

2014 National Medal Winner



Mid-Continent Public Library serves an incredibly diverse mix of communities in Greater Metropolitan Kansas City. Spanning three counties and 1,349 square miles, the System serves populations urban and rural, wealthy and poor, young and old. These unique groups provide MCPL with an exceptional opportunity to adapt services, collections, and outreach efforts to meet the needs of each community. Operating in an environment that requires varied service offerings and multiple service delivery methods, MCPL is continually challenged to learn more about what citizens need and how to best deliver those services and resources.

MCPL determined during the strategic planning process that three foundational types of library service should form the basis for a creative and robust programming approach focused upon providing access. These three foundational types of service are:

Literacy Initiatives

Aimed at improving the lives of our community members, stimulating imaginations, and helping to prepare children and youth to read at grade level.

- **Summer Reading Program**

While most libraries have a traditional summer reading programs, MCPL's Summer Reading Program is unique in its scope and structure. As MCPL's longest running major initiative, SRP serves thousands of youth each year. Almost 40,000 children and teens participated in the 2012 Summer Reading Program offered through MCPL.

- **Read Aloud 1-2-3**

Our new elementary literacy program, called Read Aloud 1-2-3, was launched in winter 2012 and is designed to encourage first through third graders to read aloud with a partner, as a group, in a classroom, or with family members. In the first year, 1,749 students across 21 school districts completed the program and earned books from the popular Magic Tree House series.

- **Summer Reading Effectiveness Study**

MCPL launched a partnership with local school districts in 2012 to begin measuring outcomes for the SRP in a more formal and comprehensive way. Beginning with three at-risk school districts, MCPL was able to track specific students' reading comprehension scores on tests taken before and after the summer break to monitor the impact of SRP. The Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium confidentially handles all of the data processing and participating families are aware of the limited use of the test score results. As preliminary results have come in (which indicate substantial SRP impact), the overall success of the partnership has garnered interest from multiple school districts across the metro area.

- **AWE Literacy Stations**

MCPL has installed, through funding from the Missouri State Library, AWE Early Literacy Stations at all 31 MCPL

locations. The stations, intended for ages two through eight, allow children access to a developmentally appropriate, computer-based learning experience with a focus on emerging literacy skills, early mathematics, and problem solving.

- **W.E.E. Bus**

For those families who are unable to visit the Library for financial or transportation reasons, MCPL has partnered with the Blue Springs Education Foundation to staff the W.E.E. Learning Bus which was funded by the Women Endowing Education Group. The self-contained lab visits local apartments, shopping centers, and other community locations to provide access to Internet-enabled computers for adults and children. MCPL staff members utilize the W.E.E. Learning Bus to provide early literacy storytimes, register people for library cards, and provide assistance in accessing the many resources available through the Library.

- **Outreach partnerships with local organizations like Clay County Health Department, Hope House, and area Head Start locations.**

Library staff are working in high-risk communities are focusing heavily on other types of outreach including, but not limited to, doubling off-site storytimes at places like the Clay County Health Department, Hope House (a domestic violence shelter), and area Head Start locations to take literacy services and materials beyond its traditional Library walls.

- **Adult Literacy Programs**

MCPL's literacy efforts do not end with children, we also support adult reading with our yearly reading programs that have included 6 in 12 and the Winter Reading Challenge. Other adult literacy efforts aim to increase effective communication skills among participants like our dedication to National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo).

Collections and Digital Resources Investments

This dedication illustrates MCPL's uncommon commitment to access for a widely dispersed community.

According to the Public Library Data Service (PLDS):

- MCPL's expenditures on materials (as a percentage of total budget) are the second highest of any similarly sized library system in the nation.
- MCPL spends an average of 22% of its annual budget on materials compared to a peer average of 12%.
- MCPL dedicates more resources to digital collections than any other library in the country.

Publicly Available Online Resources

- **CareConnection**

MCPL partnered with the Truman Heartland Foundation to create Care Connection, a collaborative website which lists resources--related to home health, senior programs, and housing options--for older adults and their caregivers.

- **Juvenile Series and Sequels**

The Juvenile Series and Sequels database compiles more than 36,000 books in 4,900 series titles for youth. Books included in this database are not necessarily owned by MCPL, but are collected to create a database that is referenced by over 1,000 other public and school libraries across the county.

