alsc

ENGAGE, CULTIVATE, PROVIDE, AND ASSESS

An Outreach Model for Serving All Children and Families

Written for the Association for Library Service to Children by
J. Elizabeth Mills, Dr. Kathleen Campana, and Dr. Michelle H. Martin

☙ INTRODUCTION

> "When we were created, our team was given a charge—to find and help fill our service gaps. To make sure we are getting our services out to every library patron in D.C., whether or not they've ever actually set foot in our libraries. So, really we are seeing the whole city as our patrons instead of just the people who are coming into the library."
>
> —*Johnna Percell, children's librarian with Outreach and Inclusion Department, District of Columbia Public Library*

What comes to mind when you hear the term "outreach"? A bookmobile winding its way through a rural community to deliver books to children and families? A summer reading event for children in a sunny park full of lively activities that complement a meal delivery program? Library staff offering a storytime and literacy program in a shelter for families experiencing homelessness? Outreach is all this and much more.

Libraries are transforming how they engage with children and families in underserved communities through creative, learning- and family-focused programs and services that take place in community locations, driven by community needs, wants, and aspirations. The competencies developed by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) encourage and support this transformation by highlighting the importance of outreach, specifically offering programs outside the library "to meet users where they are, addressing community and educational needs, including those of unserved and underserved populations" (ALSC, 2015).

WHAT IS OUTREACH?

In this white paper, outreach refers to providing programs and services beyond library walls and out in the community. Outreach is often done with community partners to reach those who do not or cannot come into the library and who are part of the greater community that the library serves. Often the sole purpose of outreach is to serve the community where they *are* rather than expect that they will eventually come into the library.

This description is supported by Beth Crist, youth and family services consultant at the Colorado State Library, who writes:

> The term 'outreach' is sometimes used to include any activity conducted outside the library walls...without the expectation that those receiving outreach services will ever come to the library. If people do visit the library after receiving outreach services, that's great! But it should not be the end goal of outreach. Outreach is a legitimate, critical service in itself (Crist, 2019, p. 73).

A visualization of definitions for outreach offered by library staff is shown in figure 1. This graphic clearly demonstrates the prominence of certain terms: outside, programs, people, services, reach, provide—many of which also appear in Crist's definition.

WHY DO OUTREACH?

The ALSC competencies provide strong justification for the importance and purpose of outreach. They encourage library staff to "[ensure] that all children have full ac-

Figure 1. Word cloud of participant definitions of outreach

cess to library materials, resources, and services…" (V.5) and "[advocate] for eliminating barriers to library service for children based on socioeconomic circumstances, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, and other diversities, and for overcoming systems of discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism" (V.4). In this way, ALSC emphasizes serving children and families where they are, regardless of barriers and access issues. Because of this, it is important to approach outreach with the goal of taking library resources, services, and programs out into the community without the expectation that the recipients will ever come into the library. Many library staff are meeting both of these competencies through identified goals for their outreach programs, which include:

- overcoming barriers,
- serving those who can't come into the library,
- reaching those who are not currently being reached by in-library services,
- providing awareness of what the library has to offer,
- leveling the playing field through access to library services,
- building goodwill,
- meeting people where they are, and more (Campana et al., 2019).

The common theme throughout these various goals is the library's desire to be an integral part of reaching and serving their surrounding community. Whether it's

through long-term partnerships or short-term programs and services, libraries are looking for ways to bring their resources to the patrons who need them most.

OUTREACH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Libraries are well positioned to support learning for the whole family through their programs and services (Celano & Neuman, 2015). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) suggests that family engagement should occur as a continuous partnership between families and early learning environments such as libraries, museums, preschools, and others. By placing an emphasis on engagement, organizations start from the understanding that all families are working to support their children's learning and development. The focus then becomes the methods by which informal learning organizations can partner with families to help their children learn and develop (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009).

Recent research on the two most prevalent public library programs for children and families—storytimes and summer reading/learning—has revealed that they do support learning. Storytimes in particular provide a strong foundation in early learning through an intentional focus on early literacy skills in the development and delivery of the program (Campana et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2018). Furthermore, storytimes offer an array of early learning domains such as STEM, social emotional, and others, and the participants in these programs embody important roles in facilitating the learning process for children (Campana, 2018). The research on summer reading has concluded that these programs, which include a variety of literacy activities, should target children in high-need populations who could most benefit from the support provided by the program (Dynia, Piasta, & Justice, 2015).

In addition to these two programs, libraries offer a variety of other programs to provide educational and enjoyable experiences for young children and school-aged children. Libraries have also helped parents and caregivers to support learning for the children in their care through initiatives and programs such as Every Child Ready to Read @ your library—first edition (ECRR1) and second edition (ECRR2), a joint initiative between ALSC and the Public Library Association (PLA). These parent education initiatives help parents and caregivers understand how to support their children's early literacy de-

velopment (Neuman & Celano, 2012; Meyers & Henderson, 2004). While libraries have long focused on learning for the child as well as parents and caregivers, they have only recently realized their potential in supporting intergenerational learning for the whole family.

Because of their family engagement practices, the public library is considered an important resource for supporting families in underserved communities (Neuman & Celano, 2012). However, many family engagement programs and services are often primarily offered in-house, placing those who do not or cannot come into the library at a disadvantage, limiting their access to learning opportunities and support. In fact, the 2009 Public Library Survey found that, of one hundred metro areas, the lowest attendance rates of children's services at the public library were located in nine metro areas that had the highest levels of child poverty and the highest numbers of children of immigrants (Swan & Manjarrez, 2011). Public libraries are looking for ways to reach these families, who may need the support most of all (Neuman & Celano, 2012; Prendergast, 2011), given the variety of barriers they experience that prevent them from accessing the library. Through the Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee, ALSC has advocated for underserved children and their caregivers and supported some innovative library efforts to reach and serve them.

Though many libraries are offering programs and services outside of library walls and in community locations, these can differ substantially from location to location. As a result, the library field needed a broad understanding of the types of programs and services that exist outside of library walls, what these programs might have in common, and what libraries have learned from these efforts to implement similar programs elsewhere. Having this knowledge could offer great potential for enabling libraries across the nation to reach children and families in underserved groups in their communities. This need is part of what led to the Project LOCAL (Library Outreach as a Community Anchor in Learning) study, an ALSC-supported, IMLS funded planning grant that explored how public libraries are taking their programs and services out into community locations to reach and serve families in underserved communities.

POSITION
ALSC recognizes outreach as a vital library service for overcoming barriers and serving children and families in underserved communities. Therefore, building on the ALSC competencies and the findings from Project LOCAL, ALSC provides the following recommendations for outreach services for children and families:

- Outreach programs and services should be centered around community needs and aspirations (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2019).
- Relationship-building with children, families, and community organizations should be at the heart of outreach efforts (Krabbenhoff, 2018).
- Outreach programs and services for children and their families should be offered in collaboration with trained children's library staff (Krabbenhoff, 2018).
- Outreach should be offered as a legitimate, critical service in itself, that is done with the main purpose of meeting children and families where they are (Crist, 2019).

Whether you are trying to get started with outreach, or you're looking to expand your current outreach services, a research-based framework of four stages of outreach (see figure 2), which emerged from Project LOCAL, should help guide you in building your own plan for reaching beyond the library's walls. This overall framework for outreach program development and delivery centers around the stages of engage, cultivate, provide, and assess, as a way to look at outreach in a holistic manner.

ENGAGE, CULTIVATE, PROVIDE, AND ASSESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
During the Project LOCAL research, it became clear that:

- Libraries devote time and energy to gathering data on community needs and aspirations and *engage* with their communities through that data-gathering process;
- Libraries *cultivate* and nurture partnerships big and small to meet community needs and avoid doing work that has already been done by someone else;
- Libraries *provide* programs and services to transform communities through innovative delivery approaches; and
- Libraries *assess* their programs to portray their complexity and depth for the purposes of advocacy and sustainability.

