Maximizing Regional Opportunities for Public Libraries

LIBRARIES MATTER TEAM
IRE Cohort 13

Project Team Members
❖ Kristopher Futrell, City of Alexandria, VA
❖ Kathleen Leonard, City of Alexandria, VA
❖ Necola Pierce, WMATA
❖ Shayna Taqi, Montgomery County, MD
❖ Etsu Tefera, Fairfax County, VA
❖ Susan Washington, Prince William County, VA
❖ Avis Wiley, Fairfax County, VA

Project Sponsors
❖ Stuart Freudberg
❖ Jenny Schitter
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our group researched and analyzed ways to preserve the future of libraries by “Maximizing Regional Opportunities for Public Libraries.” Libraries serve a critical role in serving our communities. However there are developing trends and challenges that must be effectively addressed if our region’s libraries are to fully fulfill the needs of the region in the future. These include budget challenges, organizational management issues, rapid technological and cultural changes, and a need to more fully leverage regional collaboration to address strategic priorities.

Libraries serve as the epicenter of our communities. They unite neighborhoods and contribute towards creating a healthy, vibrant, and thriving environment where people work and live. We also know that libraries are not obsolete - residents use, want to live close to, and go to libraries for community services on a regular basis. With over 130 public libraries within the Washington DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia area, we can better serve our residents by maximizing regional opportunities for cooperation.

Regionally, we know that libraries positively impact the community because they:

- Equalize the digital divide;
- Serve as cultural exchange centers;
- Promote literacy & a love of reading;
- Help foster a “community of kindness”;
- Bridge gaps between age, class, & social economic status;
- And most importantly, they allow free access to services for all people.

Our research aligns with the findings supported by a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project. The details, presented at the 2014 American Library Association Midwinter Meeting, include:

- “Ninety-six percent of those surveyed agreed that public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading. The same number agreed because libraries provide tech resources and access to materials, and a majority view libraries as leaders in technology;
While the overall number of visitors to a physical library or bookmobile dropped five percentage points from 2012 to 2013, from 53% to 48%, there was an equally significant increase in the number of users of library websites. Particular increases were noted among African Americans, Hispanics, those age 16 to 29, and those with some college education.

More than 75% of the survey’s respondents want libraries to play an active role in public life. Seventy-seven percent want libraries to coordinate more closely with local schools in providing resources to children, and the same proportion want free early literacy programs for children. People look to libraries to help fix struggling schools and to help children learn to navigate new technologies and become critical thinkers.” (State of American Libraries, 2014)

We believe that there are several actions that can help the region’s libraries continue to thrive today and tomorrow:

- Revitalize the COG agreement and reeducate regional libraries on their reciprocal borrowing agreement and the benefit it provides to all residents;
- Institute a shared services model, to include sharing best practices in training and marketing to increase efficiencies;
- Pursue cooperative purchasing opportunities for electronics, books, technology, to increase purchasing power and potentially reduce costs;
- Update the COG website, great tool to raise awareness of the many services offered at jurisdictional libraries;
- Redefine libraries as an essential core service, Libraries touch all parts of the community making them livable and lovable.

Libraries continue to serve as the central hub of the community. In the face of population growth, economic hardship, scarcity of resources, or ever changing technical demands, they work hard to sustain their importance and level of support to the community. These recommendations promote regional collaboration and cooperation to increase efficiencies, streamline functions and extend reach, which will allow regional libraries to continue to thrive and remain relevant today, tomorrow, and for future generations.
PROJECT FOCUS
Our team was initially charged with considering if “public libraries are still relevant in today’s fast changing world?” Early on in our research process it became clear that the short answer to this question was an absolute “yes, they are!” Not only do today’s libraries play a critical role in achieving a wide variety of valued objectives for our communities, the effect of several demographic, cultural, and technological trends will likely make the role of libraries even more critical in the future.

While the relevance of libraries was abundantly clear, it was also evident that libraries face clear and significant challenges in fulfilling their mission, and that failure to develop ways to address these challenges, both current and future, will threaten the sustained success of our libraries. As a result, the focus of the project shifted to researching, analyzing, and assessing ways to preserve the future of libraries by “Maximizing Regional Opportunities for Public Libraries.”

