

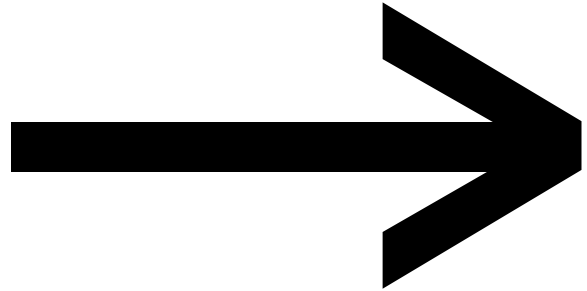
NOW



NEXT

Brooklyn Public Library
Strategic Plan 2018

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Shortly after its establishment in 1896, Brooklyn Public Library published its first annual report, declaring its undertaking “to improve the quality of the minds of the people... and lay the foundation of a better civilization for the future,” which still seems apt 120 years later. BPL has remained committed to this founding mission, though how we execute that mission has remarkably evolved.

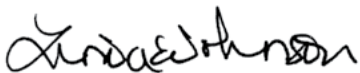
Public libraries developed during a century of nearly incomprehensible change. When our first branch was erected, Brooklyn had no cars on its streets, planes in its skies, or windows bright with electricity, nevermind wifi-enabled tablets or 3D printers. A manufacturing economy of dockyards and factories has given way to an information economy, resulting in unprecedented income disparity. Today, one in five Brooklyn households has a six-figure annual income while one in five receives food stamp benefits. Though the borough has remained one of the most important immigrant destinations in the United States—in 1900, one third of Brooklynites hailed from another country, just as in 2017—they are now more likely from the Caribbean or China than Poland or Italy. Brooklyn in 2017 is as dense and diverse as it’s ever been.

The Library has adapted at the same breakneck pace as the borough. Patrons once visited a handful of branches in person to check out printed materials in English, which they read at a carrel or at home. Today, patrons access our vast collection of more than four million materials in over 100 languages on whichever printed or digital platform they choose, whether they are at home, standing on the subway platform, or visiting one of our branches in nearly every neighborhood. Patrons come to the Library not only to access the internet but also to learn how to navigate the ever-proliferating amount of online information.

Our definition of literacy has expanded. We believe all Brooklynites should be fluent in the languages of arts and culture, civic life, digital technology, mathematics and finance, the sciences, and more. To reflect our multi-faceted approach to literacy, our services have exponentially grown. Last year, more than eight million visitors used neighborhood libraries across

Brooklyn to study, build businesses, engage in book discussions and debates, listen to live music, prepare their taxes, learn how to paint, design robots, and more.

In these ways, Brooklyn Public Library reflects the vibrant, complex, and constantly changing communities we serve. The plan that follows is the expression of our ambition to carry on that work, and to do it more effectively, more collaboratively, and more creatively than ever before. Part One—Now—articulates who we are: an institution that offers everyone the dignity and exhilaration of learning. Part Two—Next—articulates who we are striving to become: a truly public forum that transcends well-worn divides to gather people together, generate genuine dialogue, and energize a sense of possibility. Taken as a whole, it is proof that the public library—extraordinarily versatile and fiercely democratic—is as vital as ever.



Linda E. Johnson

Introduction

Brooklyn Public Library is an educator, community resource, civic space, and social support. Its founding purpose—to provide access to information and guide patrons toward books and other resources—remains central to everything it does. But it has also become a place to take classes, participate in cultural events, and meet neighbors from different backgrounds. The Library is a literal place and a collection of resources, many of which are available anywhere there is internet access. It is a shared space that sparks collaboration and a space for individual reflection.

This complexity of purpose should come as no surprise: public libraries are working on the front lines of information access, perhaps the fastest changing part of our economy and society. It is also no wonder that in a borough with many different cultures and a dearth of public space, our buildings are used in a dizzying variety of ways. But for precisely these reasons it is important to keep asking questions about the Library's core goals and to take stock of both its limits and potential as we work to deliver a broad array of services.

This plan and the initiatives it identifies are meant to provide this vision and focus.

When we started our research more than a year ago, we felt it was important to create a process that gave staff from across the organization an opportunity to discuss how they approach their jobs, what obstacles they face, and what they might do to maximize their impact if given the right tools and resources. During charrettes and interactive feedback events with over 300 librarians, clerks, custodians, public safety officers, administrators, and trustees, the common challenges that surfaced were a lack of communication and collaboration across different departments and branches, and a need for clearer guidelines and models for community outreach. Proposals included expanded service partnerships, particularly around cultural and educational programs, additional teen training and internship offerings, and creative ways of bringing services out of library buildings and into the community.

The rich and often complicated discussions that arose during the process shaped this plan. In addition to the more standard elements of a strategic plan, it identifies the values that animate our work and make us who we are, and spotlights key models and approaches that separate BPL from other community-based organizations. It describes some of the roles of a public library in the internet era, when most patrons are confronted with too much information rather than too little, and it is increasingly difficult to tell truth from fiction.

