presentations.

Outreach

At the end of my visit I met up with Jean Harripersaud, who heads up Adult Services and programming at the Bronx Library Center. The library has the highest amount of programming in the city. Jean ensures that there is extensive outreach and collaboration with the community. Her team take part in local festivals outside the library and they continually go out to visit different groups to promote library services. This includes visiting senior centres, nursing homes, schools, childcare providers, detention centres, and community groups. Jean says that wherever possible she likes to give a quick presentation to groups or at community events as she feels that this is far more effective way of promoting library services than just having a table at an event. A new outreach development Jean is planning for the team is visiting nursing homes to read short stories to residents.

It was great to see such a busy, vibrant library, so well used by all sectors of the community. I found it interesting that although this is a large library, like other libraries I have visited there were very few library staff on the floor, usually only one person on each floor or two at peak times in each area. Peak times are the lunch hour and after school/work. A lot more of the staff time is spent on planning and delivering programming, when I commented on this Michael Alvarez said that most of their patrons are fairly self-sufficient when it comes to using the library spaces.

Free Library of Philadelphia 1st-2nd October

I spent two days at the Free Library of Philadelphia Central Parkway Library with a full schedule arranged by Donald Root, Chief of Central Public Services, and his assistant Stephanie. It was great to meet with so many teams and also to meet with Free Library President, Siobhan Reardon, Library Journal's Librarian of the Year 2015.



Central Parkway Library

As the banner says the Free Library is a place of big ideas.



Café

The café is run by a non-profit organisation that supports the homeless. It offers work skills to formerly homeless people in customer service and catering, encouraging them to progress into employment. The library works in partnership with the café and makes no charge for it to operate from the building.

Business Library

The Central Library is a large historic (1927) building that is due to undergo a major expansion project. They hope to build a new area underground, at the back of the building, which will house the children's department and an auditorium.

Underneath the current building are six floors of stacks. All the stock that was kept in the stacks has been moved offsite to a facility 3.5 miles away and this area will be redeveloped to make a new Business,



The stacks have been emptied and await redevelopment to provide a new Business, Research and Innovation Center

Research and Innovation Center (BRIC), a Commons and a teen area. The building work is due to start in January 2016.

Charles Smith introduced me to his business team and explained how BRIC will consolidate the many current business areas of the library into one modern space. It will include the Workplace, an area for jobseekers to find support with CVs, job applications and interview techniques. Another section will be the Regional Foundation Center which supports all levels of non-profit organisations through research, databases, resources, programming and referrals. The new centre will also provide areas for business mentors, legal advisors and financial advisors to support small businesses and entrepreneurs.



Current Business Library

The Business Library partners extensively with the Philadelphia business community to provide a wide range of free, regular, programming for businesses and entrepreneurs. Presentations and classes available include:

- Branding
- Finance
- Technology
- Business plans
- Motivational speaking
- Women in business

These are very well attended with numbers ranging between 80 and 150. The programming offers great opportunities for business networking.

The business department is also leads on health and well-being, the team are currently exploring the possibility of a library nurse post to offer basic health assessments. For the last year two social workers, employed by the city, have worked from the library to support patrons in a variety of ways, especially the homeless, older people and those who may have mental health issues.

Literacy Enrichment After School Programme (LEAP)

Chris Caputo and her team met with me to give an overview of their children and teens educational programming.

Drop-in after-school sessions are available at all 54 library branches. The sessions offer homework help but also extensive STEM programming to extend the learning that happens in school. 53 adult after-school leaders and about 130 high school students are employed in the LEAP programme, the teens serving as role models for younger children and their peers. College students are employed to support teen after-school programmes. The Free Library also buys into an online subscription provided by Brainfuse which offers homework help and online chat to a live tutor.

The Library's College Prep Program provides high school students with workshops and coaching to help them gain college places. The programme includes college fairs, application process, applying for financial aid and exam preparation.

Words at Play

The Words at Play project is a community outreach programme for families with children aged 0-5 and focuses on increasing vocabulary through play. Children who are exposed to more words when they are young have a higher success rate when they start school, children in areas of high poverty are not exposed to as many words as their peers in wealthier areas. The library partners with the science museum, an art museum, the performing arts centre and the zoo, the project is funded by a large Philadelphia bank. The target communities for the project are in North Philadelphia which are among the poorest in the United States. The project provides community events and play parties in libraries and community locations, the events may have live animals, music or performers but always include vocabulary building activities to help parents and children learn together.