RESEARCH APPROACH
Our research sought to capture the current state of libraries, trends and conditions that create challenges or opportunities for libraries in the future, specific courses of action that could aid libraries in navigating current and future changes in order to efficiently and effectively serve the citizens of the region. We gathered information from a variety of sources and through multiple approaches. These included:

- Reviewing existing articles and reports relevant to the future of libraries;
- Interviews with regional experts on the role, needs, challenges, impacts, and operations of libraries; and
- A group discussion with library directors from across the region.

A list of reference material reviewed and subject matter experts that participated in interviews or the Stakeholder Meeting can be found on page 16.
FINDINGS

Stakeholders
The list of library stakeholders include more than the children attending story time hour; parents seeking afterschool activities, early childhood literacy programs or tutorial services for their children; professionals looking for a career change; citizens looking for civic engagement; or patrons seeking a safe haven. Stakeholders are many, representing varied interests and also include Library Directors, County Executives, vendors, business owners. The list is endless.
Research suggests that “30% of Americans ages 16 and older are highly engaged with public libraries, and an additional 39% fall into medium engagement categories. As a rule, people who have extensive economic, social, technological, and cultural resources are also more likely to use and value libraries as part of those networks. Many of those who are less engaged with public libraries tend to have lower levels of technology use, fewer ties to their neighbors, lower feelings of personal efficacy, and less engagement with other cultural activities” (http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/03/13/summary-of-findings-4).

Given this data, the community, the patrons - those on and not on the above list, all have an even larger vested interest in the library and the benefit it provides. As the Washington Metropolitan region population increases, the list of stakeholders will grow immensely, thereby increasing the dependency on libraries. The impact of libraries, the access they provide, the connection they promote will be of even more importance to the success and livability of the region.

Current Situation – Impact of Libraries

We know libraries impact the community because they:

- Equalize the digital divide;
- Serve as cultural exchange centers;
- Promote literacy & love of reading;
- Deepen engagement & connections within the community;
- Generate a community of kindness;
- Provide free access to services;
• Bridge gaps between ages, classes, & social economic statuses.

Libraries promote and support early literacy initiatives by targeting children even before they become readers. Libraries provide welcoming and developmentally appropriate early learning environments to young children, their parents and caregivers. “These early learning opportunities help transform parents into first teachers, effectively addressing the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of child development in order to build a foundation for learning during the critical first years of life. (http://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/2014-State-of-Americas-Libraries-Report.pdf)

Libraries provide customers, residents, and the community with continuous access for learning. Research shows that numerous children participate in story hour programs. For many, their first reading experience occurred sitting on the floor of their neighborhood library. Additionally, as students progress through school, many continue to utilize their school or neighborhood library to access books for research papers or for tutoring assistance. It is not a rare sight to observe a school aged student working in their neighborhood library, possibly their first employment experience. Adults who were exposed to libraries at a young age often continue using and visiting libraries throughout their lifetime; it can be seen as a place to continue their education, a social gathering hub, and a community activity center, as they age.

Deeper connections with public libraries are often associated with key life moments such as having a child, seeking a job, being a student, and going through a situation in which research and data can help inform a decision. Similarly, quieter times of life, such as retirement, or less momentous periods, such as when people’s jobs are stable, might prompt less frequent information searches and library visits. (http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/03/13/summary-of-findings-4)

Patrons who do not have computers at home often visit their local library and utilize the technology available to the public. Sometimes this includes training on the devices, which can provide greater access to modern technology, and opportunity to use a new form of media or communication. Libraries provide business and professional training, for minimal or no cost, at convenient times and days. This access allows endless opportunities for participants to further
their career, possibly start a new one or establish a second career. To this end, the opportunities in which patrons can utilize libraries to advance themselves, intensifies the impact libraries can have on driving the economy.

