



CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG  
**LIBRARY**

**MEMORANDUM**

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

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

**DATE:** July 31, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **FY 2015 Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Accomplishments**

In FY 2015, the second year of our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library **increased access** for Mecklenburg County residents, **grew users, usage and impact; broadened community awareness and engagement; created a vision for the next Main Library; expanded digital options for customers; and began its *Blueprint* planning process for 2025.** The Library Foundation raised nearly **\$1.5 million in gifts, grants and earnings**, well in excess of its target.

At the same time, the Library substantially completed all 15 items on its FY 2015 Program of Work, and met or exceeded all KPI targets.

The pages that follow provide details of the accomplishments and achievements for FY 2015, along with information about major activities that will take place in FY 2016. We think it tells the story of an organization that is making a discernible difference in our community.

None of this would have been possible without the daily assistance of our County partners and continued operating, capital, technology and one-time financial support. For all of that we are very grateful.

cc: Chris Peek, Deputy County Manager  
Leslie Johnson, Assistant County Manager  
Michael Bryant, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Monica Allen, Director, Strategic Planning & Evaluation

## **NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

From library card campaigns for school-aged children to new initiatives for adults, the Library's new programs and services in FY 2016 reflected a focus on community needs. These programs and services support the Library's **three strategic goals and four strategic roles**.

### **Three Strategic Goals**

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

### **Four Strategic Roles**

1. Library as Community Services Business
2. Library as Place
3. Library as Leader
4. Library as Community Strategy

## **Increase Community Awareness and Engagement**

### **Expansion of Library Hours**

With funding support from Mecklenburg County, the Library implemented six-day service at all locations and seven-day service at the regional libraries, Main and ImaginOn beginning September 2014. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

### **ImaginOn Selected for Presidential Visit**

On April 15, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's ImaginOn hosted a Presidential town hall meeting featuring working mothers and families. The event, which took place in Spangler Children's Library at ImaginOn, provided an opportunity for Library staff and Children's Theatre staff to work together to showcase ImaginOn as one of the community's crown jewels. The media coverage and community awareness of the visit helped to further position the Library both as leader and as community strategy.

### **ConnectEd Library Challenge**

On April 27, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library accepted the White House ConnectEd challenge, with support from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte. In accepting the challenge, the Library will:

- Provide students with easily accessible information and educational resources
- Support student learning and school success through programming and other activities
- Provide digital resources, broadband and wireless connectivity within library facilities
- Increase accessibility by granting library cards to area students

The White House issued this challenge in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

### **North Tryon Master Plan Collaboration**

The Library is collaborating with 20 other institutional stakeholders and an urban planning consulting team to create a master plan for developing the North Tryon Corridor. The block occupied by Main Library is considered a "signature" element in the plan given its location as a gateway to North Tryon. The Library's involvement in the North Tryon Master Plan aligns with a simultaneous conversation to reinvent Main Library. Both planning conversations continue to move forward.

### **Partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**

As part of the Library's continued collaboration with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), several new initiatives were launched this year. The result was an even stronger relationship with CMS, offering increased opportunities to impact children through positive educational experiences.

Here are some of the highlights:

- **The Library added an Educational Partnerships Manager** to expand partnerships with CMS, private schools and area colleges/universities.
- **The Library Card Campaign** for pre-K to third-graders in CMS resulted in approximately 18,000 new cards and 10,000 fine waivers for existing cardholders.
- **The E-Card Pilot** for sixth- to 12<sup>th</sup>-graders in Project LIFT schools resulted in 4,000 new e-cards providing access to online resources.
- **The CMS Summer Learning Blitz**, an effort to keep children engaged with learning during the summer, was promoted on the Library's homepage and all children's kiosk computers.

### Children and Teens Literacy Focus

- **Read Charlotte.** The Library is in partnership with Read Charlotte, a collaborative, community-wide movement to double the percentage of third-grade students reading at grade level from 40% now to 80% in 2025. The Library provides office space and strategic support to the program, including access to staff, resources and space for community meetings.
- **NC Science Festival.** 13 library locations participated in the NC Science Festival for two weeks in April to celebrate programs for children and teens related to science, technology, engineering and math. This year marked the fifth year of the festival for NC and the first time many branches throughout the Library participated. The program mascot, "Kelvin," was featured during President Obama's visit to ImaginOn.
- **Get Ready with Words, Supported by PNC Bank.** This Library partnership with Community School of the Arts and Discovery Place, Inc. reaches underserved pre-K children in Grier Heights and Montclair South neighborhoods. There is also a component to educate the broader community about the benefits of pre-K vocabulary-building through community awareness.
- **One Voice Chorus.** The Library collaborated with One Voice Chorus, a local singing group that celebrates differences, for three performances of the children's book, *Oliver Button is a Sissy*. The book, by award-winning author and illustrator Tomie de Paola, offers an affirming message for all children.
- **Bus Stop Outreach.** In April, Beatties Ford Road began a new outreach initiative, "Bus Stop Storytimes." Working with Bruns Academy, Library staff brought fruit, books and stories to the bus stop. Requests have come in to expand the program to other schools.
- **Trade School Fair.** More than 200 attendees – including teens, their parents and "new" adults – learned about trade programs, scholarship opportunities and career alternatives at the Fast Track Trade School Fair at ImaginOn on March 14.