Senior Services



Senior Services offers a homely area in the library

The Senior Services area was the brainchild of President Siobhan Reardon. It is a relaxed area with large light windows, carpeting, comfortable armchairs, newspapers, magazines and books, giving senior citizens a more homely library space. Additionally there is a computer area, some of the computers have assistive technology and senior patrons can use the computers for an extended time. There is also a private screened area where advice and one-to-one sessions are held.

Dick Levinson, Senior Services Librarian, provides a wide range of programming for older people which includes computer skills, hobby talks, history lectures, learning new skills, healthy lifestyles and finance planning.

E-Gadget Helpdesk

The E-Gadget helpdesk has been running for over a year in the main foyer of the Central Library, it operates as a drop-in with two library staff, twice a week and there are always customers waiting. Originally it was to help patrons use the library's eBook service but now they help with anything from using selfie sticks to setting up apps on tablets.

TechMobile

The TechMobile is a custom built mobile computer lab, it is fitted out with eight laptops and seven tablets as well as being a Wi-Fi hotspot. The vehicle attends community events, community organisations and groups and is staffed by a Digital Resource Specialist and a driver/assistant. One-to-one help is on offer as well as workshops.

Community Hotspots

Three Community Hot Spots in high need areas are provided by the Free Library, these are computer areas set up within community organisations. The Hot Spots are staffed by Digital Resource Specialists and are open access for all the community to use (no library card required). Workshops are also delivered by the Digital Resource Specialists on work skills, computer basics and social media. An additional hot spot is available at the airport for travellers.

Digital Resource Specialists

Digital Resource Specialists are a new initiative; information assistants who are keen to work with technology have been promoted to the new role. The aim is



A separate small computer area dedicated to senior citizens



Twice weekly E-Gadget Helpdesk



The TechMobile

that there will be one Digital Resource Specialist based in each library branch and they will be the go-to person to provide computer and technology help at that library, they will also be delivering technology programming.

Culinary Literacy Centre

The Culinary Literacy Centre on the fourth floor of the Central Library is an innovative and inspirational new service from Siobhan Reardon and her team. It is the first of its kind in the United States.

The centre houses a commercial kitchen, cameras and a large screen as well prep tables and seating. The premise behind it is to connect literacy and cooking. Reading, maths, measurements, conversions, sequencing, are all important parts of literacy and cooking. The centre looks at literacy in its widest forms including health literacy and consumer literacy, engaging with the immigrant population and residents with low literacy levels.

Additionally the centre provides a wide range of community programming including demonstrations by local chefs, bakers, cook book author events, school visits and workshops, family cooking, preserving classes and cake decorating.



A fully equipped commercial kitchen



Seating for workshops and talks



Librarian Suzanna Urminska with a mobile kitchen box

Librarians Liz Fitzgerald and Suzanna Urminska have developed multiple literacies programmes with hands-on experiential learning, these have proved to be incredibly popular with the community and local schools.

The programmes they offer are expanding and one of the most recent initiatives has been to make mobile kitchen boxes to enable culinary

literacy outreach and programming in branch libraries. Each box includes an electric wok, a blender and a safe set of kitchen implements that adults and children can use. While not every library can have an industrial kitchen they can all take part in some culinary literacy programming.

Neighbourhood Library Clusters and Community Councils

I met with Free Library President, Siobhan Reardon, as part of our discussion she explained how their strategic plan aimed to build Library Clusters and Community Councils with their branch libraries.

Originally library staff only worked in their designated branch but due to funding reductions, shortly after Siobhan arrived seven years ago, they needed to rethink the way that the branch libraries operated. The Strategic Initiatives Team developed clusters of branch libraries, where library staff and librarians work across a cluster of six to eight branches. The clusters share knowledge, resources and best practice with each other; this has had the added benefit of building professional development among staff. Each cluster has a Cluster Leader as an area manager.

Siobhan and her team were keen to improve civic engagement by helping to build communities. Community Councils are a new initiative that the library has developed with the clusters. Community Councils consist of representatives from the Police, Fire service, sanitation, schools and non-profit organisations in a cluster area. The councils meet to find out what is going on in their community, what resources are needed to create good civic engagement, improve community referrals and work in partnership to build better communities. The Free Library's Cluster Leaders are taking the leading role in developing facilitating the Community Councils. This has meant quite a change to professional roles with Cluster Leaders and branch librarians becoming far more forward facing, out in the community and working as community organisers.