Figure 2. Model of outreach development (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2018)

These four aspects of outreach development and delivery are brought together into this research-based framework. Each stage of the framework is explored and defined below. In Appendix 3, you'll find ten case studies of libraries whose work exemplifies one or more of these outreach stages. The goal of the case studies is to provide real-life insight into what these stages look like, in addition to providing you with ideas and inspiration for your own outreach practices.

ENGAGE

Engage refers to learning about the world outside of the library. Libraries employ a variety of methods to engage with and learn about their communities. The tools librarians use to determine community need generally fall into two large categories—existing data and emergent data.

Existing data refers to census statistics, school-related data such as free and reduced lunch rates, test scores, local community data, superintendent data, and more. Many libraries are already collecting this data and using it, for instance, to demonstrate need for a storytime program in preschools that feed into schools with high need. Emergent data refers to personal conversations

with community members, leaders, individuals, and parents; getting to know the neighborhood through explorations—walking or driving; and talking with those in community organizations such as churches, food banks, homeschool groups, parent advising groups, targeted focus groups, community partners, and community focus groups. An outreach strategy for your library can begin through this process of discovering needs and aspirations and engaging with the world inside and outside the library through programs, services, and collections and most importantly, through people.

CULTIVATE

The act of cultivating in outreach is all about building relationships with partners, either existing or new, and the community. Offering outreach programs and services often requires you to develop partnerships to help you gain access to specific community groups, locate a site where you can offer your program or service, and connect with people so that your efforts will be well received. Project LOCAL uncovered that libraries are cultivating partnerships with a wide variety of community organizations to create, design, and deliver their outreach programs and services. Schools and preschools are often a natural fit for partnerships, as are community businesses, pediatricians, food banks, and more (Johnson, 2019).

These partnerships are often built in a variety of ways. Many libraries use existing partners to help them build a new outreach program or service, but others build completely new partnerships around outreach programs. Some intentionally choose their partner and work to build that specific relationship from the ground up because of their unique contributions to the program or service, whereas in other cases, the partner approaches the library about playing a role in the program or service, and the partnership emerges from the request.

In addition to partnerships, libraries also build long-term relationships with specific communities in which the outreach program or service takes place to help support the success of the program. For example, the Free Library of Philadelphia uses Neighborhood Ambassadors to support the success of their Words at Play program, a large-scale early learning outreach initiative. The Neighborhood Ambassadors are community members, paid a small stipend by the library, to publicize and spread the word about their programs and services

(Stippich & Caputo, 2019). Strategies for connecting directly with the community like this are important because they can help to break down barriers between the library and specific communities.

PROVIDE

Many libraries across the country provide innovative programs that focus on being responsive to their communities. As library staff identify a location within the community, they must also develop a structure for the program and determine what is required to implement it successfully. Sometimes, the library takes the lead role by completely developing the program, then coordinating with their community partners to figure out where the best location will be and what roles the library and the partners might play. At other times, a partner will approach the library with a programming need or idea and will work with the library to bring the program to fruition.

Additionally, a continuum of types of programs and services emerged from the Project LOCAL data, ranging from active, learning-rich programs to more passive marketing-based programs. Active programs involve group participation by library staff, children, and caregivers within a designated time frame, such as storytime, PrimeTime Family, block play, etc. Passive programs, on the other hand, are open-ended and allow children and families to interact with materials and resources on their own time and at their own pace, such as book drop-offs at day care centers, setting up a booth with library materials at a farmer's market, etc. Active programs often require more resources and personnel than passive programs. Moreover, it's important to understand what outcomes are intended for active and passive programs and how to assess those outcomes in a meaningful way.

Outreach can encompass both active and passive programs without privileging either type. Your library will have strengths in particular areas, your communities will have different needs, and you may find some aspects of outreach easier than others as you build awareness of your library and reach different communities—particularly

underserved communities. Notably, library programs are not one-size-fits-all and often depend heavily on the community, the personnel, the partnerships, available locales, etc. The better your library staff knows the community, the greater the likelihood that your library can provide outreach programs that matter, and the more the community will see how essential the library is to the life of the community.

ASSESS

Assessment has gained recognition in the past several years as an important aspect of public library operations. Historically, many libraries have focused on collecting output numbers (program attendance and circulation statistics) and participant satisfaction reports as their measures of assessment (Irwin and St-Pierre, 2014). More recently, though, many in the field have recognized that assessment measures can and should go deeper by examining outcomes and impact (Becker, 2015; Irwin and St-Pierre, 2014), and should be used for a wider variety of purposes, such as professional development, future program development, advocacy, and more (Mills et al., 2015; Irwin and St-Pierre, 2014). Assessment of programs and services is a crucial aspect of the program and service lifecycle because it can provide data for advocacy, data on community needs, and data for building more effective services and feeding into professional development (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2006; Gross et al., 2016).

Project LOCAL demonstrated that many libraries are assessing their outreach programs and services and collecting data for advocacy, future program development, and professional development. Most of the libraries, though, struggled with how to assess outcomes and impact in a widespread, meaningful way, beyond attendance counts, satisfaction measures, and anecdotal evidence. Some libraries were fairly successful with implementing self-reflection and peer discussion, which were used mainly to inform future program development and professional development. In self-reflection, the library staff examined how their program went, what they

> **Library programs are not one-size-fits-all and often depend heavily on the community, the personnel, the partnerships, available locales, etc. The better your library staff knows the community, the greater the likelihood that your library can provide outreach programs that matter, and the more the community will see how essential the library is to the life of the community.**

felt might improve it, and how to go about making those changes. In peer discussion, multiple library staff assembled to discuss their programs, using this time to discuss how the programs went and what they wanted to change about them and to ask for advice and feedback.

Ultimately, it's important to be creative in developing new ways to assess your programs and services, and don't be afraid to try something new. You can always make changes or do something different if it doesn't work out the way you had envisioned. The most important thing is to recognize assessment as a key piece of the program/service development cycle and dedicate time and effort to developing and implementing ways to assess your outreach programs and services.

In Appendix 3 you'll find profiles of ten libraries that offer a variety of outreach programs and services, in ways that follow the model of engage, cultivate, provide, and assess. Their strategies, tools, and experiences may prove useful as you and your library aim to reach the underserved families and children in your community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Here is some advice from practitioners for libraries looking to establish or grow their outreach.

ENGAGE:

- If you are starting an outreach program or service for your library, try to get a sense of your community, what is needed, and how to fulfill that need. Then do a little pilot, build from there, and constantly tweak it with what's working and how it can be done differently to be more effective. Always be looking at the big picture for the community and the larger perspective of the library system and services.
- Where do you typically go to feel part of the community? Consider how the library could be a part of that experience. What tools do you already have as a library system that you could bring to an outreach experience at that location, whether it's a community event or something else? Think about those tools and really curate what you're bringing so you showcase the unexpected side of the library.

CULTIVATE:

- Identify at least one organization in your community and connect with one person in that organization. That one person can be the person that opens the doors for you to get into community events. And then, from there, when you get to community events, start networking. Find and make use of every opportunity, because one connection, wherever it is, can spark multiple connections and community relationships.
- Don't be afraid to over communicate with your community partner. Most of the time, when I've felt like I'm pestering somebody, they actually thank me for the communication because they had been busy. You have to be willing to put yourself out there and make sure that you find a way to succinctly describe what you can offer. Frame what you want to do in a way that will communicate to your partner that the library can support and supplement their organization's mission and provide benefits to their audience.

PROVIDE:

- Just jump in and do it. You could plan all day, but really you just need to look for the opportunities. Once you get partnerships in place, start brainstorming or talking about what are they doing and where collaborative possibilities might lie. Once you have an idea, decide how much you're going to put towards it and what your resources are and then just do it.
- Start small. Connect with a community organization—Boy Scouts, schools, any organization that is dealing with kids—and build a relationship. Then start where you can with your resources and develop a program you can manage with your partner. Once you have one successful program, the partner will, hopefully, be more excited to help you with the next program. So, lay the foundation and then grow your programs. Most importantly, recognize that the process takes time.
- Believe in what you are doing and have confidence in what you can offer. Others may not understand what you are doing or see the value in it. People may question your goals and ideas, so you need to have the confidence and passion to push beyond that.