Based on our charrettes, focus groups, and over 100 hundred additional interviews with internal and external stakeholders, the plan also presents a vision for the future designed to guide BPL's strategic initiatives over the next several years. In addition to clarifying our existing approaches to public service and creating the internal capacity to reproduce the best programs, this vision incorporates new ways of engaging residents and tailoring services to the particular needs of our neighborhoods.

Part One—Now—identifies the Library's five core principles. At a time of great change for libraries and information services in general, it is important to explicitly identify the high-level goals that define our work, make us who we are, and motivate us to continually improve. BPL's five core principles are:

- To foster literacy and the love of learning
- To supply trusted, up-to-date information resources, and guide patrons to the ones they need
- To connect residents to educational and economic opportunities
- To strengthen relations between residents and promote civic engagement
- To provide inclusive and inspirational places

For each principle, we draw on key existing services to describe the Library's distinct approach, including its values and methods. For example,

when it comes to literacy and the love of learning, BPL incorporates play and experimentation, and designs programs to meet the needs of learners with a wide range of abilities. And when it comes to strengthening relations between residents and promoting civic engagement, the Library works closely with community partners and volunteers.

Part Two—Next—identifies three focus areas for future action. While each focus area encompasses a number of distinct initiatives, its main purpose is to identify a set of general goals that can direct action at all levels of the organization. The three focus areas are:

Establishing Priorities

Because the Library responds to a broad range of needs with an even broader range of services, it is important to acknowledge genuine constraints on material and human resources. To build capacity and deepen our impact, BPL will evaluate existing services in light of our core principles, establish clear models for new and expanded services, and streamline partnerships with outside organizations and stakeholders.

Focusing on Community

In a borough as diverse as Brooklyn, different neighborhoods often need different library services. BPL will take a number of concrete steps to become more responsive to local neighborhood conditions, including engaging residents and using performance and demographic data to customize services and programs.

Innovating through Collaboration and Learning

To keep abreast of the rapidly changing needs of information consumers and producers, BPL must continue to incorporate new tools and practices. Going forward, the Library will prioritize professional development for staff, while providing new ways to collaborate on projects and share information about best practices.

Together we hope these focus areas will not only help coordinate future planning efforts from the

Library administration down, but inform individual initiatives from the field. Examples of top-down initiatives include new tools and strategies for tailoring services to individual neighborhoods, and a renewed focus on partnerships and professional development. A critical part of this plan, however, is to create institutional space for staff at all levels to identify solutions of their own. Through a new system of branch networks, staff will be able to prioritize issues in several distinct service areas and draw on the Library's resources to test concrete solutions.

Moreover, as demonstrated in the series of spotlights in the middle of this document, the Library will do more over the coming months and years to highlight models of excellence, drawing on innovative staff members to inspire change across the system.

As we move toward a relationships-based service model, being a librarian means creating partnerships with outside organizations and engaging residents in addition to stocking and checking out materials. Our staff are constantly evolving in their roles and redefining boundaries and expectations. The plan is meant to clarify this process and deepen our capacity to respond to the changing needs of patrons in principled and coordinated ways.



Brooklyn Connections participants present their research at a culminating ceremony



Finalists in BPL's Teen Writing contest have their pieces published in a journal



An interactive performance of Sophocles's *Ajax*, followed by discussion at Crown Heights Library



An Asian New Year celebration, Sunset Park Library



Data Detox Day, in partnership with the Mozilla Foundation, is proposed for BKLYN Incubator funding 12



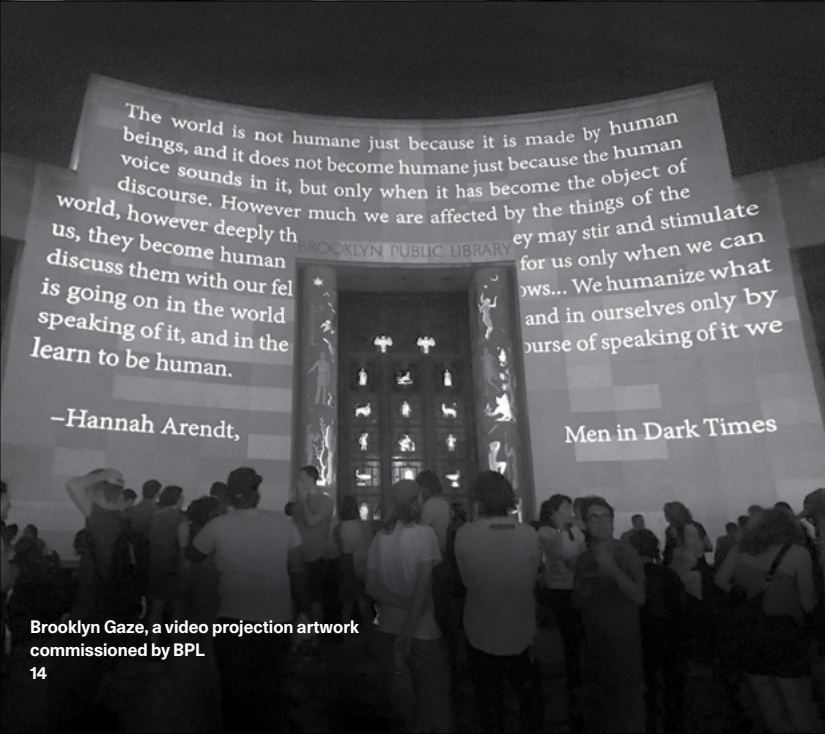
BKLYN Amplified, a silent listening party with BPL produced podcasts 13