### Adult Services Partnerships and Programs

- **Library in the Park.** For six months, the Library partnered with the Knight Foundation and Charlotte Center City Partners to provide daytime programs to "animate" Arequipa Park in front of Main Library.
- **50th Anniversary of Civil Rights Act.** The 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was celebrated at ImaginOn, with more than 300 attendees. Many dignitaries attended, including Mayor Clodfelter and Theodore Shaw, the newly appointed director of the UNC School of Law's Center for Civil Rights.
- **Partnership with Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA).** CHA opened its waiting list for the Housing Vouchers program for the first time in seven years. Library staff worked closely with CHA on strategy and the best approach to deal with the anticipated high numbers seeking housing vouchers. All 20 branches participated. There were more than 10,000 sign-ups by the end of the first day, more than 20,000 by the end of the second day and the final count for the week was 32,128 enrolled, for less than 5,000 available vouchers.
- **Expansion of Special Needs Programming for Adults.** Many branches implemented new programs to reach adults with special needs, many of whom have limited opportunities for learning and interacting in groups.

- **Museum Pass Program.** The Library, working in conjunction with the Arts & Science Council, piloted a free museum pass program for customers during the months of March, April and May. Customers could visit Hickory Grove, Sugar Creek and West Boulevard libraries, checking out a pass for up to a family of four to attend the Gantt, Bechtler, Levine and Mint Museums. Throughout the program there were 33 passes checked out, which provided 96 customers access to the respective museums for free. There are plans to extend the pilot in FY 2016.

## Innovate to Support 21<sup>st</sup> Century Access

### **Digital Strategy**

The Library hired its first-ever Digital Strategy Manager and began implementation of several digital projects which will greatly impact the community. In FY 2015, the new Storyplace.org site was launched with support from the State Library of NC and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. In addition, the new CMStory.org debuted, featuring content from the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room collection.

### **Library Selected for Google Fiber Fellowship**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library was selected for Google Fiber's first-ever Digital Inclusion Fellowship. As one of two organizations in Charlotte chosen to participate in the fellowship – the Urban League of Central Carolinas is the other – the Library has demonstrated that it has the expertise, skill and commitment to take on the challenge of narrowing the digital divide in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. Through the Digital Inclusion Fellowship, the Library will collaborate with Google Fiber and the Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN) to create programs that will bring the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community a step closer to bridging the digital divide. The fellow has been hired and will embed within the Library for one year, building a new digital literacy and awareness program from the ground up.

### **Main Library Reinvention Advisory Committee**

The Library formed a community-based Main Library Reinvention Advisory Committee to examine Main Library's current and future roles in the community and to recommend ways to increase Main Library's relevance in Uptown and the larger community in alignment with the North Tryon redevelopment effort. The Committee's report and recommendations will inform next steps for this project.

### **Main Library "Idea Box" Makerspace Opening**

Main Library opened its first Makerspace on Feb. 17, called "Idea Box." Equipped with 21st century fabrication equipment, Idea Box represents an opportunity for libraries to use their spaces to encourage the creation of content in the digital age. Makerspaces often act as incubators to creative ideas that can lead to workforce and personal development success for users. This space was funded with the generous support of The Knight Foundation and comes loaded with a laser cutter/engraver, two 3-D printers, a vinyl cutter, as well as a collection of more traditional tools such as sewing machines. Currently, Idea Box is staffed for eight hours a week, attracting nearly 100 customers to 27 new programs over the first 3 months. The goal of each program was to increase access to practical digital literacy skills in the fabrication/creative sector.

### **Lynda.com**

The Library recently added Lynda.com, an online video tutorial database that offers thousands of video courses in software, creative and business skills, all taught by industry experts. The Library is currently working with County HR to provide access to this and other digital products to all County staff.

## Market Segmentation Tool, “Savannah”

The Library implemented a new market segmentation tool and trained Library leadership and branch managers on how to use it to track customer activity by branch or service. The tool enables branch managers to better know their customers and design services and campaigns to meet their interests. It also enables the Marketing & Communications department to create email marketing campaigns targeted to specific customer groups and measure the responses of those customers based on opens, clicks and activities. By the end of the year, Marketing & Communications had used this tool to re-engage nearly 9,000 inactive or occasional customers.