- **Based on the Book**

Based on the Book is a database of over 1,450 books, novels, short stories, and plays that have been made into

motion pictures. Based on the Book has proven highly popular for schools, public libraries, and the general public with more than 4,000 links to this publicly accessible database.

Midwest Genealogy Center

The MGC, a 52,000 square-foot building, is dedicated solely for the collections, programs, and services surrounding genealogy and family history. MGC is now the largest freestanding public genealogy library in the nation and serves as a preeminent resource for family history, providing access to almost three-quarters of a million on-site materials.

- Family Tree Magazine named the center one of the **9 Genealogy Libraries to Visit Before You Die** in 2009.
- **Ancestry.com** joined with MGC in 2013 to present a day-long genealogy seminar to 975 family history enthusiasts.

Community Engagement Efforts

These efforts have been developed in cooperation with local and national partners for unique patron groups.

MCPL approaches community engagement through customized programs and strategic agreements with other organizations. By giving branches the freedom to customize programs and outreach services, MCPL is able to serve specific needs of individual communities.

- **English as a Second Language Programming**

The Antioch Branch which serves a fairly high concentration of adults and children who are English language learners. In order to serve this growing population of immigrants and refugees, Antioch Branch implemented adult ESL conversation classes, multi-cultural storytimes, and special ethnic celebrations.

- **Young @ Heart**

Situated in an older community, the North Oak Branch created the Young @ Heart Open House in order to provide important health-related information to aging populations. This free, community-wide event features representatives from numerous organizations, including Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security Administration, the local county health department, VFW, Better Business Bureau, AARP, and area senior centers. The event connects appropriate non-profit organizations to citizens aged 50 and older and/or their caregivers. As a result of high attendance and positive feedback, MCPL has expanded the program to other branches with high populations of seniors (or similar clusters).

- **Pink Parties**

MCPL's Pink Parties are an example of a program that serves a specific interest group across multiple branches. Developed by one branch as a way to provide information and support around the issue of breast cancer, this program has expanded to be hosted at four branches each year. Cancer foundations, hospitals, medical practitioners, and relevant local businesses set up tables in each branch to discuss issues related to the physical, psychological, and emotional challenges presented by breast cancer.

- **Veterans Salute**

For the past 15 years, MCPL has worked with regional veteran's groups to host a daylong event honoring military veterans. The annual Veterans Salute transforms one of our libraries each year into a military history museum. The event includes reenactments, roundtable discussions, and displays of artifacts and military equipment. The Library also collects oral histories and helps connect veterans support groups with those they serve. This year, over 1,100 attendees celebrated community veterans.

- **Tell Me A Story**

This program encourages families, friends, and community members to share memories and stories through

recorded interviews which are then archived at MGC. This program will soon be expanding to the newly opened Woodneath Library Center situated in the northern part of the service area.

National and Local Partnerships

MCPL is also able to engage with the larger community through mission-enhancing partnerships.

- Through the Midwest Genealogy Center (MGC), a long-term partnership with the Family History Library in Salt Lake City provides full-time volunteer support and sharing of digitization equipment.
- MCPL has been able to expand access to MGC's collection through partnerships with Ancestry.com, Familysearch.com, and Missouri State Archives, which has resulted in digitization of several genealogy collections. Additionally, a digitization partnership with the Jackson County Historical Society provides increased access to specific collections for MGC's patrons.

Metro-wide Partnerships

- **Truman Heartland Community Foundation** (Care Connection)
- **Mid-America Regional Council** (Generation Exchange, an intergenerational storytelling program)
- **Metropolitan Community Colleges** (Annual Storytelling Celebration)
- MCPL is also developing partnerships in support of a new Story Center concept with **The Nature Conservancy** and **National Storytelling Network**.

Accomplishing these initiatives while providing access in a service area as large and diverse as the MCPL system requires flexibility, creativity, and a consistent focus on the needs of the populations served by the Library. While MCPL's collection and services are heavily utilized and valued now, technology evolves and communities change. MCPL's priorities will change as well in response to community needs. The Library's mission to provide access, however, will remain constant. Access is what MCPL does well, and it is what ensures the Library will continue to be an integral and invaluable institution for years to come.

Screen reader users: Please switch to forms mode for this link.

Feedback