ASSESS:

- Talk to the participants and get their feedback. Ask them, "What could you use? What would you like to see more of? What could we offer to you to help you even more?" That piece is really important. If we just kept doing what we were doing just because we thought it was great, I don't think our program would be as successful.
- Once you have offered a program or service, evaluate if it was worth continuing to invest time, energy, and effort. Look beyond the stats and find the stories from within the program to determine, and communicate, its value.

CONCLUSION

Librarians want to do more to reach and serve those encountering significant barriers to accessing the library, despite the limits of their library system—financial, staffing, transportation, and more. The goal for this white paper and the model is to help you in every stage of your outreach program development—whether you're at the beginning looking for a roadmap to launch a program, or whether you've been doing outreach work for a while and are taking a moment to reflect, revise, and perhaps increase your offerings. As you move forward in your outreach efforts, consider the model and ALSC's competencies. How can you move beyond your library walls to better support children and families, especially those in underserved communities?

Focus on **engaging** with your community, **cultivating** strong and lasting partnerships, **providing** responsive and interactive programs that seek to meet community needs, and **assessing** along the way to remain agile in your program development and gain support from both administration and community to strengthen your programs long term. You can build connections in your community while staying within your resources and making a difference where families and children are living their lives outside of the library. In this way, you will make a difference and help situate your library as an anchor in your community.

REFERENCES

ALSC. (2015). Competencies for librarians serving children in public libraries. Retrieved from: www.ala.org/alsc/edcareeers/alsccorecomps.

Becker, Samantha. (2015). Outcomes, impacts, and indicators: Six years of measuring digital inclusion in public libraries with the Impact Survey. *Library Journal*, *140*(15), N/a.

Campana, Kathleen. (2018). "The multimodal power of storytime: Exploring an information environment for young children," ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Campana Kathleen, Mills J. Elizabeth, Martin, Michelle H. (2019). The role of community data in helping public libraries reach and serve underserved communities. In: Taylor, Natalie Greene, Christian-Lamb Caitlin, Martin Michelle H., Nardi, Bonni (eds.), *Information in Contemporary Society*. iConference 2019. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 11420. Springer, Cham.

Campana, Kathleen, Mills, J. Elizabeth, Martin, Michelle H., and Kociubuk, J., UW iSchool Research Symposium, "Keeping it Local: A research-based model of public library outreach programs for families and children in underserved communities," Seattle, WA (January 28, 2019).

Campana, Kathleen, Mills, J. Elizabeth, and Martin, Michelle H. (2018). ECRR outside the library: Providing meaningful, family focused, community outreach. *Children & Libraries*, *16*(2), 35–36.

Campana, Kathleen, Mills, J. Elizabeth, Capps, Janet L., Dresang, Eliza T., Carlyle, Allyson, Metoyer, Cheryl A., Bayo Urban, Ivette, Feldman, Erika N., Brouwer, Marin, Burnett, Kathleen, and Kotrla, Bowie. (2016). Early literacy in library storytimes: A study of measures of effectiveness. *The Library Quarterly, 86*(4): 369–88.

Caspe, Margaret, Jeske, Michelle, and Graham, Lesley. (2016). *A new approach to building family engagement pathways: The 5Rs framework*. Web. Accessed at www.ala.org/pla/onlinelearning/webinars/archive/pathways.

Celano, Donna C., and Neuman, Susan B. (2015). Libraries emerging as leaders in parent engagement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *96*(7), 30–35.

Crist, Beth. (2019). Taking the library to unexpected places: Outreach and partnerships in youth services. In Kathleen Campana and J. Elizabeth Mills (eds.), *Create, innovate, and serve: A radical approach to children's and youth programming* (pp. 71–82). Chicago: ALA Editions-Neal Schuman.

Dresang, Eliza T., Gross, Melissa, and Holt, Leslie Edmonds (2006). *Dynamic youth services through outcome-based planning and evaluation*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Dynia, Jaclyn, Piasta, S. B., and Justice, L. M. (2015). Impact of library-based summer reading clubs on primary-grade children's literacy activities and achievement. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, *85*(4), 386–405.

Gross, Melissa, Mediavilla, Cindy, and Walter, Virginia A. (2016). *Five steps of outcome-based planning and evaluation for public libraries*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

Halgunseth, Linda, Peterson, Amy, Stark, Deborah R., and Moodie, Shannon. (2009). *Family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs: An integrated review of the litera-*

ture. (Literature Review). The National Association for the Education of Young Children & PreK Now.

Irwin, Bill, and St-Pierre, Paul G. (2014). Creating a culture of meaningful evaluation in public libraries: Moving beyond quantitative metrics. *SAGE Open*, *4*(4), 1–15.

Johnson, K. (2019). Spring ahead with outreach opportunities. Web. Accessed at www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2019/04/spring-ahead-with-outreach-opportunities.

Krabbenhoff, Lindsey. (2018). Community outreach and the devaluation of children's librarians. Web. Accessed at https://jbrary.com/community-outreach-and-the-devaluation-of-childrens-librarians.

Meyers, Elaine, and Henderson, Harriet. (2004). Overview of Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library. Web. Accessed at www.everychildreadytoread.org/project-history%09/overview-every-child-ready-read-your-library%C2%AE-1st-edition.

Mills, J. Elizabeth, Campana, Kathleen, Carlyle, A., Kotrla, B., Dresang, Eliza T., Bayo Urban, I., Capps, J., Metoyer, C., Feldman, E., Brouwer, M., Burnett, K. (2018). Early literacy in library storytimes part 2: A quasi-experimental study and intervention with children's storytime providers. *The Library Quarterly*, *88*(2), 160–76.

Mills, J. Elizabeth, Campana, Kathleen, Fullerton, S., Brouwer, M., Carlyle, A., Metoyer, C., Dresang, E. T. (2015). Impact, advocacy, and professional development: An exploration of storytime assessment in Washington state. Published at https://views2.ischool.uw.edu.

Neuman, S. B., & Celano, D. (2012). *Giving our children a fighting chance: poverty, literacy, and the development of information capital.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Prendergast, Tess (2011). Beyond storytime: Children's librarians collaborating in communities. *Children & Libraries*, *9*(1), 20–40.

Stippich Sarah, and Caputo, Christine. (2019). The Free Library of Philadelphia: Serving its youngest patrons with a community-minded approach. In Kathleen Campana and J. Elizabeth Mills (eds.), *Create, innovate, and serve: A radical approach to children's and youth programming* (pp. 123–34). Chicago: ALA Editions-Neal Schuman.

Swan, D. W., and Manjarrez, C.A. (2011). Children's services at public libraries: A port in the storm. Web. Accessed at www.metrotrends.org/commentary/libraries-imls.cfm.

APPENDIX 1: THE PROJECT LOCAL STUDY

In 2015, focus groups with prominent librarians and library administrators in the children's services field uncovered many essential research needs, including reaching families who do not come into the library. A number of library staff expressed the importance of serving and supporting these families, but they felt uncertain of how to actually reach and engage with them. One participant shared that their library was *"trying to go out to all of these different places to reach these parents who do not come in."* The library felt they could offer support to these families, many of whom faced various barriers to visiting the library. So, the library felt it was important *"to go to them, where they are."*

Some participants discussed their innovative efforts in this area with trying to find *"more nimble ways to get out to families that are not coming into the library,"* such as building relationships with early learning community organizations as a way to reach and understand the needs of underserved families. Ultimately, these library staff were actively searching for and testing various practices that can be used to reach and serve these families.

To support libraries' efforts in this area, Project LOCAL (Library Outreach as a Community Anchor in Learning), an IMLS Planning grant,[1] was designed in 2017 to explore how public libraries are taking their programs and services out into community locations to reach and serve families in underserved communities. The overall research question asked, *How, if at all, are public libraries currently reaching beyond their walls to serve families in underserved communities who do not come into and utilize the library?* To answer this question, the study included four phases, which together involved more than one hundred sixty library staff and administrators from small, medium, and large libraries in twenty-seven states across the United States. These four phases provided a holistic approach to understanding outreach programs and services:

1. Three focus groups at ALA Annual to gather initial information on library outreach;
2. Twenty-one virtual interviews to gather deeper, more specific information on libraries' outreach programs and services;
3. A national survey to gather broad information on outreach programs and services;
4. Ten virtual follow-up interviews to gather more specific information on how libraries plan, deliver, and assess their outreach programs.