Authors Jacqueline Woodson and Jason Reynolds at Macon Library



BPL's local history archive has more than 200,000 items, including 467 historical maps



Brooklyn Gaze, a video projection artwork commissioned by BPL



Drag Queen Story Hour at Park Slope Library



The World Language Family Festival, Bay Ridge Library



Remix Academy, a digital media program for teens interested in music, is prototyped at Bedford Library



BPL adult literacy students prepare for the High School Equivalency exam



A patron listens to poet and activist Sonia Sanchez, Campfire Conversations, Lefferts Historic House



PowerUP! businesses show their products at a pop-up market at BKLYN Commons co-working space

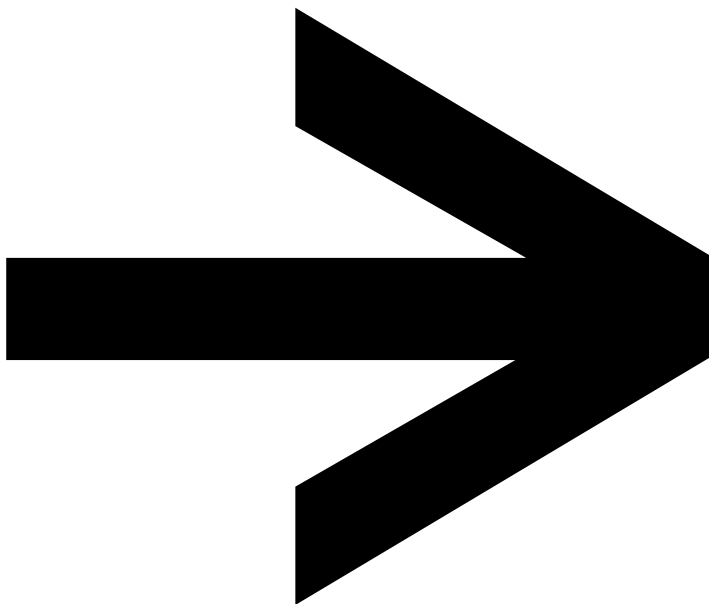


Choreographer Reggi "Regg Roc" Gray and dancers demonstrate flex styles at Central Library



A young patron uses BPL's self-service machines

NOW



Now: Core Principles

At BPL, we believe there are many ways to learn, that welcoming people from all beliefs and backgrounds is crucial for democracy, and that listening and taking an interest are fundamental characteristics of strong communities. We protect our patrons' personal privacy, including their digital privacy, because we believe in intellectual freedom and take seriously our role in supporting learners and information seekers of all kinds. We take pride in sparking people's curiosity and believe learning is most effective when it's fun.

This section of the plan expresses our values in five core principles and examines how we put them into action. In making these principles explicit, we provide our patrons with a clearer sense of what makes us who we are, and give our staff and service partners a better idea of how we might improve in the future.

Over the last decade, one of BPL's strengths has been its ability to meet new needs with new services. To keep up with the incredible number of changes brought about by the internet, for example, the Library has not only purchased new materials and made them available in new ways—it has created a wider range of services and programs and invested in new tools and spaces to support them. In addition to eBooks and other digital resources, BPL offers STEM programs for elementary school children, technology training and internships for teens, business plan competitions for entrepreneurs, arts programs for seniors, and more.

One goal of this plan is to create even more capacity internally to respond to new needs and changing conditions on the ground. But to do this effectively, we must be mindful of the Library's mission and established approaches to public service. As we sustain, expand, and improve existing services and programs, and dream up and execute new ones, we will ensure they spring from the following core principles.

**“THE PURSUIT OF
KNOWING WAS
FREEDOM TO ME,
THE RIGHT TO
DECLARE YOUR
OWN CURIOSITIES
AND FOLLOW
THEM THROUGH
ALL MANNER OF
BOOKS.”**

To foster literacy and the
love of learning

One important insight behind the founding of this and other public libraries across the country is the idea that reading is transformational, that through reading we can not only learn new things but discover new worlds. In his award-winning book, *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates writes about this aspect of the library and what it meant to his own intellectual development. “The pursuit of knowing was freedom to me,” he writes, “the right to declare your own curiosities and follow them through all manner of books. I was made for the library, not the classroom.”