Through these various functions, libraries are serving as community epicenters, often called the community hub, or known as the central gathering center. For instance, they are used as meeting spaces for civic minded residents to gather, engage, mobilize and educate themselves on matters happening throughout the community. These social opportunities also include learning a new language or exploring a new craft/hobby with like-minded citizens. In a region as diverse as the Washington Metropolitan area, this is a wonderful opportunity to extend the hand of friendship by learning, and sharing from the cultures that make up the existing region.

There are over 130 public libraries in the Washington Metropolitan region serving over 3 million residents. Through our research, we found local libraries offer community programs that promote:

- Free access to all;
- Technology assistance and rentals and E-books;
- Health and wellness programs, seminars;
- Tutoring, test proctoring, homework assistance;
- Afterschool activities and early childhood literacy & community activities;
- Resources for non-profit & business community;
- Free access to training, job search capability, and employment;
- Cultural exchange, English as a Second Language, Language courses;
- Supportive and safe public space for people to gather;
- Safe places in times of crisis;
- A place for seniors and community to learn about volunteer opportunities.

This emphasizes that fact that libraries are an essential facility within a community; they influence, and impact the lives of many – regardless of generation, race, color, economic background. The advantage libraries give to individuals is exponential, and at times unmeasurable. Through their various programs, which bring people of various backgrounds
together, libraries contribute to creating vibrant and livable communities, generating and promoting an unspoken community of kindness, not just as a concept, but an actual practice.

In addition to promoting literacy, equalizing the digital divide and deepening engagement/connections in the community through opportunities for cultural exchange, libraries build upon the practice of a community of kindness by being a safe place in times of emergency. In the summer of 2012 the Washington Metropolitan region experienced a massive power outage due to inclement weather, both Arlington County and Prince George’s County public libraries established regional “Cooling Centers” for residents to find relief from the heat, this was especially helpful to our vulnerable populations, senior citizens, disabled community, and adults with young children. (http://wamu.org/news/12/06/30/cooling_centers_around_the_dc_area)

As a central point for shared information and/or communication centers for the public, libraries collaborate with local government and other organizations to address social, economic, and environmental issues. No longer just providers of books, public libraries are vital partners in responding to a wide range of ongoing and emerging needs, including helping communities cope with the unexpected. For example, with the rollout of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act many public libraries struggled to keep up with the demand for public computer terminals and with requests for help in using the Healthcare.gov website (http://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/2014-State-of-Americas-Libraries-Report.pdf). People left homeless by Hurricane Katrina filled libraries in Fairfax County, using the library’s computers to complete federal forms and communicate with loved ones. Many library administrators find themselves in the middle of societal issues - such as homelessness, or civil unrest as they handle day-to-day operations, striving to provide free access within an environment that is safe for all patrons.

“Furthermore, when one considers that the most vulnerable and underserved city-dwellers are also those who generally do not have access to the internet, the need for a free and publicly connected space becomes even clearer. A beautiful example of the important civic role libraries play took place during Ferguson’s recent upheaval, when the local and under-staffed library
opened its doors and served as a community haven while most schools and businesses were shuttered.” (http://magazine.good.is/articles/public-libraries-reimagined).

Trends & Challenges

*In the 2015 “State of America’s Libraries Report:*

- Academic, public and school libraries are experiencing a shift in how they are perceived by their communities and society. No longer just places for books, libraries of all types are viewed as anchors, centers for academic life and research and cherished spaces.
- From offering free technology workshops, small business centers and 24/7 virtual access to e-Books and digital materials, libraries are transforming communities, schools and campuses.
- The lack of diverse books for young readers continues to fuel concern. Over the past 12 months the library community has fostered conversations and fueled a groundswell toward activism to address the lack of diversity reflected in children’s literature—both in content and among writers and illustrators.
- Digital literacy continues to grow as an important library service. Research shows that families are increasing their access to digital media, but they lack the knowledge to use it effectively in a way that enables learning.
- Digital reading brings a tangle of legal issues for publishers—and libraries

Libraries are critical components in almost any community throughout the nation. As previously mentioned, these institutions provide customers with access to technology, books, meeting space, training opportunities, educational support – early and continuous, community engagement, cultural and career assistance. Therefore, as technology continues to advance and the Washington Metropolitan region’s population grows, so will the needs of the region and the importance of how knowledge/information is exchanged. We must ensure that all libraries within the metropolitan region are meeting the needs of the residents. Ignoring this valuable institution and its reach and benefits is a recipe for breaking down what some might call a stable pillar in the community foundation.