There is a great deal of community engagement happening at The Free Library of Philadelphia and they have led the way with many innovative ideas. Thank You to Siobhan Reardon, Donald Root and their teams for taking their time to see me, sharing so much and giving me a great two day schedule.

Washington D.C. Library of Congress

I had a weekend in Washington DC before my meetings at The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (Central Library) on Monday. This allowed me a bit of time to catch up with myself and have a look at some of the city. For a librarian a visit to the Library of Congress is a must, they offer free, hour long tours around the main Jefferson Building. The tours concentrate on the history, art and architecture of the Library of Congress and are led by very knowledgeable volunteers. There are other exhibitions and library treasures to explore.

I also visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, both of which I can recommend. A walk down the National Mall to the Lincoln Memorial and The White House is also a must. The amazing thing about D.C. is that all museums and buildings are free entry.



Main Reading Room at the Library of Congress



Library of Congress

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (DCPL) 5th October



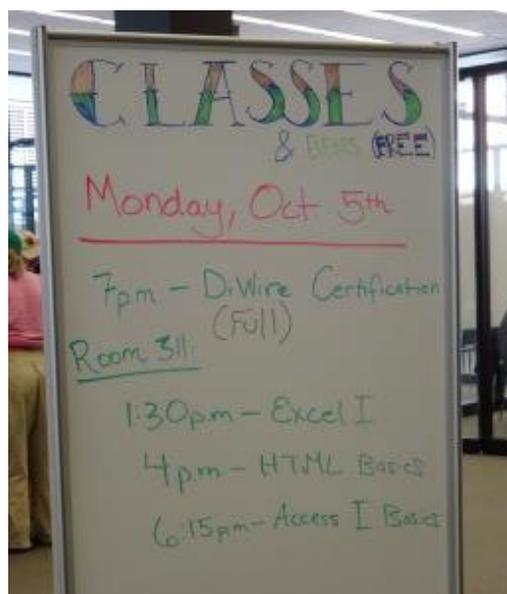
Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library

The 440,000 square ft. building was designed by architect Mies van der Rohe, it was completed in 1972 and in 2007 it was designated a historic landmark by the District of Columbia. A major three year renovation and extension programme is due to start in the next 18 months. This will include adding an additional storey onto the top floor. While the refurbishment takes place the library will move off

the site. They are currently in the process of looking for accommodation in the downtown area for each different department. Operations Manager April King showed me around the building before a series of meetings DCPL had set up for me.

Highlights of the tour, not included later, were:

- Adult Literacy Resource Centre – Help to pass High School Diplomas, computer assisted learning, help with reading, writing and maths, English as an additional language and conversation circles. The centre runs classes and one-to-one help is delivered by tutors and supported by volunteers.
- Computer Lab – A wide range of free computer classes are provided ranging from the basics to designing a website. There are usually three classes a day delivered by a tutor and volunteers. The computer lab is also used for staff training.
- Teen Area – Staff work between the Teen Area and the Children's Library. The area includes gaming and a small studio, Mac computers, and YA books. Teens can put forward ideas they would like to do e.g.



A wide variety of free computer classes are offered

film making. It was interesting to find that they are considering changing some of their Macs for PCs as the feedback they have had is not all teens are comfortable with Macs.

- Children's Library – A large area where they provide extensive after school programming. The space includes separate baby and toddler areas, with a sensory wall. There is also a large colourful story time room, usually accommodating up to 60 children and carers. During holiday periods they can have 150 attending story times.



Children's Library

- The library partners with a number of local government organisations, this includes the local jail and a room is available for video visits for families of men awaiting trial. A councillor for the homeless also uses the space and a support agency for veterans operates from the library. Advice sessions on 'Obama Care' are frequently available. Other civic partnerships include tax office advice sessions and disability benefit – help to fill out forms.

I had lunch with Kim Zabrud, Assistant Director of Public Services, we discussed the possibilities and concepts of the new building and what will still be relevant in five years' time, when the new building will be open. The current plans are to retain the makerspaces, co-working business spaces, zones for government partner agencies and provide a visible centre for innovation. Book stock may be reduced but there is likely to be more of a book shop arrangement, with low level shelving, 'grab and go' fiction, a cafe and a visitors' centre.

Kim explained how a staff visioning study came up with five anchor concepts for the new library.