Like Coates, many patrons rely on BPL as an alternative to school, a place where they are surrounded by books and other resources, and can follow their intuitions and interests at their own pace. For patrons who want to pursue knowledge alongside others, or need more direction, the Library offers an enormous range of programs that introduce participants to new ideas, practices, and ways of thinking. Many of these programs incorporate materials from the collection, or instructions or tips, so that participants can continue learning on their own if they choose. The goal is to tap into a person’s innate curiosity and inspire a passion for learning.

As one of the only organizations in New York that focuses on learners of all ages, BPL has developed distinct pedagogical approaches for different age groups, including children, teens, adults, and students of all ages with learning disabilities.¹

For instance, early learning programs (0–5 years old) are as much about modeling activities for care-givers as they are developing new skills and habits for young children. With an emphasis on social and emotional learning, in addition to intellectual learning, participants are encouraged to talk, play and sing.



Science Baby, a creative science series for 0–3 year olds

Babies are introduced to patterns and textures, and toddlers build with blocks and dowels. Programs for school-aged children (6–12) emphasize play and experimentation. In Book Adventure programs, they dress up in costumes, play with toys, and browse through stacks of topically appropriate books; and in Library Lab, they conduct hands-on science experiments with different substances and create machines out of cardboard, duct tape, circuits, and diodes.

For teens, the goal is to empower participants by involving them in both the design and execution of programs. Drawing on their input and continued involvement, the Library hosts an annual teen writing contest that culminates in a reading and awards ceremony at Central Library. The winners and finalists also have their pieces published in the Teen Writing Journal distributed by BPL. For adults, the Library offers programs for learners with a wide range of abilities, including both basic computer literacy programs and more advanced digital media classes. At its adult learning centers, BPL offers intensive courses in basic reading and writing, preparation for the High School Equivalency exam, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

To accommodate different intelligences and learning styles, BPL has developed programs that go far beyond traditional literacy to incorporate sensory and physical elements, including building and disas-

sembling, dissecting and performing. The Library's Inclusive Services Department develops these kinds of programs for students with learning disabilities, and many of the same approaches have been adopted for other children as well as for teens and adults.



The Vision and Justice lecture series presented by Harvard professor Sarah Lewis

At the same time the Library is increasing its range of educational programs, incorporating new approaches and delving into new subjects, it continues to stress reading as fundamental. Through literally thousands of reading groups, lectures, author talks, a prominent literary prize, and citywide campaigns like Summer Reading, one of BPL's most important contributions to the city is building a culture of reading and a community of readers.

Over the last two years, the Library has built on this tradition by developing an arts and culture series that is both inclusive and unapologetically intellectual. Recent events have included high profile performances of ancient Greek plays meant to spark important discussions about violence and mental health, a series of Harvard University lectures on the representations of race in the history of photography, and the Night of Philosophy and Ideas, which involved 60 lectures by prominent philosophers and thinkers and attracted over 7,000 attendees.

CONNECTING PATRONS TO RESOURCES IN THE COLLECTION REQUIRES INNOVATIVE CURATION, PATRON ENGAGE- MENT, AND PARTNERSHIPS.

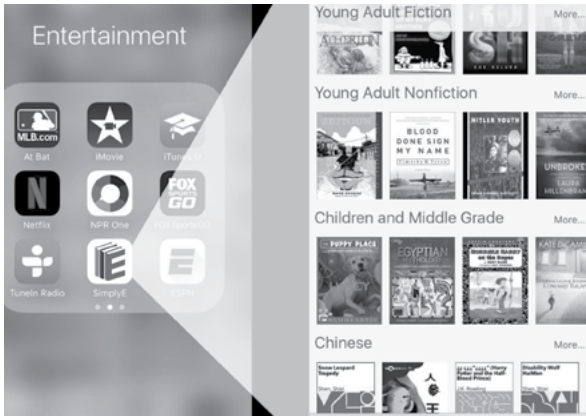
To supply trusted, up-to-date information resources and guide patrons to the ones they need

BPL's approach to education and other aspects of its work, including social service support and legal assistance, civic engagement and more, rests on the assumption that people can continue on their journey of lifelong learning with a book, article, electronic learning resource or some other informational tool. In this way, the collection is at the heart of everything we do. But to create a collection and make it accessible and relevant to people's needs and interests requires more than merely purchasing, shelving, and checking out books. It requires ongoing patron engagement and support for the individuals and groups that use our materials.

The Library's collection is extremely diverse—it contains 4 million books and other items, as well as electronic databases and educational products, computers and digital media tools—and patrons engage with it in equally diverse ways.² A freelancer might take part in the Business & Career Center's business counseling services, then check out sample business plans and participate in online training sessions on time management through Lynda.com. A teenager interested in photography and digital media might participate in the Library's digital photography bootcamp, browse through hundreds of career profiles and interviews with professionals on Career Cruising, and then return to the stacks to get inspiration from the work of Weegee, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks. Patrons utilize our collection to prepare for professional licensing exams, delve into their family histories, access information about government safety net programs, and pursue their interests for research, enrichment, and entertainment.