Across these various datasets, researchers determined that libraries are offering a wide variety of outreach programs to meet the needs of children and families in underserved communities, including summer reading programs at meal sites, storytimes and early literacy programs at Head Starts and housing developments, parenting-focused programs in the community, mobile pop-up libraries, reading and STEM programs in barbershops, and much more. The participants shared that they work with a variety of partners to produce these programs and take on both active and passive roles in these partnerships depending on the goals and purpose of the collaboration. The participants identified a number of purposes for doing outreach in the community, such as meeting the needs of underserved families where they are, raising awareness of the library in these communities, and more. Participants also shared several barriers for families and children in underserved communities that prevent them from coming into the library, including transportation and scheduling, while challenges for libraries in offering outreach in the community in-

---

clude staffing, time, lack of connections in the community, transportation, and others.

Furthermore, the participants shared that they are employing a number of strategies to collect data about their communities, including relying on existing data such as census and school-related data as well as emergent data that comes from community conversations and neighborhood walks. However, libraries often did not have a clear strategy for translating this community data into meaningful program development and assessment to demonstrate impact and sustainability (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2019). This gap is significant and offers an opportunity for further research in this area to provide relevant, research-based strategies for leveraging data to develop impactful outreach programs that meet community needs and aspirations.

Finally, when asked in the survey if libraries should be offering outreach, one hundred percent of respondents said yes, citing the following purposes for outreach in the community:

- To promote and support learning for children and families;
- To inspire future engagement with the library;
- To increase awareness of library services/programs;
- To serve underserved communities where they are;
- To bring underserved communities into the library.

This demonstrates that libraries are recognizing the value that outreach efforts can provide to the community and the importance of those efforts for building relationships with communities with high numbers of individuals and families who traditionally do not use the library. Continued research in this area will help to further shape and guide this work to better meet community goals for families and children.

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS AND BOOK CHAPTERS

Crist, Beth. "Taking the Library to Unexpected Places: Outreach and Partnerships in Youth Services." In Kathleen Campana and J. Elizabeth Mills (eds.), *Create, Innovate, and Serve: A Radical Approach to Children's and Youth Programming.* Chicago: ALA Editions/Neal-Schuman, 2019.

Dresang, Eliza T., Gross, Melissa, and Holt, Leslie E. *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-Based Planning and Evaluation.* Chicago: American Library Association, 2006.

Edwards, Julie B., Robinson, Melissa S., and Unger, Kelley R. *Transforming Libraries, Building Communities: The Community-Centered Library.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Gross, Melissa, Mediavilla, Cindy, and Walter, Virginia A. *Five Steps of Outcome-Ba*sed *Planning and Evaluation for Public Libraries.* Chicago: ALA, 2016.

Harrod, Kerol, and Smallwood, Carol, eds. *Library Youth Outreach: 26 Ways to Connect with Children, Young Adults and their Families.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014.

Sittler, Ryan L. and Rogerson, Terra J. *The Library Outreach Casebook.* Chicago: ALA, 2018.

Stoltz, Dorothy. *Inspired Collaboration: Ideas for Discovering and Applying your Potential.* Chicago: ALA, 2016.

ARTICLES, REPORTS, AND TOOLKITS

AASL, ALSC, and YALSA. Public Library and School Library Collaboration Toolkit. www.ala.org/alsc/sites /ala.org.alsc/files/content/professional-tools/plslc -toolkit-p.pdf.

ALA. *Communities have challenges. Libraries can help: A step-by-step guide to "turning outward" to your community.* 2015. www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org .tools/files/content/LTCGettingStarted_DigitalWork book_final010915.pdf.

ALSC Committee for Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers. *Library Services to Special Population Children and their Caregivers: A Toolkit for Librarians and Library Workers.* January 2015. www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files /content/professional-tools/lsspcc-toolkit-2015.pdf.

Campana, Kathleen, Mills, J. Elizabeth, and Martin, Michelle. "ECRR Outside the Library: Providing Meaningful Family-Focused Community Outreach." *Children & Libraries* 16, no. 2 (2018): 35–36.

Krabbenhoft, Lindsey. "Community Outreach and the Devaluation of Children's Librarians." Jbrary. June 4, 2018. https://jbrary.com/community-outreach-and -the-devaluation-of-childrens-librarians.

Prendergast, Tess. "Beyond Storytime: Children's Librarians Collaborating in Communities." *Children & Libraries* 9, no. 1 (2011): 20–40.

Rocha Aldrich, Kristen. "Pre-K Partnership: How One Library and One Public School Increased Parent Engagement." *Children & Libraries* 15, no. 2 (2017): 21–23.

Smith, Carrie. "Pedal Power: Two and Three Wheel Library Outreach." *American Libraries.* September 1, 2017. https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2017 /09/01/pedal-power-book-bikes.

Van Stralendorff, Chloe. "Building Meaningful Relationships through Community Engagement." Public Libraries Online. Public Library Association, April 26, 2018. http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/04/building-meaningful-relationships-through-community-engagement.

Witteveen, April. "Bookmobiles and Beyond: New Library Services on Wheels Serve Newborns through Teens." *School Library Journal*. April 6, 2017. www.slj.com/?detailStory=bookmobiles-and-beyond-new-library-services-on-wheels-serve-newborns-through-teens.

Williment, Kenneth, Jones-Grant, Tracy, and Somers, Denise. "From Project to Branch Integration and Sustainability: Community-led Work at Halifax Public Libraries." Public Libraries Online. Public Library Association, April 26, 2013. http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2013/04/from-project-to-branch-integration-and-sustainability-community-led-work-at-halifax-public-libraries.

Woltjer, Gavin. "The Relevance of Bookmobiles and Mobile Libraries in 2018." Public Libraries Online. Public Library Association, July 20, 2018. http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/07/the-relevance-of-bookmobiles-and-mobile-libraries-in-2018.

Wong, Alia. "Where Books are All But Nonexistent." *The Atlantic*. July 14, 2016. www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/where-books-are-nonexistent/491282.

WEBSITES

ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services. "Outreach Initiatives." American Library Association, accessed September 2019. www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/diversity/initiatives.

ALSC Blog. *Blogger Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers committee* (blog), www.alsc.ala.org/blog/category/bloggers/blogger-library-service-to-underserved-children-and-caregivers-committee.

Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. https://abos-outreach.com.

Collaborative Summer Library Program. www.cslpreads.org.

DEMCO. *Library Outreach* (blog), https://ideas.demco.com/tag/library-outreach.

Libraries Without Borders. www.librarieswithoutborders.org/activities.

National Summer Learning Association. www.summerlearning.org.

OCLC Webjunction. "Outreach Brainstorm." Web Junction. OCLC, March 21, 2012. https://webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Outreach_Brainstorm.html.

GRANTS

ALSC. "ALSC/Candlewick Press 'Light the Way' Grant." ALSC, accessed September 2019. www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards/candlewicklighttheway.

APPENDIX 3: LIBRARY PROFILES

ENGAGE

CARNEGIE LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) is a nineteen-branch system that serves a community of around 2.6 million people. Andrew Carnegie believed that the greatest contribution that residents of Pittsburgh could make was to support a public library. When he generously provided capital funding to build the initial library buildings, he intentionally resisted the notion of endowing the library's ongoing operations. Since its inception in 1895, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh continues to build community, enable learning, and provide equal access for residents of all abilities, skills, and backgrounds.