## Increase Operational Excellence, Fiscal Stability and Financial Sustainability

### Library Foundation

During FY 2015 the Library Foundation secured gifts, grants and earnings of almost \$1.5 million from 1,296 unique donors to fund Library programs, collections and other areas. Examples of support and impact areas include:

#### Early Literacy and Educational Success

- **\$1 million two-year grant from PNC Foundation** to establish a vocabulary building initiative, *Get Ready With Words*, in partnership with Community School of the Arts and Discovery Place.
- **\$10,000 grant from the Foundation for the Carolinas** in support of the Library Card Campaign for pre-K to third-graders in CMS.
- **\$10,000 from the Akers Foundation, Inc.** to support the Born Reader Program and books and materials for teen users.

#### Digital Strategy

- **\$75,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** to fund Idea Box.
- **\$50,000 grant from the State Library of North Carolina and the Institute of Museum and Library Services** to help the Library identify a new ILS/Discovery platform that will help Library customers better access services through the Web.
- **\$50,000 grant from the State Library of North Carolina and the Institute of Museum and Library Services** to redevelop Storyplace.org with additional content and responsive design that can be used on a wide range of devices.

#### Additional Individual Support and Community Engagement

- **In its first year, “Verse & Vino,” a signature fundraising event featuring *NY Times* bestselling authors, netted \$125,000** for the Library and sold out, attracting 850 attendees.
- **The first Library Fundraising Summit** for library development professionals in North and South Carolina was held in May at Foundation For The Carolinas. The summit, funded by Duke Energy, attracted 75 colleagues to learn fundraising best practices.

### Staff Development and Support

During FY 2015 the Library invested in human capital in the following ways.

- **Mentoring Program.** The Library’s dynamic and very successful Mentoring Program is a learning partnership that provides job-specific knowledge and insight for employees, while also identifying talent within the organization for development and retention as well as personal and professional growth.
- **Leadership Development Program.** Recognizing a need to prepare library staff for future leadership roles, the Leadership Development Pilot Program was created using 10 tenets of leadership and graduated its first class in December 2015. Based on its success, the program will continue in FY 2016.
- **Career Paths for Staff.** The Library developed visual career paths to help staff understand the skills and experiences needed to progress in the organization, with or without the MLS degree.

- **Learning and Development.** The Library offered more than 80 library-specific learning opportunities for staff during FY 2015, complementing the ongoing training provided by Mecklenburg County. The Library was an early adopter of the online training system MeckEDU.

### Facility Improvements

The following facility improvements took place in FY 2015.

- **Sugar Creek's PC Learning Lab** was renovated to include a closed space for classes while adding 10 additional PCs for open Internet access that can be used without interrupting PC classes. New furniture, fixtures and equipment were added to complement the space.
- **Davidson was renovated** to create a new public service desk and a manager's office for better workflow and to create additional study spaces for customers.
- **Parking lots were replaced** at West Boulevard, Main, North County and South County.
- **HVAC systems/components were replaced** at Independence, Davidson and South County.
- **Bathrooms were renovated** to include hands-free fixtures and better ventilation at Main.
- **Carpeting was replaced** at South County.
- **Terrazzo flooring was repaired** and a new entryway was installed at Main.

### Library as Leader

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

- **David Singleton, Director of Libraries, is a member** of a national task force of the Public Library Association (PLA) on outcomes and measurement, sponsored by the Gates Foundation. The Library will be part of a pilot group of public library systems testing the measures beginning in fall 2015.
- **Beatriz Guevara, Library Manager,** was elected President of REFORMA. REFORMA is an affiliate of the American Library Association (ALA), that actively seeks to promote the development of library collections to include Spanish-language and Latino oriented materials, the recruitment of more bilingual and bicultural library professionals and support staff and the development of Latino-based library services and programs.
- **Emily Nanney, Children's Services Coordinator,** was chosen as a Leadership Fellow in the Public Library Association Leadership Academy while David Singleton served as a national mentor for the program.
- **Marie Harris, Teen Librarian,** was selected as a Discovery Place Stem Fellow. This program offers a dynamic, hands-on learning experience for educators who want to deliver high-impact STEM lessons that prepare students for real-world challenges.
- **Tiffany Boeglan, Teen Librarian,** was awarded \$1,000 by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) to expand the Teen Volunteer program.

## SUBSTANTIAL SERVICE DELIVERY CHANGES

### Expanded Library Hours

The Library implemented six-day service at all libraries and seven-day service at the regional libraries, Main and ImaginOn beginning in September 2014, thus increasing service delivery for customers throughout the Mecklenburg County community.