1. The City's reading room – traditional library space
2. The City's innovation lab – maker movement and co-working
3. The City's gathering place – place for people to meet and public meetings
4. The City's classroom – place for learning, all ages
5. The City's forum – a place for public discussion about things of importance to the community.

The new space will have a lot of programming space and DCPL will be relying heavily on community partners to deliver programmes. It is likely that they will have an events co-ordinator to ensure that there are plenty of daily events.

Special Collections

After lunch I met with Mark Greek, special collections co-ordinator. The special collections are made up of Washingtoniana and the Black Studies Centre. The Washingtoniana is one of the largest local history centres in a public library in the U.S., it includes a public archive, micro film, newspapers, periodicals, books, photographs, maps, art and sculpture. Most of the collection is donated and the space available will double in size in the new building. One option in the new building will be for the Historical Society to move in with the Special Collections department which will increase the collection size.



Black Studies Centre

The department run public programming, a recent programme was the history of murals in the city. They also act as facilitators for community meetings. Staff deliver a lot of programmes out in community spaces during evenings and weekends. Staff work flexibly to enable these programmes to take place and Mark said that empowering staff with ownership of projects helps with this process.

Memory Lab

Jaime Mears is a resident fellow from the Library of Congress, she has been placed at DCPL for one year to develop a project helping raise awareness of personal archiving and digitising. Jaime's exciting project is likely to be very popular with the public, it will be ready to launch in February 2016.

The Memory Lab will be a free DIY space where the public will be able to transfer obsolete formats to digital files, Jaime has researched the formats that were most popular by the numbers purchased, VHS, VHS Cs, mini DVs, audio cassettes, photos and transparencies. The lab will be very accessible and will be promoted as a social activity, e.g. families come to the library with their old home movies, enjoy watching them together and digitise them.

Jaime has also developed a series of workshops such as archiving your Facebook pages. She will be spending time making sure that she teaches the lab staff how to use the equipment and is writing detailed workshop lesson plans so that the project can be used by other public libraries. There are plans to develop a picture based wiki with information to help people use the lab, this will be available online and in paper format in the lab. Jaime will also be producing preservation information to help ensure that people have the resources they need to take care of their digital files once they have visited the lab e.g. best practices.



Jaime Mears in the testing phase of the Memory Lab

There are currently no other projects like this in United States public libraries but a similar project is already in operation at Vancouver Public Library. Jaime has a blog where she is documenting her project. <https://jaimemears.wordpress.com/>

Centre for Accessibility

I next met with Adaptive Services Librarian, Rose Asuquo. The centre tries to ensure that DCPL is accessible for people with all types of disabilities; it includes the D.C. Library for the Blind, part of the National Library Service for the Blind. Every state has a Library for the Blind. The National Library Service for the Blind is run from the Library of Congress and provides DCPL with the talking book machines and the talking books for free. There are about 1000 DCPL patrons who use the Library for the Blind service.



Free audio book machines are provided for the blind and visually impaired

A books at home service operates for patrons with short term disabilities, there are only about 50 patrons using this service, books or DVDs are posted out to them in zipped bags whenever they require them, the books for the blind are delivered in the same way. Rose said that most of the interaction for the Library for the Blind and at home service patrons is done over the phone, they do not physically meet 99% of these customers.

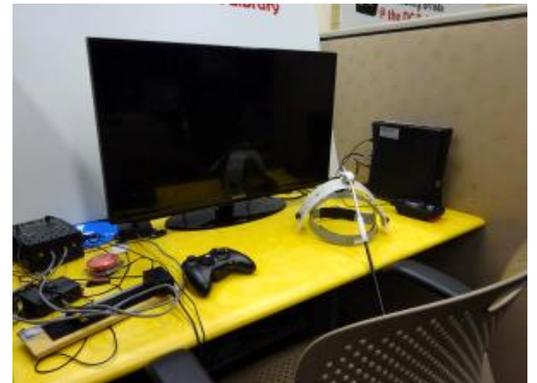


Audio books are cassette tape size with USB fittings

The Centre for Accessibility offers many other services including a wide range of assistive technology hardware and software for computers. Mac has a full range of accessibility features but Rose finds that many patrons are using PCs and while there is accessibility on Microsoft, patrons prefer JAWS screen reader software as it has greater functionality.