CLP works to engage and impact children and families throughout the Pittsburgh region. Children's Specialists (Children's Librarian or Library Assistant) use a variety of strategies and tools to develop their outreach efforts. When a Specialist begins working at a new location, they are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the community by touring the neighborhood or service area to identify points of interest, places of historic significance, businesses, schools, and child care centers. In addition, Children's Specialists maintain a spreadsheet that lists all of the existing outreach partnerships that take place each year. This information is uploaded to Policy Map (www.policymap.com) in order for outreach to be displayed as a visual map for each neighborhood library location's service area. When new staff members are hired, they can look on the spreadsheet and Policy Map to see what outreach efforts have taken place over the past years. This helps them to quickly identify existing partnerships and contacts in the community and learn about library programs and services that have previously been offered to schools, organiza-

tions and other community partners. Since Policy Map also uses available data from multiple sources to provide information about nonprofits and schools in the area, it is also helpful for learning more about the community.

While Children's Specialists are learning about their community and identifying outreach sites, they work with the Coordinator of Children's Services and their Library Services Manager to learn the expectations for outreach, the needs of the library, and the best days and times to visit schools, child care centers, etc. They can then begin to prioritize their visits and reach out to contacts listed on the partner spreadsheet.

Another way that Children's Specialists can connect with community partners is during Resource Fairs. CLP hosts resource fairs at the library and during trainings to connect with community partners. Once they have made that initial connection with a community partner, the staff member may follow up with community partners to further understand their area of expertise and resources that can be beneficial to children, families, and educators the Specialists interact with. All of these efforts are done with the goal of developing a partnership with these community organizations through which they can build outreach or even in-library opportunities. This kind of relationship-building is key to gathering emergent data and supporting library services.

CLP's Early Learning BLAST (Bringing Libraries and Schools Together) team provides monthly literacy-based storytime programs for families and children, who are growing up without the advantages of their well-resourced peers, in sites such as Head Start centers and preschool/childcare centers throughout Pitts-

burgh. One site they visit is a shelter for populations experiencing homelessness.

The storytimes in shelters are offered to both children and caregivers and emphasize the five activities that help develop early literacy skills—talk, sing, read, write, and play. The Early Learning BLAST Specialists make sure to provide literacy tips both during the program and on take-home parent engagement sheets, which include the books, literacy tips, and songs and rhymes that were shared during the program. In addition to the monthly storytimes, CLP works with a community partner who hosts events for populations experiencing homelessness. CLP often participates in these events by bringing summer reading materials and fun activities for children and families to build positive relationships and support literacy and learning during the summer months. The work CLP's Children's Specialists do to build relationships and partnerships and get to know their communities has paved the way for this important work in prioritizing outreach efforts and reaching underserved populations.

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY, ILLINOIS

The Chicago Public Library (CPL), which will soon have eighty-one branches, has a cadre of librarians and associates called the STEAM Team who bring daily STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) and early literacy storytimes for children and families into Head Start programs, laundromats, WIC Centers, and, soon, pediatric centers. The team has been incredibly successful in growing their outreach efforts through the different ways they have engaged with their community.

At the beginning of growing their outreach efforts, they were asked to focus on specific zip codes considered a priority by the city of Chicago. They contacted their target organization, Head Start, by cold calling them and sharing the services that the STEAM Team could provide. It took some time to build credibility, but by emphasizing the benefits of library programs, they were able to initiate and build a successful partnership.

Building on their success, they used the same cold calling technique, which resulted in offering storytimes in

five laundromats. Those laundromats then connected them with the LaundryCares Foundation, which got them into an additional nine laundromats.

The WIC storytimes came about through a different route. When WIC reached out and asked the library to offer a single program, the STEAM Team proposed a more robust partnership with weekly engagement to reinforce early learning and early literacy concepts and to provide both modeling and greater access for parents. CPL believes in breaking down barriers and streamlining services for people—when they're at a laundromat or at a WIC center, they can be benefiting from library services, too.

Each STEAM storytime has a theme and, like most storytimes, includes songs, books, rhymes, and fingerplays, but these sessions also introduce particular STEAM concepts to the preschool audience, such as colors and color mixing, sorting, body part identification, and more. The librarians also share STEAM talking points to introduce the concepts in an approachable way for a preschool audience.

> **When WIC reached out and asked the library to offer a single program, the STEAM Team proposed a more robust partnership with weekly engagement to reinforce early learning and early literacy concepts and to provide both modeling and greater access for parents.**

Instead of a craft activity, the team brings in hands-on STEAM activities and allows time for the children to play and engage with the manipulatives. In Head Starts, they use more of a traditional storytime format, but in WIC Centers and laundromats, the facilitators use more of a free-flowing program that welcomes people as they come and go. Because these storytimes rely on drop-in attendance in non-traditional locations, advertising is essential for getting the word out to the communities. The team places fliers in the branch libraries closest to the laundromats where the programs will occur and also distribute them to the laundromat owners to share with customers. They also hand out quarter-sheets to parents during storytimes with the weekly details for STEAM storytimes in the laundromats as well as those at the nearest library branch and list the information on the library's website as well. For the WIC programs, the library created fliers that include the logos for both the library and WIC, inviting families to STEAM storytimes. The broad goals for this program are "to meet people outside the walls of the library [and] take the library to where the people need it to be."

SUMMARY

You can see from these two cases that engaging with your community can lead to all sorts of exciting opportunities. For the Carnegie Library, they used emergent data to connect with local homeless shelters and offer programs that could reach and serve the families and children staying there. Chicago Public Library relied on a combination of both existing data—zip codes and particular Head Start locations—and emergent data regarding laundromats and WIC centers to extend their programs and reach out into their communities. Engaging can look different depending on your priorities, budget, and community partners—it's important to take the time to lay the groundwork for your outreach strategy.

CULTIVATE

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY, CALIFORNIA

The San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), opened in 1879, now serves a population of more than 870,000. SFPL's program with the National Park Service, specifically the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Golden Gate Parks Conservancy, is one example of cultivating a strong partnership with a community organization. The partnership was initiated by a former intern from the parks and later with the library, who sparked the connection with the park's centennial and community engagement.

The new partnership developed from the parks' interest in partnering for the national centennial celebration. What SFPL discovered, through this partnership, was a shared alignment to reach underserved communities in the area, providing shared experiences in the natural world. Reflective of a national trend, SFPL recently transitioned from summer reading to summer learning. With that, the library wanted to figure out how to do things a little differently to provide real hands-on experiences for their community beyond the library walls.

The program involves both an in-library component, with a park ranger coming in and providing educational and informative programming, and an out-of-the-library component—community members take shuttle buses to the park with park rangers who provide a guided hike, local history, and shared experience, complete with water and snacks, and an opportunity to explore the natural world together.

The Park Service wanted to target neighborhoods that might have difficulty getting to a local national park or even to the ocean, and they were strategic about meeting their goals of connecting with less traditional park users and harder to reach communities. This unique partnership involves different roles. The library is the gathering hub; local publisher Chronicle Books is a marketing partner that helps commission original art born from a selected book to promote the city-wide literacy campaign; the Park Service provides shuttles, public programming, and guided outdoor experiences. The library even brought teens in to do a think tank and have a dialogue about what they would want to see on a trailhead and the graphics. Additionally, the library did a mid-course reflection with the Park Service, to better understand program attendance and how to strengthen engagement opportunities. As a result, together they rebranded the programs, presented sample programs directly to the SFPL youth librarians, and eventually designed three different programs to build on previous success and be an effective partner with the Park Service.

Our North Star for the San Francisco Public Library is creating community connections through shared experiences. This particular partnership embodies that. It's a very robust partnership built on trust and integrity and has evolved over the past couple of years. When I think about new partnerships with other agencies, I look at this as the model of what it could be, how it would engage and delight new users and go beyond the library walls.

SFPL's keys to partnership success? Maintaining fluid communication, assigning lead roles to staff to handle different moving parts, and making sure they have a solid contact for the partner through continuity on both teams that leads to strong relationships and trust. Furthermore, the program is in alignment with the goal of the library: to engage students over the summer through all ages, all abilities, all-means programming.