US Census Research shows that in 2014, “the Washington Metropolitan Washington areas are ranked fifth in population growth when compared with other regions across a one year time period. Our metropolitan region grew by 87,265 people, a number exceeded only by Houston (137,692), New York (111,749), Dallas (108,112) and Los Angeles (94,386), the bureau
reported. Census officials said the main driver of the increase was people migrating to the D.C. region from other parts of the country” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-region-continues-population-growth-us-census-finds/2014/03/27/81645516-b5c3-11e3-8020-b2d790b3c9e1_story.html). Additionally, “the explosion of mobile communication and the streamlining of digital tools and devices means that we as a society are dependent on technology, we check e-mail on the train; we do conference calls in bed, and find out what kind of projects our friends are working on in real time” (http://magazine.good.is/articles/have-plug--will-travel).

The more access to technology, the more users experience technology and integrate it into their lifestyle no matter what the socioeconomic status. This trend will likely continue with the evolution of technology and increase in demand, thus stressing libraries’ infrastructure even further.

The ability to do more work, with more people, over a wider distance requires libraries to change not only how their print materials are being accessed, but it also requires a fundamental change to the library infrastructure - enhanced speed of information, increased mobile access and applications, and improved critical response to meet design and demand challenges.

“A recent study by the Information Policy & Access Center at the University of Maryland reports that the demand for libraries’ limited resources has outstripped the supply of both computers and bandwidth: 87 percent of urban libraries report having insufficient computers, and only 17 percent of rural libraries offer broadband speeds greater than 10 Mbps, compared with 57 percent of urban libraries” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-region-continues-population-growth-us-census-finds/2014/03/27/81645516-b5c3-11e3-8020-b2d790b3c9e1_story.html). Additionally, “According to a 2011 report from the Department of Commerce almost one-third of American households still lack a broadband connection. We need to make sure no one is left behind in the digital age. Significant gaps in Internet usage still exist among certain demographic and geographic groups around the country. Among adults 25 years and older, those with college degrees adopt broadband at almost triple the rate of those with only some high school education (84% versus 30%). The rates for White (68%) and Asian non-Hispanics (69%) exceed those for Black non-Hispanics (50%) and Hispanics (45%) by 18
percentage points or more”


Although technology is moving forward at a fast pace and libraries are increasing their level of adoption of many Web technologies, use of social media, etc., the Pew survey found, “the proportion of adults who read an e-book in 2013 rose to 28%, up from 23% in 2012, but print remains the foundation of Americans’ reading habits.”

(http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/03/13/summary-of-findings-4). So libraries, tasked with meeting the needs of their patrons, must maintain a solid connection with the advancements in technology all the while continuing to provide a variety in material format.

Libraries need to also be mindful of the physical structure of the building. Current trends in library building and renovation include open-plan space, which provides flexibility for future modifications; semi-private space, which recognizes that open-plan space may not be appropriate for every activity or suit the taste of every use; and technology-rich space. This has led to libraries creating meeting space for entrepreneurs, multiple types of cafes or learning centers, offering adult literacy classes, and gaming facilities. Maker-spaces are trending more and more, evidence that libraries are continuing to evolve beyond the traditional focus on collections and emphasizing that they need to be flexible, compatible and adaptable to the variety of uses and needs of their users, now and in the future.

Possibly the biggest challenge for libraries is funding. More often than not, library services are considered discretionary funding; they are open to budget cuts in ways core services are not - even though the service potential and impact is critical to residents and the overall community. There are some libraries that are able to continue to thrive because they secure funding from additional sources such as foundations or Friends of the Public Libraries, or sometimes by cutting services, hours, or employees and staff. This alternate funding model, or work-around to deal with the monetary issue, has created a situation where Library systems could become independently owned and operated as a business. Without a dedicated funding source, libraries are opening themselves up to a variety of risks. In our research, we came across a library system, outside the regional area, that sought funding through real estate taxes. This resulted in a lawsuit, with the library on the line for a large amount of money.
The lack of dedicated funding, or private funding, also leads to limited programming and circulation options for patrons, especially if the funding source includes stipulations that commit libraries to interests of specific patrons and/or locations. This does not lend to opportunities for regional collaboration and cooperation. According to a 2013 Pew poll, “90 percent of people in the U.S. said their community would be negatively impacted if their local library closed.” (http://magazine.good.is/articles/public-libraries-reimagined).