Whatever the goal, BPL's public service staff, including more than 650 librarians, clerks, and technol-

ogy resource specialists, are experts at connecting patrons to resources inside and outside the collection. This happens in person every day across the Library system, and increasingly online via the Library's website and social media channels. After a short period in which search and recommendation engines looked like they might replace traditional readers advisory services at libraries across the country, the tide has started to turn the other way as patrons look for more personalization and context. Librarians generate book lists through the online catalog, meet with researchers through Book-A-Librarian, and provide personalized book recommendations through BookMatch.



SimplyE, a new app that lets patrons browse through and read over 200,000 ebooks

Partnerships are another important way of connecting people to resources in the collection. BPL creates and distributes curated book sets to classrooms across the borough in support of core curriculum goals in a variety of subjects, and at the end of every school year distributes reading lists to schools as part of its annual Summer Reading campaign. Archival materials from the Library's extensive local history collection are made available to classrooms as a part of Brooklyn Connections, a project-based educational program that teaches fourth through 12th graders how to sort through and understand primary source

materials.³ Last year, 1,700 students at 33 different schools participated, with final projects including a scale model of Ebbets Field, home of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and handmade protest aprons and hats in commemoration of the civil rights boycott of Ebinger Bakery.



A young patron records herself reading a book as a part of the Daddy and Me program

The Library partners with hundreds of senior centers and assisted living facilities, homeless shelters, and jails to create offsite book collections that our librarians visit regularly and supplement with programs. At Riker's Island, for instance, librarians supplement a book delivery service with a four-week literacy program in which incarcerated parents learn reading and storytelling tips, and are invited to record themselves reading their favorite children's books. BPL works with local bookstores and publishers to stock important titles in over 100 languages, and to host foreign authors for panel discussions and talks. Finally, our librarians work with a variety of city agencies and nonprofit service providers, such as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Immigrant Justice Corps, to provide immigrants with legal advice and a host of practical information about working and living in the U.S., including classes to prepare for the citizenship test and information about applying for or renewing green cards.

BPL CONNECTS PATRONS TO RESOURCES AND CLASSES WHILE HELPING THEM TO IDENTIFY LONG-RANGE GOALS.

Core Principle 3

To connect residents to
educational and economic
opportunities

In an economy that increasingly requires postsecondary training and a baseline of technology skills, BPL has become a lifeline for tens of thousands of Brooklyn residents looking to make themselves more attractive job applicants and chart viable career paths. Every day people come into branches to search through job listings on the internet, and many work with staff to improve their resumes and cover letters and find information on educational and career training opportunities.

To serve students who never finished formal schooling, including the more than 20 percent of Brooklyn adults who lack a high school degree, BPL offers a number of different intensive courses in basic reading, writing, and math. The Library enrolls nearly 400 students a year in pre-HSE (High School Equivalency) courses designed for students who read below the ninth-grade level. Students receive support from advisors who can help with problems outside the classroom if needed, referring them to housing agencies and social service providers. Beginning in early 2018, BPL will launch an associate's degree program in partnership with Bard College, in which small cohorts of students will take college level liberal arts courses at Central Library. The program—which is completely free for students—will target people who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to attend a liberal arts college, much less a college of Bard's caliber, and support them on their "pursuit of knowing" through many of the same courses offered at the school's main Hudson Valley campus.

In the case of Bard at BPL and the Library's intensive pre-HSE courses, students take classes as

they would in a traditional school setting, but the fact that they're coming to the Library to do it is important. The students in these courses benefit not only from the Library's collections and staff, but also from its culture of curiosity and support for self-directed, differentiated learning.

Beyond intensive courses, the Library prepares young adults for careers by introducing them to mentors and role models. The Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Techies (T4) program trains up to 100 teens every year on customer service and computer software and puts them to work in branches across the borough. They help patrons on computers and assist staff in a variety of technology programs, including basic computer classes for seniors. Graduates of the program have gone on to enroll at universities including MIT, Duke, Wellesley, and Binghamton University, join organizations such as Girls Who Code and Technology Service Corps, and work for employers like the Brooklyn Museum, AOL, and Eyebeam.



Up to 100 T4 interns receive software and customer service training every year

Yet another way the Library connects people to economic opportunities is through business support services. Freelancers, independent contractors, sole proprietors, and aspiring entrepreneurs regularly

visit the Library to work on their laptops, or use software and databases they can't access elsewhere. Through a variety of partnerships with external organizations such as SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), they receive in-depth coaching from experienced business professionals as well as pro-bono legal and financial advice. They learn how to secure financing through not just regular banks but microlenders, how to repair their credit or reduce debt, how to create contracts with clients, and more.

The Library's business plan competitions—PowerUP! and PowerUP! KREYOL—offer entrepreneurs classes and individual counseling in addition to much-needed visibility and financing. In stark contrast to the wider small business community, the majority of participants are women (70 percent) and/or minorities (75 percent), while only 40 percent are employed full time. Over the last decade, PowerUP! and PowerUP! KREYOL, which serves Brooklyn's Haitian community, have helped to launch literally hundreds of new businesses.