HAILEY PUBLIC LIBRARY, IDAHO

The Hailey Public Library serves a community of nearly eight thousand residents, circulating about seventy-six thousand items a year. The library is located in a Title 1 school area where many Hispanic children live and where low-income housing developments are located. Recently, the library collaborated with a local community partner that offers daily summer lunches for children. This

partnership began a few years ago, when the community organization contacted the library about providing social programming for children during these summer meal times. This became a monthly program called Storytime in the Park. The community partner arrives at the park and sets up its food distribution center, and the families and children know just what to do. Once they've finished their lunch, the librarians offer their program.

The library has recently added STEM concepts as part of the program, including bringing in beach sand left over from previous flood preparation. Since many of the kids had never been to a beach or played in sand, this addition was very popular. According to the library staff member, it is important to focus on the element of play and enjoyment, "I think we have to remember they're kids and you gotta have something fun, not just focus on what we're gonna teach them or help them learn. We have to keep it fun."

A second local partner has recently committed to building a shelter for the library, which will provide shade from the sun for the attendees during the summer and may help grow participation.

Another partner is a nearby private, nonprofit library that relies on donations and philanthropic efforts. This library also partners with the food-related community partner through their mobile services. Hailey Public Library applies for funds, lists this private library as a partner, and shares resources with them because they serve the same kids in the valley. Hailey also helps with the private library's circulating collection by allowing books to be returned to either library.

Because of the wealth divide across Hailey and nearby towns, the lunch program in the park helps to bring people in who normally don't come into the library. Challenges around staffing are ongoing, but the librarian asks other staff and some Friends volunteers to help out from time to time. The Friends group also helps fund for free books to give to the children who attend, enabling families to build a home library.

SUMMARY

San Francisco Public Library and Hailey Public Library offer examples of different ways to cultivate community partnerships, especially ones where the partner approaches the library with an opportunity. You can see how, in both cases, the libraries worked out roles—either formally or informally—to streamline the work and offer successful, meaningful programming for community members. Communication is key, as is constant evaluation and recognizing where partners can join efforts for maximum impact.

PROVIDE

SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY, WASHINGTON

Seattle Public Library (SPL) serves a population of nearly seven hundred thousand, with twenty-six branches, a mobile system, and a Central Branch that regularly receives attention for its unique design. SPL provides quite a bit of outreach in the summertime, connected with their Summer of Learning program. Kids are not in school and foundation money has been available to hire extra staff. SPL's partners include the local Boys and

Professional Development Model	Description
Modeling	The library staff member models early literacy skills for the teachers through storytime at the preschool.
Coaching	The library staff member has coaching conversations with the teachers who watched her modeling the early literacy skills in the storytime.
Small Group	The library staff member brings the teachers together in a small group where the teachers are able to learn from each other through the dialogue they have in the small group.
Practice	The teachers are given opportunities to practice the early literacy skills and techniques that they have been learning. To help with this, they receive practice kits that include age-appropriate books and a handout with tips for using the books, props, and suggestions for extension activities. The library staff member also has discussions with each of the teachers during this stage, talking to them about their practice, what they have learned, and what they have questions about.

Girls Club, which serves hundreds of kids; Department of Parks and Recreation; and a local writing and tutoring organization, among others. With the Boys and Girls Club, librarians bring bins of age-appropriate, high interest books with the goal of offering the kids at the club quality reading opportunities in the midst of their various other activities. Librarians have noticed that the kids are excited about reading and pull books out of the bins as soon as they arrive. Moreover, this helps address the fact that many of these kids don't have time to come to the library. Instead, the library brings Summer of Learning programs to them.

The Department of Parks and Recreation offers families a free and reduced lunch at a nearby park, and the children's librarians come to connect with the families, offer programs, and give away books. Many of these families are already coming into the library and now are coming to the park; others don't traditionally come to the library or the park.

The librarians have provided various short-term programs, such as Zumba with toddlers, which prompted one community member—a yoga teacher—to come forward and suggest a yoga program for kids who might not have access to this kind of activity elsewhere. The library found its own funding for this idea and made it happen, coordinating around the free lunch in the park so that participants in the lunch program could also take part in the yoga program.

> **Seattle Public Library is committed to being out in the community, where kids are, partnering with the parks, and being strategic about when to offer programs that coincide with existing programs like free lunches.** 🌿

The librarian provides a storytime for about twenty minutes, and then the yoga teacher offers a half-hour session. The program was primarily intended for preschoolers, though some older children attended, too. Attendance was good, and people stayed and read on a parachute after the program ended. This was a community-led idea, and the library conducted some local marketing to spread the word—through a newsletter and the website.

The goals for the program were to offer a literacy component in combination with a physical element; offer interactive programming; do something in the park with people who might not otherwise know about the library; work with a community member; and provide fun. Chal-

lenges around communication and scheduling are confronted through flexibility and partner support. However, sustainability is still uncertain, as the library works out funding and program details. The librarian detailed various methods of assessment, combining the counting of attendees with periods of reflection talking with the community member to ascertain what is going well and what might need to change going forward. Seattle Public Library is committed to being out in the community, where kids are, partnering with the parks, and being strategic about when to offer programs that coincide with existing programs like free lunches.

ARAPAHOE LIBRARIES, COLORADO

The Arapahoe Library District serves a population of approximately two hundred fifty thousand residents and circulates about five million items per year. One in-depth, long-term early literacy program they offer is the Reading Readiness Outreach Program. As a part of the program, one library staff member, whose position is dedicated to the program, works with a number of preschools in high-need areas to provide early literacy professional development for the teachers in the school.

Their initial efforts to reach out to preschools consisted of just an awareness program, through which the library staff member provided early literacy resources and information to the teachers. Over the years, the program has transformed from those initial efforts to its current state where the library partners with specific preschools for a year to provide a multi-stage professional development program with teachers and some additional pieces for the families. This shift was done "to build a really comprehensive staff development model that would ultimately help kids be ready to succeed and learn to read when they get to kindergarten." The program has two main goals—to introduce the preschool children to early literacy skills through their teachers' proficiency and to increase library awareness by building a strong community partnership between the library, the preschools, and families in their community. A decision matrix is used to decide which preschools to include, and the preschools that commit to participating must have their teachers and director sign a coaching contract.

The main professional development piece of the program has four stages across the year that the library staff member works through with the teachers: modeling and demonstration, coaching, small group interactions, and practice time. The family components of the program include events where the library staff member can interact directly with the family members, such as attending preschool events (parent/teacher conferences, fall festivals, etc.); bringing backpack collections (backpacks filled with five books) to the preschool for families to check out; and being present during preschool pickup time to hand out library information and sign up families for library cards.

A strong assessment program is in place to determine the effectiveness of the Reading Readiness Outreach program. At the beginning of the program, the library started out with a pre/post survey of the teachers to understand what they knew about early literacy at the beginning of the year versus at the end of the year. However, when they realized that the pre/post surveys were not enough, they added teacher observations. The library staff member observes the teacher at the beginning, middle, and end of the year; these are used to inform the coaching process by providing insight into the strengths of the teachers and whether they understand what they are working on and how to apply it.

As part of the program, the teachers also document what they have worked on and learned, and what they have noticed with their kids, which provides some anecdotal evidence. Arapahoe Libraries is working on a more final evaluation that will include a self-evaluation piece for the teacher that will enable them to reflect on their own skills; an evaluation for the teachers to provide feedback for the library staff member on their coaching; and an evaluation for the preschool directors that requests program feedback. This is a great example of how a program can deepen and expand over time, when given adequate attention and support.

SUMMARY

These two cases exemplify both active programs, such as Arapahoe's Reading Readiness Program, which reaches children through training with their preschool teachers, and passive programs, such as SPL's partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, through which they make age-appropriate bins of books available to the young people who attend. Each approach capitalizes on services and resources that the respective libraries can provide. Additionally, deliberately planned, community-oriented programming that has emerged out of an identified community need can often lead to new partnerships with those who have witnessed how this synergy between the library and the partner can positively impact the community. They will want to partner with the library, too. To maintain programming excellence and ensure that your programming is reaching the goals you have set for it while also meeting the needs of the community members who are attending, knowing how to assess your programs is also essential.