As stated earlier, some libraries, however, are able to keep up with current technological advancements and the multi-faceted needs of the modern day library user; they are increasing their electronic collections and providing a digital hub in cities where individuals who still struggle to connect to wireless internet can have access. Yet within that same breath we have some of our historic libraries struggling to remain open, therefore reimagining how libraries can work together bodes well for libraries as our learning institutions for the future (http://magazine.good.is/articles/public-libraries-reimagined).

ANALYSIS

Evaluation Criteria
The first step in the analysis process was the identification of the key success criteria. These criteria serve as the core factors in evaluating potential recommendations to aid the region’s libraries in successfully serving their communities today and into the future. Based upon our research, we identified seven key criteria that should be used in determining the most promising actions.

A. Maintain public libraries as free/open to all
B. Feasible in a Public Environment
C. Affordability for local governments
D. Increased Community Awareness and Engagement
E. Increased Efficiency and Access to Services
F. Technology that meets needs of current and future initiatives and ability for pooled group of resources
G. Regional Impact/Focus
Perceived Stakeholder Views of Criteria

After identifying the evaluation criteria, we assessed their perceived importance to the various stakeholder groups. We deemed all of the criteria as important to at least a reasonable subset of the stakeholders. Our perceptions of the perceived importance of the criteria to stakeholders are summarized in the table below.

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*(Criteria A-G headings correspond to the criteria descriptions identified in the Evaluation Criteria Section)*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our perspective in developing our recommendations was influenced greatly by two broad questions.

1. How do we maximize the impact of libraries today in order to ensure a brighter tomorrow? and

2. How do we get leaders, patrons, all stakeholders to recognize the impact of libraries?

This issue is not so much an issue of the relevancy of Libraries, as most will consider Libraries as important in some way or another, as a part of a community. Rather we should view this from a longer term, systematic view. We must acknowledge the multiple, fundamental benefits of libraries to valued community and government objectives, as well as the wide variety of groups and interests served. How do we support the ability of libraries to continue to serve as the central
hub of the community and sustain their support in a growing society that has experienced increasing economic hardship, scarcity of resources, and ever changing technical demands?

With this in mind, we identified a series of potential actions worthy of consideration as recommended steps to support the contributions of the region’s libraries to the citizens of the National Capital Region. These potential options were then evaluated against the seven key success criteria. The result of this evaluative process was the identification of the five recommendations below.

1. Revitalize the Council of Governments (COG) Regional Agreement, which first created a Resolution Endorsing Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement Among All Area Public Libraries in 1977;
2. Institute a shared services model, to include sharing best practices in training and marketing to increase efficiencies;
3. Enhance awareness of services by updating the COG website & exploring a regional marketing campaign to promote regional library resources;
4. Pursue cooperative purchasing opportunities to purchase of electronics, books, technology, etc. to increase purchasing power and potentially reduce costs; and
5. Consider identifying Libraries as a core service in public government.

CONCLUSION
In order to maintain the connection to the community and continue to provide important services as the region grows, libraries need to think and operate efficiently and feasibly. Libraries need to receive dedicated and reliable funding. In addition we need a collaborative effort to support regional library institutions in exploring ways to improve efficiencies; refresh the mutual borrowing agreement, identify ways to save money/share services – collaboratively purchase electronics, books, cross training of staff (library subject matter expert travel to other locations and provide training); expand service to meet diverse customer needs; and capture & communicate their impact.