In a borough famous for creative entrepreneurs and DIYers, the Library is the original coworking space. It was an incubator of businesses and career ambitions long before the term was adopted in the start-up community. And like many of the incubators in the tech and creative industries, BPL connects people with ambitions to the networks and mentors they need to realize them, a service that is particularly important among women, minorities, and others traditionally deprived of these opportunities.

LIBRARIES HELP CREATE AND SUSTAIN THE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS THAT MAKE OUR NEIGHBOR- HOODS VIBRANT PLACES TO LIVE.

Core Principle 4

To strengthen relations
between residents and
promote civic engagement

Every one of BPL's branch libraries, including Central Library, enable people to create community around shared interests, strengthen relationships with neighbors, and exchange views and opinions (even if it means disagreeing). When people from different walks of life come together to form even fleeting bonds in a library, surrounded by books and programs celebrating diverse viewpoints, they open up to new ideas and ways of seeing and thinking about the world, and not infrequently discover new role models and even mentors.

People forge bonds through chance encounters in our libraries all the time, but BPL also offers a broad range of programs that allow them to connect through common interests and the shared experience of learning something new. For school-aged children, many branches offer creative writing and cartooning programs and, for older adults, memoir writing, painting, and dance classes. Unlike many senior centers and residential care facilities, BPL enables older adults to see and interact with children and new parents, and exposes them to new technologies and tools. Among the Library's many technology offerings for older adults is Library Lanes, a competitive virtual bowling league using Xbox consoles.

Another way the Library builds community is through in-person, group discussions. People gather at the Library to engage in dialogue about neighborhood concerns and broader political, moral, and social issues.

In partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance, BPL hosts regular campfire conversations in front of the Lefferts Historic House, in which residents of all ages discuss topics like aging and public land. In some



Library Lanes, a competitive virtual bowling league for older adults

cases, getting people involved in these discussions has meant stirring things up, even agitating participants. Several BPL branches have hosted performances of *The Madness of Hercules* and *Antigone* by a theater production company called Theater of War, which uses ancient Greek drama as a springboard to discuss complex contemporary issues like violence and mental illness. In the words of its founder, Bryan Doerries, the point is to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” Unlike many prominent cultural organizations, the Library is able to attract remarkably diverse audiences that include former gang members and highly educated professionals, public housing residents and homeowners, life-long Brooklynites and those who only recently moved here—which makes for incredibly rich conversation.

BPL enables people to give back to their communities by training and managing over 2,000 volunteers at any one time. Volunteers serve as homework helpers, program leaders, literacy coaches, and Friends Group members, and through their work at the Library they impart knowledge to tens of thousands of Brooklyn residents, foster trust, and inspire people to care about their communities.

Finally, BPL contributes to stronger, more resilient neighborhoods by creating and supporting services to combat a wide variety of social policy challenges. In addition to programs designed to enrich

the social lives of older adults, BPL offers services for the homeless, including a program in East Flatbush that gives people experiencing homelessness an opportunity to discuss their situation with one another in a supportive environment while connecting them to shelters and mental health professionals, and working with them on preparing for a job. Through the TeleStory program, the Library brings story time to incarcerated New Yorkers and their families via a live video link between city jails and over a dozen public libraries across Brooklyn. At a time when over 50,000 New York City children are growing up with a parent in prison, this program reunites families in warm, welcoming environments, while enabling parents to inspire in their children an appreciation for reading.⁴



TeleStory connects families to their incarcerated loved ones through live video links at 12 branches

**AS LIBRARIES
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QUIET SPACES TO
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TO COLLABORATE
AND PLAY.**

To provide inclusive and
inspirational places

In a large, dense borough like Brooklyn, one of BPL's most important functions is to provide accessible and inspiring spaces that are noncommercial and open to all. For many residents, the local library is both symbol and civic square. It's part of what they take pride in when they take pride in their neighborhood.

Over the last decade, the number of people taking part in Library-based educational programs has increased dramatically, as have the number of people using the Library's electronic resources and WiFi. In fact, more people are using our services in more ways than ever before. They visit the Library to pick up new skills and reconnect with neighbors; to collaborate with peers and find peace and quiet; to use the computer and browse the shelves for reading material. This multiplicity of uses has stretched many neighborhood libraries, including Central Library, to their limit and made modernizing our physical spaces a high priority.

Due to BPL's aging infrastructure and insufficient capital funding, some branch buildings not only struggle to accommodate modern uses but suffer from broken mechanical equipment and leaky roofs. Several years ago, BPL announced that it had over \$300 million in unfunded repair needs and asked city government to help close the gap so that all Brooklyn residents have access to modern, fully-functional library buildings. Though many problems persist, the tide has undoubtedly started to turn. In fact, with support from Mayor Bill de Blasio, New York City Council, Borough President Eric Adams, and the New York State Legislature, BPL is now entering one of the largest periods of rebuilding in its history.