ASSESS

THE STARK COUNTY DISTRICT LIBRARY, OHIO

The Stark County (Ohio) Library District has ten library branches and serves two hundred forty thousand residents. They offer a variety of outreach programs, one of which is with the SPARK program (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids), an early intervention, home visiting program for kindergarten readiness. Though the library's partnership with SPARK has only been since 2013, SPARK has operated for the past sixteen years. The program started with a Kellogg Foundation grant that the local Sisters of Charity wrote for the program, and it was initially piloted in two sites. A staff person (called a Parent Partner) goes to the home once or twice a month and works with the preschooler and the parent, guardian, or caregiver and leads them through a prepared lesson with a particular book. The child then gets to keep the book along with a small packet of paper, drawing materials, and something for activities such as play dough.

The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) (run by the Sisters of Charity) oversees the SPARK program, and the participating school districts are considered partners as well. In addition, the program includes a Responsive Services Team—made up of a child psychologist, a speech therapist, a child behavior specialist, a school representative (principal, intervention specialist, or a kindergarten or preschool teacher), and the SPARK supervisor—with whom the Parent Partners meet once a month. While the library is not the lead partner in the program, they play a major role by hiring, training, and managing seven Parent Partners who do the home visits. There are other agencies besides the library that also hire partners. The library also incorporates library

services into the home visits and other aspects of the SPARK program. Their approach is "for those people who aren't coming to the library, we are taking the library to them."

The library and their partners use a variety of assessment measures to understand all aspects of the program. As a part of the SPARK program, assessments are done with the children when they enter the program to determine where they are academically. They have also done some follow-up assessments with the same children at different points in their academic progress and found that the SPARK children were outperforming the kids in their grade level who were not in SPARK, even in as high as fifth grade.

In addition, the ECRC has administered a survey to participating families to find out how they felt the program went, what could improve it, and what needed to be changed. Along with these more formal methods, they also use some internal, more informal methods of assessments to constantly improve the program. The entire SPARK team will meet as a group occasionally to review how the program is going so they can make adjustments, if need be. In addition, the Parent Partners gather anecdotal feedback from the families they interact with and continuously collaborate with the library staff to refine the program based on parent feedback and their own observations.

CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, MARYLAND

Carroll County Public Library in Maryland has six branches and three mobile service vehicles, which serve a population of just over one hundred sixty seven thousand, and circulate 3.6 million items annually. When the library's largest bookmobile needed costly repairs, the library invested in a smaller vehicle. This gave them the flexibility to more easily transport targeted collections, haul puppet-show materials to branches, and visit new sites with pop-up program resources—4H fairs, farmers' markets, community events, and festivals. The library partners with several organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, Head Start, and the school's Judy Center Early Learning Hub, to help reach families and children in underserved communities throughout the county. The library has also created Make and Learn programming kits that feature books and materials for STEM, music, and physical activities that can be used by both librarians and community educators inside and outside the library. These endeavors have been funded through grants and community funding opportunities such as banks and so forth.

Carroll County had the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on how their outreach program was going and where they might want to make changes to better serve their communities. Part of this reflection process is how they go about assessing their programs. Ingrained in the culture of the staff is the inclination to ask, "What's working well, what do we want to keep, what's not working, and what can we do differently to be more effective?" This culture fosters a dynamic approach to outreach that is constantly shifting and adjusting. Staff self-assess noted successes and challenges of programs and services being offered in the community. Additionally, Carroll County conducts surveys with community members and parents to get feedback on programs and services, gathering thoughts and reactions. This data helps staff understand how to adjust or reuse pieces of a program according to how it was received.

> Outreach in general has a two-fold goal: First, to support the organization by reaching out to those who may not be using the library to invite them into the branches to discover and help shape the library's offerings; and second, to strengthen existing community partnerships and engagement. In these ways, you can expand the presence of a library in the lives of people in the community. The library can act like a magnet to draw people to resources, activities, expertise—staff expertise—all around lifelong learning (*conversation with staff member, Nov, 18, 2018*).

SUMMARY

Whether assessment happens formally, as in the type of reading assessments incorporated into Stark County's SPARK program, or informally, as in Carroll County's deliberate reflection process that each staff member undergoes after each program, assessment gives you a barometer to know how you're doing, what improvements could enhance the program, and what sorts of resources will be necessary to bring those improvements to fruition. Because the data from assessments clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of their program through the continued success of fifth graders who participated as preschoolers, SPARK was able to hire more Parent Partners. Hence, assessment can also help build justification for additional resources, staff po-

sitions, funding and more because when your assessments show that your programs are meeting their goals and improving life for community members, it increases your credibility and gives you a more powerful platform from which to advocate for your programs and ultimately for your library.

THE WHOLE PICTURE

The cases described represent the various stages of our outreach model. We also wanted to offer two case studies of libraries that illustrate the complete model in action, but in different ways. The District of Columbia Public Library (DC Public Library) is a large library system in a big urban area that has taken some time to reflect on and reinvent their outreach strategy; thus, their program is still quite new and in the midst of proving its relevance and sustainability. Ritzville Public Library is a small, rural library in Washington State that saw a critical community need—access to food over the summer—and developed a program to help. Think about how these libraries are engaging, cultivating, providing, and assessing in their outreach efforts to serve their communities and make a difference in the world around them. It doesn't matter what size you are, or the extent of your budget, or how many staff you have. There are pieces you can take from all these cases that can help you get your outreach plan off the ground.

One of their main goals at Project Playtime is to develop relationships with these families and to get the families to see the library all over the city. 🌱

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC LIBRARY, WASHINGTON D.C.

The District of Columbia Public Library, which includes twenty-six branches, was founded by an act of Congress in 1896 and serves a population of more than seven hundred thousand. Two years ago, the library took advantage of renovations to the city's central library to try restructuring their outreach efforts. They decided to take the time to try some different initiatives to target communities where getting to a library had been difficult. They created a new department called Outreach + Inclusion to experiment with outreach that would remove barriers to library use.

Project Playtime, an organization that works with families experiencing homelessness, is one of their primary partners. Because Project Playtime has been serving these families for years, the library feels strongly that they should take the lead from the partner and not assume the library knows what the community needs. Given that the partner has already established deep connections, DC Public Library went to them and said, "Okay, these are the things that we can offer you," and shared a menu of all the possibilities. This gives the community partner more ownership in the program development process.

One particular program offered by Project Playtime was a drop-off program at D.C. General (the downtown homeless shelter for five hundred families that recently closed since shelters are being built in each ward) four days a week for three hours per day that created a space for children to play—a luxury children experiencing homelessness don't often have. Rather than offering traditional storytime, the librarians bring books and do baby laptime in the baby room and offer to read with any children who are interested—often choosing books based on whatever the children are playing. "There's usually between twenty to thirty kids in the room. And I'd say each time that I go, I end up engaging directly with at least ten children with a book for various amounts of time. Sometimes a kid will sit there and want to read four different books. Sometimes they'll read half a book and then wander off and do something else," said Johnna Percell, a children's librarian at DC Public Library.

These readings often happen one-on-one, but when parents pick their children up, the librarians can also encourage the parents to establish their own positive reading practices. One of their main goals at Playtime is to develop relationships with these families and to get the families to see the library all over the city. With twenty-six branches, the library can serve them wherever they end up finding housing. And so, the library wants to build that bridge with each of those families and let them see, "Oh, the library can be something that's consistent in your lives as you're going through this huge transition and change." This partnership with Project Playtime works well because the library staff are not allowed to supervise children; instead, the partner handles all of the supervision, organizing volunteers, etc.

The new structure of the Outreach + Inclusion department has enabled these staff members to cover this program, which currently takes place in hotels, the tem-

porary housing for the families in transition. Because their regular salaries pay for the librarians who do this outreach, and because the books they take to the sites come from the library collection, no additional funding is needed for this program. Because this department needed to show the value of their work, the librarians did some basic statistics tracking at the events they attended so they could report back with information on the reach of the department in the community.