Implementation of the recommended actions will require creative thinking, results based decision making, and effective collaboration from both libraries and their stakeholder partners. However, there are already examples of jurisdictions adopting similarly innovative approaches to maximize
service, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. For example, the Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) as of June 2014 became one collection, rather than collections “owned” by each branch. Moving forward, FCPL is working on continuing to develop their floating library collection. Challenges that FCPL have had to overcome and continue to work through include ensuring that data can be communicated across various technological systems and how to continue to enhance and develop collections with an ever shrinking library budget. In 2015 FCPL will be undertaking a community and outreach effort to evaluate the current use of libraries including customer satisfaction, essential library services and why residents who do value libraries are not using them (http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/news/scopeofwork12102014.pdf).

In an effort to educate the public on the relevance of libraries and the number of people who are still using libraries, jurisdictions such as Prince William County & Montgomery County display statistical data such as the number of citizens who used libraries in prior years. Montgomery County Public Libraries have creatively displayed this information as a part of their data dashboard including statistics such as the number of branch visits, library computer usage, eBook downloads, new library card registrations, and website visits: (http://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/library/Pages/history.aspx & http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Library/resources/files/about/stateofthelibraryfy14.pdf).

A greater regional partnership and collaboration will allow libraries to continue the successful relationship with communities, by promoting literacy; bridging gaps across ages, class, social status and opportunities; leveling the playing field for all residents; and continuing the positive impact on the community as the region expands.
Works Cited

Interview List

- City of Alexandria Public Library Director – Rose Dawson
- City of Alexandria Deputy Director – Renee DiPilato
- Montgomery County Public Library Director – Parker Hamilton
- Arlington County Public Library Director - Diane Kresh

Stakeholder Meeting (May 12, 2015) Attendees

- Sam Clay, Library Director, Fairfax County, VA
- Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Library Director, DCPL
- Rose Dawson, Library Director, Alexandria City
- Chang Liu, Library Director, Loudoun County
- Mary McMahon, Library Director, Falls Church City

Websites

- http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future
- http://magazine.good.is/articles/public-libraries-reimagined
- http://www.slate.com/articles/life/design/2014/04/the_future_of_the_library_how_they_ll_evolve_for_the_digital_age.html
- http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/03/13/summary-of-findings-4
- Montgomery County Snapshot Day
- http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/
- http://magazine.good.is/articles/have-plug--will-travel
- http://wamu.org/news/12/06/30/cooling_centers_around_the.dc_area
MAXIMIZING REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Community Impacts
Equalize Digital Divide
Cultural Exchange Centers
Promote Literacy
Bridge Gaps
Provide Free Access

Recommendations
COG Agreement
Shared Services
COG Website

Trends/Challenges
Community Hubs
Budget Constraints
Local Isolation

Technology
90% of Americans said that “closing of their Public Library would impact community.”

There Are Over 130 Public Library Branches in The Washington Metropolitan Region Serving Over 3 Million Residents

ACCESSIBILITY 101
Public Awareness
COLLABORATION
Appendix 2 – Handout

“Maximizing Regional Opportunities for Public Libraries”

Team: Libraries Matters
Kristopher Futrell, Kathleen Leonard, Shayna Taqi, Etsu Tefera, Necola Pierce, Susan Washington, Avis Wiley

Issue: To maximize regional cooperation among Public Libraries in the Maryland, Virginia and DC area to preserve and increase their impact within our communities, both locally and regionally.

Regional Libraries by the Numbers:

- Over 130 public libraries in the Washington Metropolitan region serving over 3 million residents.

Impacts: Locally, we know libraries impact the community because they:

- Equalize the digital divide;
- Provide free access to services
- Deepen engagement & connections within the community;
- Serve as cultural exchange centers;
- Promote literacy & love of reading;
- Generate a community of kindness;
- Bridge gaps between ages, classes, & social economic statuses.

Trends/Challenges: In the 2015 “State of America's Libraries Report”:

- Academic, public and school libraries are experiencing a shift in how they are perceived by their communities and society. No longer just places for books, libraries of all types are viewed as anchors, centers for academic life and research and cherished spaces.

- From offering free technology workshops, small business centers and 24/7 virtual access to e-Books and digital materials, libraries are transforming communities, schools and campuses.