## **Collections**

The Library met the needs of our digital customers this year by allocating more money to our digital collections than ever before. During FY 2015 digital circulation increased by 61%, which meant that Materials Management had to allocate more funds to meet this increasing demand. Circulation of books and materials increased by 2.6% in FY 2015, and purchased digital content grew by over 52.2%.

## **REDUCED/AVOIDED COSTS**

The Library's primary strategy for reducing costs in FY 2015 was the use of community volunteers to extend the capacity of paid staff.

## **Volunteer Time**

663 Library volunteers gave 59,496 hours, valued at \$1.4 million according to values defined by the independent sector. These hours were equivalent to 29 FTEs.

## **Library Book Sales Managed by Volunteers**

Book sales demonstrate the collective impact of our volunteer activities. When activities like book sales are managed by volunteers, this increases staff capacity to assist the public with technology and provide programs for all ages.

## **AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has received several awards this fiscal year, including recognition for the very successful Library Card Campaign for pre-K to third-graders in CMS and several awards for the Library's video storytelling efforts in collaboration with Mecklenburg County.

### **National Association of Counties (NACO) Achievement Award**

- Library Card Campaign for pre-K to third-graders in CMS

### **Charlotte Magazine Best of the Best (BOB)**

- Awarded for Library Storytimes

### **Telly Awards for Mecklenburg County Public Information Videos about Library programs**

- Bronze Telly Award for Film/Video - Storyvine Storytellers
- Bronze People's Telly Award for Film/Video - Storyvine Storytellers
- Bronze People's Telly Award for Film/Video - Independence Library's 40th Anniversary

### **2015 Hermes Awards**

- Platinum Award - The Library's Mobile App
- Gold Award - The Library's Tumblr Blog

### **Ava Awards**

- Gold Award - Social media campaign for One Book community read program
- Gold Award - Library News & Events
- Honorable Mention - Library Facebook engagement

## **SIGNIFICANT UPCOMING EVENTS (PROGRAMS/SERVICES)**

In FY 2016, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library will continue to focus on activities and initiatives that align with the Strategic Plan and will help the Library reach its objectives as outlined in the attached Program of Work.

### **Wee Read East**

The successful Wee Read West Program, focused on building pre-reading and reading skills for pre-school children in the West Boulevard area, will be expanded to Hickory Grove Library and will be called Wee Read East.

### **ONE Access**

Beginning in fall 2016, the Library will be streamlining student access to databases and materials by integrating CMS student ID numbers and Library accounts through the One Number Equals Access (ONE Access) initiative. This will allow all 145,000 students in CMS to have instant access to Library databases and materials. Implementation will include training for students and CMS staff on the Library's educational resources. In addition, the Library will curate specific digital content to support CMS curriculum goals. This effort is part of an ongoing commitment by both organizations to benefit the community by increasing literacy and educational success.

### **Community Read**

After a one-year hiatus, the Library will once again give the community a chance to participate in a County-wide "Community Read." Community members will have the chance to read *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry* by Gabrielle Charbonnet Zevin in late August/early September and participate in related events.

### **Morrison Renovation/Expansion Project**

The Morrison Regional Library renovation is scheduled to begin in March 2016. \$8,017,000 was approved by the Board of County Commissioners for the renovation. The entire building is to be renovated and reprogrammed for improved collections, service delivery and technology access.

### **West Boulevard Renovation**

Planning for this renovation will begin this fall with construction occurring later in the fiscal year.

### **Main Library Renovation**

Armed with recommendations and a vision created by the Main Library Committee, a new Main Library Steering Committee will lead the next phase of planning for a new Main Library.

### **EpicFest**

Established by The Library Foundation, "EpicFest" is a new free literary festival for kids of all ages and is made possible through the generosity of the Jim Preston Family, Wells Fargo and other corporate partners. The festival has been created to remember and honor Elizabeth (Libby) Preston's passion for encouraging and instilling a love of reading in children. The first EpicFest will take place on Nov. 6-7, 2015. The first day (Friday, Nov. 6) will bring award-winning children/young adult authors into selected CMS schools. The second day (Saturday, Nov. 7) will include a free literary festival for children, young adults and families, hosted at ImagineOn.

### **Blueprint for the Future**

As the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan nears its end, the next phase will involve creating a long-term, ten-year view of what the Library will need to look like in order to have a positive impact on the community it serves. Creating the Blueprint are a set of Work Teams encompassing Library and Board staff and including the participation of community stakeholders as needed. The Library's mission and roles guide the work teams to position the Library as Community Service Business, Place, Leader and Community Strategy.