This has been such a successful partnership that last year, Project Playtime awarded the library the honor of its Partner of the Year. This program is a great example of where a community partner took the initiative to connect with the library, identifying a need and the space for a library to step in and match their resources and programs with the target population. This partnership isn't without its challenges, though, especially when it comes to communication—notifying partners of closures, expectations, policies, etc. Therefore, the staff at the library are clear about communicating what roles they can fulfill, and what they can and cannot do.

The DC Public Library is conducting both formal and informal assessments of both their individual programs and the overall status of this new department. They do basic statistical tracking at each event, a monthly report, and an internal report to administration, as well as a report to other branch libraries to keep them informed of community partnerships that are developing near them. The library staff also do their own "on-the-fly" assessments to keep track of interactions and the growth of the children as they go, a sort of ongoing informal assessment. They also send surveys to Project Playtime periodically to find out how they feel the community's needs are being met. These kinds of regular check-ins and reflections are important because the library needs the information to demonstrate their relevance and purpose to survive as a department. This kind of assessment is crucial for engagement and sustainability.

RITZVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY, WASHINGTON

Ritzville Public Library is part of the East Adams Library District in Washington State, serving a population of 3,455 residents and circulating a little over nineteen thousand items. Their Stimulating Summers camp program for children ages 6 to 12 includes the Feed Your Brain program for children ages 0 to 18, who join the camp children for two midday hours daily.

The library already had a Community Library program one night a week (Prime Time Family, a Humanities Washington program) in one of the schools. When the library saw a need for a safe place for children to be during the day in the summer while their parents are at work, and for meals for children in their surrounding community, they looked to their existing long-term partnerships with the local schools for establishing a new program that would meet these needs. Obtaining a grant from the Inland Northwest Community Foundation (now the Innovia Foundation) for a three-year pilot project, they currently host camp in three of their surrounding communities. The camp runs between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. for six weeks in the summer, and because of the challenges of coordinating funding and resources for all three sites, the library formed a separate 501(c)(3) that handles all of the camp finances. Families are charged a small fee for camp, which focuses on literacy and STEM activities, physical activities, and field trips. Those who cannot pay can receive full or partial scholarships—funds that the library obtains from the Friends of the Library and the library's foundation.

Because children from migrant families and those who live in the more rural areas participate less because of transportation challenges, the library plans to find ways to provide transportation, such as through school buses. Funded by School's Out Washington, which fights summer learning loss and summertime hunger, the Feed Your Brain program hires a teacher or student teacher to provide educational enrichment. To save on resources, the food is prepared in one school kitchen, and a driver delivers the meals to the other two sites; since the driver also manages quality control for the food preparation, she delivers additional supplies to sites as needed.

Day camp counselors, who are high school or college students, implement the rest of the programming that the library staff have planned around themes; the librarians offer binders of theme-related curriculum that provide programming continuity for all sites. Camp takes place in the local schools, which distribute information about camp to their students and encourage families to participate. Parents can use the camp as a safe space for their children to be during the workday, enrolling for all six weeks, or they can register for individual weeks. In addition to the main grantors for the program, the library has received support from the local electric company, the Lion's Club, and even the senior center.

The library has found it challenging to increase participation in the program without transportation for outlying areas, even though many high-needs families living in the area could benefit from the program. The cost may also discourage some, despite the availability of scholarships. The library has also found it challenging to hire counselors and teachers for the program since local agricultural jobs often bring much higher wages. Coordinating three sites has also been difficult, but having one person oversee all three has helped. In assessing the effectiveness of the program, the library keeps statistics on program participation, surveys families whose children attend camp, and sends the names of participants to their schools to see if those children have avoided summer slide during the months out of school. Feed Your Brain also requires a pre- and post-reading assessment, which the librarians also use to assess the effectiveness of their programming.

One of the most important aspects of this program is that it has raised the profile of the library in the surrounding community and helped the city see the library's relevance to the community (particularly the underserved) and has therefore helped them to gain more funding and support from the city. "Start small and build from there." Building programming with partners takes time, but you can look at the partners you already have as a natural place to start.

Building programming with partners takes time, but you can look at the partners you already have as a natural place to start. 🌱

SUMMARY

The model we propose doesn't necessarily have one beginning point and ending point. It is meant to be an iterative cycle through which you can enter at any of the four points depending on where your library is in their outreach efforts. You can see that these two longer profiles exemplify each individual component of our model in a holistic way, beginning where they felt was best.

For DC Public Library, because they had an opportunity to take a step back from their previous outreach approach to reflect and reassess, they took advantage of that time to think about what they needed to do to better reach their community and meet their needs. They also thought about what their own department needed in terms of information to be able to demonstrate impact and promote sustainability. They chose to work with an existing partner to build on the foundation they had already built and see how they could put their reflection into practice. Their engagement and cultivation work led to a program that met the families and children where they were to cultivate a love of reading.

Ritzville started from engagement and recognized a need in their community for safe spaces for children and access to meals. They then leveraged existing partnerships to save work and capitalize on their expertise. From there they built a camp that offered STEM and literacy activities as well as field trips and meals to, again, meet families and children with what they need and, as the title of the camp states, Feed their Brains. The library continues to work on meeting logistical challenges and developing meaningful assessment measures that help them demonstrate impact and purpose. You can start from any point on the model that works for you and your library, based on resources and so forth, and then develop your outreach program from there. Refer back to these profiles from time to time for inspiration and problem-solving ideas.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

J. ELIZABETH MILLS

J. Elizabeth Mills is a PhD candidate and Project VOICE Research Assistant at the University of Washington Information School. She studies how public children's librarians use the design process of reflection in their storytime production. She has written books for children, including *The Spooky Wheels on the Bus*, with Scholastic, Inc. She has been a researcher on the award-winning Project VIEWS2 study, which sought to measure early literacy outcomes in library storytimes; on Project LOCAL, studying public library outreach programs with underserved communities; and on a study investigating technology use in libraries with young children and their caregivers. She is coauthor of *Supercharged Storytimes: An Early Literacy Planning and Assessment Guide* and coeditor of *Create, Innovate, and Serve: A Radical Approach to Children's and Youth Programming*, with ALA Editions-Neal Schuman.

DR. KATHLEEN CAMPANA

Dr. Kathleen Campana is an Assistant Professor at Kent State University's School of Information. Her research focuses on understanding the learning that occurs for children and families in informal and digital learning environments and how those environments support and impact the learning process. She has significant experience doing mixed-methods research with children and families in informal learning environments. Some of her prior research projects include Project LOCAL—an IMLS-funded grant which explored how libraries are using outreach to support children and families in underserved communities; The Multimodal Power of Storytime—which explored school readiness content in storytimes; and Project VIEWS2—an IMLS-funded grant which explored the early literacy impact of public library storytimes. She is coauthor of *Supercharged Storytimes: An Early Literacy Planning and Assessment Guide* and coeditor of *Create, Innovate, and Serve: A Radical Approach to Children's and Youth Programming*, with ALA Editions-Neal Schuman.

DR. MICHELLE H. MARTIN

Dr. Michelle H. Martin became the Beverly Cleary Endowed Professor in Children and Youth Services in the Information School at the University of Washington in September 2016. From 2011 to June 2016 she was the inaugural Augusta Baker Endowed Chair in Childhood Literacy at the University of South Carolina. She teaches children's and young adult literature and youth services courses and has published *Brown Gold: Milestones of African-American Children's Picture Books, 1845–2002* (Routledge 2004) and co-edited (with Claudia Nelson) *Sexual Pedagogies: Sex Education in Britain, Australia, and America, 1879–2000* (Palgrave, 2003). Martin cofounded Camp Read-a-Rama (www.Read-a-Rama .org), a nonprofit that uses children's books as the springboard for year-round and summer camp literacy immersion programming. Martin publishes widely on issues of diversity in children's literature and reviews dozens of children's books annually.

alsc

alsc

ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) is driven by more than 4,000 members dedicated to the support and enrichment of library service to children. Our members include youth librarians, literature experts, publishers, and educational faculty. ALSC supports its members in engaging communities to build healthy, successful futures for all children. To learn more about ALSC and how to join, please visit our website at www.ala.org/alsc.