Thirteen libraries with nearly \$53 million in combined capital needs are slated to receive full-scale

renovations over the next several years. Another three libraries are going to be completely rebuilt, while two new satellite facilities will be created in DUMBO and the BAM Cultural District, increasing the system's total number of locations from 59 to 61. Counting recently completed projects like the Kensington Library and the renovated Park Slope Library, well over a third of BPL's physical spaces will have been overhauled or rebuilt by 2025.



The planned Greenpoint Library and Environmental Education Center, designed by Marble Fairbanks Architects

These new libraries will not only be more accessible and functional—with working elevators and HVAC units—they will be able to accommodate more programs and uses. Patrons will have quiet spaces to work alone as well as spaces to collaborate and play. There will be spaces for the ever widening array of library-based educational programs and events, and spaces that accommodate new technologies and the ways people increasingly use them.

Older, so-called Lindsay boxes (which date from Mayor John Lindsay's administration from 1966 to 1973) will be opened up to the street to allow in more natural light and create a more inviting space for people to linger or work. Even older, Carnegie-era buildings (which date from 1903 to 1923) will be renovated and modernized, with original exterior and

interior details restored wherever possible.⁵ Larger overhauls and new buildings will expand public spaces and create entirely new amenities for their neighborhoods, such as expanded children's



The planned Business and Career Center at Central Library, designed by Toshiko Mori Architect

spaces at the Brooklyn Heights Library and outdoor gardens at the Greenpoint Library.

For the buildings that aren't currently slated for major overhauls, BPL is concentrating on modernizing mechanical systems, refreshing interiors and making them accessible, updating indoor and outdoor signage, and transforming community rooms.

BPL is also preparing a full-scale renovation of Grand Army Plaza's Central Library, one of the city's finest examples of art moderne architecture, the largest circulating library in the five boroughs, and a civic hub with over 1.3 million visitors a year. Divided into four phases, the Central Library plan will restore the building's historic lobby, modernize its mechanical infrastructure and amenities, and dramatically increase public space to better accommodate a diverse number of services and programs.

The Library has secured funding for phase one of the Central Library plan and will work with government and private partners over the next three years to secure the necessary funding for phases two through four.



Emphasizing BPL values at Bay Ridge Library

FROM INCLUSION TO EMPOWERMENT

As political debates have veered toward the xenophobic and symbols of intolerance and hate have started to appear even in Brooklyn, some librarians have found ways to emphasize BPL's core values of inclusion and diversity.

In early 2017, the Bay Ridge Library began putting out a sign every day that said, "You are welcome here. You are loved." And to get patrons thinking more broadly about immigration issues, children's librarian Katya Shapiro organized a series of readings about refugees and migrants in different parts of the world and supplemented these with creative posters and book displays. Over the last year, library regulars, including a few little kids, have taken on the message of inclusivity themselves. "We let them take over the chalkboard," says Rita Meade, the library information supervisor. "They started writing things like 'Everyone is welcome here' and 'We're happy to see you.'"

These are simple gestures, but when people feel unwelcome or uncomfortable in their own city for being who they are, simple gestures matter.

Libraries have long been safe havens where people are free from harm or ridicule. They are also safe havens in the sense that in the library, people are empowered to explore, ask questions, and express themselves, no matter who they are or where they come from, what they know or don't know. BPL does this through educational programs that draw on a wide variety of prompts and materials to engage different kinds of learners, including those with intellectual, emotional, and physical disabilities, and through cultural events, lectures, discussion groups, and performances that address important social and political issues.

Books are no longer the only means of engagement, but they're still essential. At the suggestion of a local mom, the Bay Ridge library started stocking and displaying children's books about Islam, not just for the Arab and Pakistani immigrant families in the neighborhood but for other children and parents curious about the hijab and other Muslim customs.

To create an environment in which everyone feels not only welcome but like they have a stake in their community, staff

"WE LET THEM TAKE OVER THE CHALKBOARD... THEY STARTED WRITING THINGS LIKE 'EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE' AND 'WE'RE HAPPY TO SEE YOU.'"

have to have a strong sense of residents' interests, challenges, and needs. There might be teens struggling with bullying at school, parents worried about standardized testing, newly arrived immigrants working toward their high school equivalency, seniors trying to stay mentally and physically active, and more. In each of these cases, one component of the job is providing access to information and one component is ensuring a safe, inspiring environment.



Presenting Girls Report Now! at the BKLYN Incubator pitch competition

A PLATFORM FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Every year, the Library works with thousands of volunteers and organizational partners to create a wide variety of classes, events, and performances. These programs mobilize existing Library resources to answer specific needs in our communities, and leverage the expertise and assets of outside partners to do it. A good example is Girls Report Now!, a bootcamp for teenage girls interested in journalism.

After putting out a call for potential partners, Erik Bobilin, the manager of the Leonard branch in Williamsburg, found an experienced reporter from Fusion News who was interested in teaching and mentoring kids in the neighborhood. Together they designed and led a series of workshops over three months that introduced teenage girls to key reporting methods and supported them as they researched and composed their own articles.