Extensive programmes catering for all aspects of disability are delivered by the centre, including:

- Accessibility networking for web developers
- Accessibility Hackathons
- Youth education, independence, employment and technology fairs
- American Sign Language story hour – stories, crafts and therapy dogs
- Blind and low vision game nights – Scrabble, Monopoly, Bingo and Uno
- Braille book club for kids
- Celebrations of deaf culture
- Sign language classes
- Technology training sessions
- Talking book club
- iPad and Android training sessions



Assistive gaming technology is available

It was very impressive to see a department in a public library with such a wide range of services and options for people with disabilities.

The Labs

Maryann James-Daley is the Manager of the Digital Commons and The Labs, she showed me around these new innovative areas.

The Digital Commons houses public use PCs and Macs, patrons can use the computers twice a day for 70 minutes. The space includes the Dream Lab co-working space, 'incubators' (small glass offices for small business use) can be used as a one off for meetings or may be used regularly by some individuals as office space. Regular non-profits or start-ups can sign a contract with the library and in return for free use of office space, they agree to deliver one programme per month in their area of expertise, e.g. marketing, design, social media, coding etc.



Co-working incubator spaces in the Dream Lab

An espresso book machine is available which can be used to print bound copies of out of copyright books or a patron's own book or report. There is also a small booth available for patrons to Skype in.



Skype booth



Fully equipped sound studio

The Studio Lab offers, for free with a library card, a fully working recording studio, rehearsal space for bands, a green screen, photography programming, photography studio space, interview and podcasting booths.

The Fab Lab is a maker space with seven 3D printers, a 3D scanner, laser cutters, wire bender, traditional tools and soldering equipment. An extensive range of programming is offered, mostly in the evenings. There are two makers in residence who can inspire patrons and deliver programmes. They are funded by the foundation and are in residence for a year.

Regular 20-30 minute orientation sessions are held for the labs, patrons need to complete an orientation session before they can use the labs, it includes health and safety information and expectations. Certification sessions are also required to use specific machines, once patrons have taken these sessions they are free to book sessions to use the labs and equipment. There is no charge to use the labs, customers bring in their own maker materials and there is a nominal charge for 3D printing.

The staff of the labs are not necessarily librarians, although some are (with a keen interest in technology), other staff employed have a technology background. The lab staff rotate so they cover all of the labs and the Digital Commons.

My day at DCPL was really interesting and covered a number of different areas. Thank you to all the team for their time. I'll be very keen to see how the building renovation progresses and what the new space will eventually hold and offer.



Fab Lab Makerspace

Chattanooga Public Library 7-8th October



Chattanooga Public Library

A number of people were surprised that I was going off the beaten track down to Chattanooga for the last stop of my study tour. However Chattanooga Public Library is led by 2014 Library Journal's Librarian of the Year, Corinne Hill, who in the past three years, with a team of hand-picked librarians from around the States, has turned the library's fortunes around quite dramatically.

Corinne was brought in as Executive Director in 2012 following an independent consultant report that deemed the library to be failing and irrelevant.

Chattanooga Public Library is a big space but it does not have the big budget that some of the other libraries I've visited have. It is a challenging 1970s concrete building with large open spaces, the floors are reminiscent of aircraft hangers, but by using the space to their advantage Corinne and her leadership team have demonstrated what can be done, providing innovative new spaces with a limited budget. It is still a work in progress and so far most effort has been concentrated on the 4th floor Makerspace and the 2nd floor Teens/Tweens and Children's areas. Much has been written and talked about Chattanooga's 4th floor and it has been heralded for its creative innovation, however it was the Teen/Tween areas that really caught my eye.

Changes

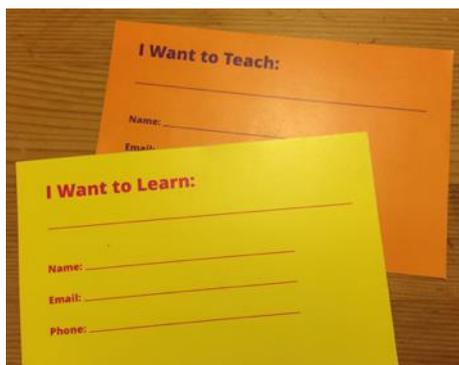
I met with Corinne Hill and Assistant Director Mary Jane Spehar, they gave me an insight into some of the changes that have taken place in the last couple of years. The 4th floor is the best known area putting Chattanooga at the forefront of the makerspace movement in libraries but a lot of other changes have taken place.

One of the major changes has been the way the library order's stock. In the past up to 19 people selected the stock, this process has been streamlined, stock is now ordered by two people and new stock is pre-processed. Corinne's view is that when a book is released it should be available in the library on the same day. If a

new book is popular and there are many reservations for it, additional copies are now purchased.