- The lack of diverse books for young readers continues to fuel concern. Over the past 12 months the library community has fostered conversations and fueled a groundswell toward activism to address the lack of diversity reflected in children’s literature—both in content and among writers and illustrators.
A current analysis of book challenges recorded by ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) from 2001–2013, shows that attempts to remove books by authors of color and books with themes about issues concerning communities of color are disproportionately challenged and banned. A challenge is defined as a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that a book or other material be restricted or removed because of its content.

Digital literacy continues to grow as an important library service. Research shows that families are increasing their access to digital media, but they lack the knowledge to use it effectively in a way that enables learning.

Makerspaces are trending and provide evidence that libraries are continuing to evolve beyond the traditional focus on collections.

Many federal government policy and regulatory issues are of importance to libraries and the people who use them. Policies related to personal privacy, library funding, workforce development, and copyright law are a few of the issues of interest to the library community.


Recommendations:

- Revitalize the Council of Governments (COG) Regional Agreement, which first created a Resolution Endorsing Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement Among All Area Public Libraries in 1977;
- Collaborate on regional best practices to improve efficiencies;
- Enhance Awareness of Services by updating the COG website & explore regional marketing campaign to message regional library resources;
- Pursue cooperative purchasing opportunities to purchase of electronics, books, technology, etc. to increase purchasing power and potentially reduce costs;
- Collaborate on regional training opportunities.
Appendix 3 – Handout

April 27, 2015

Richard Reyes-Gavilan
Executive Director
District of Columbia
901 G. Street NW
Washington DC 20001

Dear Richard Reyes-Gavilan,

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Institute for Regional Excellence "Libraries Matter" Team to invite you to a special meeting with the team and your colleagues around the region to learn about the team's project and provide your insights and feedback to support their work.

This special meeting is scheduled for Tuesday May 12, 2015, from 9 am - 12 noon in Room 417 of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK), located at 901 G Street, NW. MLK Library is one block from the Gallery Place/Chinatown (Red, Yellow and Green lines) metro station and two blocks from the Metro Center (Red, Blue and Orange lines) station. Please RSVP to Kristopher Futrell (703.362.0145 and email Kristopher.futrell@alexandriava.gov) by Friday, May 8, 2015.

COG’s Institute for Regional Excellence is a regional leadership development program which began in the year 2000. Participants in the program are rising mid- to senior managers drawn from COG’s members across the Washington metropolitan region who spend a year together to develop a common set of skills, knowledge and understanding built around regional challenges. Its goal is to be a learning forum for new ideas and uncommon ways of creatively addressing regional issues facing the Washington region. The program is convened by COG and led by experts from The George Washington University. A major part of the program is an in-depth team project on a regional issue of significance to COG and its members.

The “Libraries Matter” team has selected “The Future of Libraries.” It did so recognizing that given ever-changing technology and the subsequent information explosion, public libraries may be “perceived” as no longer a central place (or sole place) for information for the general public. The team is interested in answering questions including “What can public libraries do to remain “perceived as” relevant and vital in today’s world?” “What are the essential roles for public libraries now and in the foreseeable future?” The team’s effort will ultimately result in a paper, recommendations, and a presentation to COG’s Chief Administrative Officers from around the region as well as to COG staff.
The team is currently in the research phase of this project, and are intently focused on key stakeholder outreach. The team is especially interested in hearing from you on this issue, and thought it would be a good starting point to convene a special meeting of the regional group that used to meet on a regular basis.

The team looks forward to meeting you and getting a better understanding of your wealth of knowledge and experience on this important regional issue.

We hope you can attend the meeting and thank you for your time and feedback regarding this project!

Please contact Kristopher Futrell (703.362.0145, Kristopher.futrell@alexandriava.gov) should you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Stuart A. Freudberg
Deputy Executive Director on behalf of:

**Team “Libraries Matter”**
Kristopher Futrell, City of Alexandria
Kathleen Leonard, City of Alexandria
Necola Pierce, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Shayna Taqi, Montgomery County
Etsu Tefera, Fairfax County
Susan Washington, Prince William County
Avis Wiley, Fairfax County