Corinne introduced a patron request system, the premise being that it is cheaper to purchase a paperback book than pay for the cost of staff time and postage for inter-library loans. The promise is that the library will purchase requests that patrons ask for and the patron will be the first person to borrow that book or DVD. It is not a complete carte blanche, the items requested have to fit within the bounds of the collection policy and be available to purchase. Since 2012 there have been 11,000 patron requests. The library is now finding that by adding to their collection in this way, they are purchasing a broader range of materials that are popular with patrons and may not have been chosen by librarians. The process of actively partnering with the community to build the collection is very popular with patrons, patrons feel that the library is listening to them and requests can be turned around within a week.

They have bought into many online services including several for eBooks and eAudio books and an online film streaming service. Very extensive weeding had to take place to make room for the new areas, this was quite controversial at the time.



Customer comment cards are placed around the library

Other changes that took place were investment in customer service training and practices and changes to recruitment. Customer comment cards are placed all around the building for customers to give feedback, every comment is followed up by Mary Jane. Corinne visited an Apple Genius Bar to get her phone fixed and was impressed with the service and staff so she asked Apple for their job description and application form and had them adapted for the library, they then advertised

for 'smart people'. This gave them some new staff who have different skill sets to complement existing staff with library backgrounds.

There has been an institutional cultural shift underway at the Chattanooga Public Library, not all staff have reacted well to the changes that have been made but the process is on-going and Corinne believes that to create institutional change takes five years. A forthcoming staff day training will be used to highlight to all staff the different activities that happen on the 2nd and the 4th floor.

Coffee Shop

The entrance of the library combines a coffee shop with the circulation desk; all circulation staff make coffee as well. It is aptly named 'Circulation and Percolation'. The coffee shop breaks even; it is not there to raise funds but provides an additional service to customers. The rest of the 1st floor houses the adult fiction, non-fiction, 20 public computers, magazines, DVDs and audio books.



Circulation and Percolation coffee shop

4th Floor Makerspace

Mary Barnett (4th floor operations) and Elizabeth Gaffney (assistant) showed me around the 4th floor makerspace. The floor had been used as a storage space prior to Corinne's arrival; it was completely cleared and now offers 12,000 square feet of public laboratory and educational space. After trying various hours and days they decided that the best times for the floor to be open are Tuesdays to Saturdays 2-8pm. Three part-time assistants staff the space, it is often single staffed and occasionally double staffed. The mantra on the 4th floor is that the library is there to facilitate, it is all about self-directed learning, the staff are learning too so won't do the work for people but can help if needed, the ethos is to allow people to learn themselves.



Zine making area on the 4th Floor

Originally the floor was designed to be a conduit for people to be self-organised, however they are now trying to start some introductory workshops to help people get started in the space. Where possible they ask people in the community to come and share some of their skills rather than relying on staff to learn enough to teach. The focus of the 4th floor is to support production, connection and sharing of knowledge by providing access to tools, facilities and space.

The most popular item on the 4th floor is the 3D printer, the filament is charged at cost (\$0.06 per gram) so most items printed cost no more than \$1.50. Other

popular items include a zine making area – essentially cutting, sticking and folding to make small magazines. There is also a fabric making area with a loom and sewing machine, a vinyl plotter, a laser cutter as well as an area with traditional tools.

GigLab

The floor also houses the GigLab, Chattanooga is the Gig City, one Gigabit per second internet speed is available to every household and business in the city by super-fast fibre optic broadband. The GigLab offers one Gigabit of connectivity throughout the library and through the Wi-Fi, it also offers a 4K high definition screen, an audio visual streaming system and virtual servers. Popular recent additions are two Oculus Rift headsets enabling virtual reality gaming.



Sewing and a loom in the fabric area of the makerspace



Virtual reality gaming in the GigLab

Teens and Tweens area

The Teens and Tweens area covers over half of the second floor, this area used to house adult non-fiction but in the last couple of years the floor has been completely rearranged. Now there are Chromebook laptops for teens to use in the library, there is no enquiry desk, one to two members of staff floorwalk and the space is filled with lots of interesting ever-changing things for teens to do.

Megan Emery is a librarian based on the 2nd floor, she designs the programming for the teen and tween department and also the programming for the 4th floor makerspace. Megan is currently focusing on parallel programming ideas between the 2nd and 4th floors, making the 4th floor more family orientated and a natural progression for young adults from the teen area. This will enable trips to the library to become a greater whole family experience.

Camp EtsyNooga

Megan has worked on Etsy's Entrepreneurship Program for libraries, with her knowledge from this programme she has developed a weekly Saturday teen camp called Camp EtsyNooga, it runs over five weeks and is aimed at helping teens start their own small creative businesses. The teens need to come along with a product that they have made or designed and sessions concentrate on helping them with pricing, replicating their product and marketing. At the end of the camp they attend and sell their products at a craft fair.

Walk-up Programme Stations



The popular gaming area

The 2nd floor has an interesting range of walk-up program stations, staff do not operate these stations and again the focus is on self-directed learning. Through a series of focus groups they asked teens and tweens what they would like to see in the space, so the programming is developed with the users' input.

The stations include:

- A gaming area
- Minecraft stations
- A MaKey MaKey station (currently glasses of water to make music on a Chromebook)
- Science experiments
- Spirograph
- A tracing table
- Button badge making
- iPad Instagram photo booth.

There are also areas for theatre, art and a big screen for weekend movies. One of the programmes that was on while I was there, which really appealed, was "Let's take things apart", old electronic devices that no longer work, e.g. laptops, VHS machines, radios etc., are donated to the library and the teens can spend an hour



Trying my hand at the Makey Makey music station



Megan demonstrates the tracing table

taking them apart. The programme an hour later is “Let's put things together” here teens and tweens spend an hour making new weird and wonderful things from the items they've taken apart in the previous session.



A big screen for film shows

Programming on the 2nd floor is extensive with multiple activities each day. Many programmes are advertised on the library's website but some are put on at short notice, if teens want them and there are always a range of walk-up stations.

Teen Books

There is also of course a book area and some staff recommendations to help teens decided what to read. The manga and graphic novels are particularly popular. Teens are encouraged to sit back and read for 20 minutes if they are spending time on the gaming station and want to change a game.



Staff 'top picks' for teens

Teen Volunteer Programme

Megan operates a teen volunteer programme, she has about 180 teens and tweens who help out. There are no set roles and no set times. It is very flexible, they can turn up and there is always an on-going list of (real) things to do which maybe about developing programmes, designing craft areas, art projects, helping on walk up stations. Volunteers are initially trained to do pop-up programmes, take statistics, and engage with patrons. Some experienced teens also provide peer-to-peer learning, teaching and supporting new volunteers. Over 800 teen volunteering hours were donated in August alone.

Children's Library



Children's library with sensory pod and walk-up programme stations



'Write a postcard to your favourite book character' station

Lee Hope, Youth Services Coordinator, showed me around the Children's area. This area had been rows and rows of shelving with no seating, it is now an open space where children and their carers want to spend time.

Similar to the Teen and Tween area there are lots of walk up programme stations, fun things for children to do based on STEAM learning (STEM plus the arts). These include Lego and Duplo tables, sensory pods, hopscotch taped on the floor, postcard writing, a dressing up area and magnet letters.

Story times take place in a separate children's events room and it was interesting to hear that they also deliver a regular sensory story time, they find these are particularly good for children with autism as well as visually impaired or deaf children.

There are many inspiring ideas at Chattanooga that can easily be adapted to suit other libraries. I'm sure as the rest of the regeneration takes place there will be much more innovation to come from this library. Thank you to everyone at Chattanooga Public Library for the time and information that they shared.

Conclusions and Some General Observations

Programming

At all the libraries I visited in the U.S. there has been a change in focus in recent years. The emphasis is now very much on programming rather than stock. Programming at these libraries is diverse to meet the needs of the whole community. Many libraries had Programming Librarians with an overview of all events and activities in their libraries. In the UK, most libraries do offer a range of activities but the focus on these is often secondary to core library duties.

Skills sharing, knowledge facilitation, experiential learning, peer-to-peer support, self-directed learning, partnerships, community outreach and community conversations were the common themes throughout my study tour. These themes inform the programming at each library. Every library's community is different, engaging with communities and meeting the needs of individual communities is vital, there is no one size fits all when it comes to programming.

Funding

The State, City or local taxes fund libraries. However this usually only pays for the basics and most of the libraries I visited are very pro-active in seeking additional funding to help deliver the wide range of services and programmes they offer. Additional funding is sourced from philanthropy, endowments, grants, business sponsorship, civic groups and friends groups.

Many libraries are commissioned to provide additional government services e.g. passports and citizenship.

A number of the libraries I visited had donation boxes to help fund programming.

Roles and Staffing

Public Libraries generally have Boards of Trustees acting as governance for the library, the Library Director reports to the Board of Trustees.

Staffing at the libraries I visited was minimal; there were very few staff on library floors, often only one per floor, two at peak times even in the largest libraries. A greater amount of staff time is spent on developing and delivering programmes.

Teens are often employed as 'pages', an entry level library helper role involving shelving, shelf tidying, supporting programmes and simple clerical duties.

Library students from Masters in Library Science (MLS) degree courses frequently undertake internships in libraries.

Volunteers

The use of volunteers varies from state to state, depending on state laws and unions. The most common volunteering role is shelving. In many places a large number of volunteers are sent from the courts for community service hours or high schools (20 hours required to graduate). Historic libraries often have volunteer guides. Other volunteer roles include skills sharing workshops and delivering courses.

Opening Times

Libraries are generally open for longer hours than in the UK. Not many libraries are open before 10am. Most libraries are open at weekends. Peak times are lunch times and evenings, all libraries are open in the evenings, smaller libraries usually until 7pm and larger libraries between 9pm-11pm.

Adult programming and courses are often held in the evenings. Staff work flexible shifts to accommodate out of hours programmes. Provision of library services outside the standard working day can only help engage the community with the library.

Online Resources

Most libraries I visited reported that online resources are a major growth area, use has rocketed, not only traditional reference but also film and media streaming, eBooks, eMagazines and homework help e-resources are all very popular.

Fees

Virtually everything is free to customers. The libraries I visited did not make any charges for courses, events, activities, reservations or DVDs. The only charges they applied were for printing and overdue fines.

I had an amazing time during my study tour and consider myself extremely lucky to have been given this opportunity. Along the way I've seen some fabulous libraries and places and I've met some truly inspiring librarians. In the future I hope to plan

some international co-working and I have made some great contacts to share best practices with.

We have an excellent team at North Somerset and we have lots of fantastic projects and developments on the go, which I have enjoyed sharing with colleagues overseas. I hope that what I have discovered and learnt will help inform future developments. I know that colleagues in the United States will also be looking at some of our processes and projects to adapt for their libraries.

Sharing our best practices is the way forward, it's not necessary for any of us to re-invent the wheel, libraries, after all, are about open access to information – free for all!

Websites

Library Websites

Boston Public Library <https://www.bpl.org/>

Hartford Public Library <http://www.hplct.org/>

Red Hook Public Library <http://redhooklibrary.org/>

New York Public Library <http://www.nypl.org/>

The Free Library of Philadelphia <http://www.freelibrary.org/>

Washington DC Public Library <http://dclibrary.org/>

Chattanooga Public Library <http://chattlibrary.org/>

Other Websites

ALA Libraries Transforming Communities

<http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/libraries-transforming-communities>

A step by step guide to the “Turning Outward” approach to your community

ALA/Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

<http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/sites/ala.org.transforminglibraries/files/content/LTC%20digital%20workbook%206-12-15-incl%20new%20tools.pdf>

Travelling Librarian 2015 Blog <https://travellinglibrarian2015.wordpress.com/>



[@FrancesTout](https://twitter.com/FrancesTout)

Expenditure

International Flights Bristol – Amsterdam – Boston; Boston – Amsterdam - Bristol	£508
Internal Flights Washington DC – Atlanta – Chattanooga; Chattanooga – Atlanta - Boston	£172
Train Fares Amtrak Hudson – New York Amtrak Philadelphia – Washington DC	£24 £70
Bus Fares Boston Airport Megabus Boston – Hartford (CT) Megabus New York – Philadelphia	£3 £5 £5
Taxi Fares New York, Philadelphia and Chattanooga UK Taxi from airport	£62 £18
Subway Fares Boston and New York	£16
Accommodation (18 nights AirBnB, 4 nights library host) Boston - 3 nights – AirBnB Hartford – 1 night – AirBnB New York – 3 nights – AirBnB Philadelphia – 2 nights – AirBnB Washington DC – 4 nights – AirBnB Chattanooga – 4 nights – AirBnB Boston – 1 night – AirBnB	£286 £66 £256 £156 £310 £234 £108
Subsistence	£410
ESTA Visa Waiver	£9
Telaway U.S. SIM	£60
Travel Insurance	£69
Gifts/Thank you cards	£110
Total	£2957