“Girls face so many obstacles in their teenage years,” says Bobilin. “We wanted to empower these teens to go into their community and really dig in on an issue. Reporting was a reason for them to do that.”

One student wrote an article about the L train shutting down and interviewed a bunch of small business owners and shopkeepers in Williamsburg; another wrote about why the SAT should be abolished and interviewed her classmates; yet another wrote about a genre of Minecraft videos and interviewed YouTube personalities with tens of thousands of followers. “They were required to break out of their comfort zones,” Bobilin says. “Teenagers aren’t asked to hold their own in these sorts of conversations enough. It was definitely intimidating for them.”

Girls Report

Now! was a participant in the BKLYN Incubator, a program that helps library staff learn to assess needs and opportunities in their neighborhoods, build partnerships with outside groups, and design successful new programs and services. BKLYN Incubator grants, worth up to \$15,000 each, are awarded on a competitive basis to especially promising new projects. Over the first two years of operation, successful proposals have included gardening programs for children,

**“ONE STUDENT
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SHOPKEEPERS IN
WILLIAMSBURG.”**

coding courses for teens, training in early learning pedagogy for childcare providers, and theatrical performances based on the writings of adult literacy participants.



Over 60 librarians offer reading recommendations through BookMatch

A PERSONAL GUIDE IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

When people want answers to simple questions, a search engine is often the most convenient tool. But if they want help formulating the question in the first place—or are in search of something new and surprising—librarians are often a better choice.

Through a program called BookMatch, over 60 BPL librarians steer patrons toward an impossibly broad range of titles, from test prep materials and self-help books, to literary nonfiction and Manga comics. They field requests through an online form at bklynlibrary.org as well as in person at a wide variety of special events such as the Gay Pride Parade, Comic Con, the Brooklyn Book Festival, and Smorgasburg.

“This service doesn’t rely on taste algorithms,” says Amy Mikel, a school outreach coordinator who helps organize the program. “It’s a personal relationship.”

Conducting BookMatch at special events gives librarians an opportunity to advertise the service while making inroads in particular reading communities. But the core of the program is based online, and those

exchanges, says Mikel, can be surprisingly rich and substantive.

The online format gives patrons a little more time to think about and even research what they’re looking for, and gives the BookMatch team an opportunity to find the right person to respond. Patrons interested in science fiction novels or World War II history, for example, can be paired with librarians who have experience or interests in those fields. BookMatch librarians aren’t just cataloging experts—they’re passionate readers themselves. They include comic book nerds, history

buffs, amateur chefs, gamers, and poets.

At a time when our digital lives are increasingly filtered and curated by algorithms, many people are just looking to have a good conversation about books with someone they trust. “They want to connect on a personal level,” says Mikel, “and hear about your experience

“THIS SERVICE DOESN’T RELY ON TASTE ALGORITHMS. IT’S A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.”

with a particular book or subject.” For this reason, being a good BookMatch librarian isn’t so much about providing the correct answers as making a connection. “You listen to what they’re telling you and draw from your own interests to set up an explanation about your five books.”

This focus on the personal is at the heart of BookMatch Teen, a trial version of BookMatch run by and for teenagers. Like many of the Library’s other teen programs, participants are involved in all stages of the service, including not just delivery but planning, marketing, and outreach. The program has a career development component that introduces participants to professionals in publishing, libraries, and writing, but the basic idea is the same: to create a reader advisory platform that enables people—in this case, teens—to share and inspire others through their passion of reading.



A pajama party at the Rose McCarthy Family Shelter

EXPANDING THE LIBRARY'S REACH

Making sure that the most vulnerable in our communities have an opportunity to fully participate in our economy and society is an important value of the Library. It informs a range of specialized services for the marginalized and disadvantaged, including those experiencing homelessness or suffering from mental illness, and inspires the proactive approach many staff members take when delivering these and other services to patrons.

To better serve the needs of those staying in the Rose McCarthy Family Residence in East New York, for example, children's librarian Nicole Bryan started throwing evening pajama parties in the facility's common room. The idea came to her after meeting with Rose McCarthy staff to discuss how the New Lots branch could better connect with residents. Pajama parties, she thought, were just the sort of experience children without stable housing often miss out on.

"It was an amazing turnout," she says of the first event. "They all came in their PJs: the children, the parents, even the staff. I bought myself a pair of tiger pajamas."

What started out as occasional outreach events soon became a monthly series at which the children read stories and completed fun activities, including sing-alongs and holiday crafts. Bryan set up a lending library of 200 items at the shelter and gave the children books they could keep. She attended monthly house meetings to tell families about the services available for free at the library and worked with staff to include information about BPL in the intake packets for new families.

Shelter life is transitory, yet Bryan was able to build enduring relationships with residents, many of whom

settled in the neighborhood and became frequent visitors to the New Lots branch.

"Because we went to the shelter, the kids would say, 'I want to go see Miss Nicole at the library!' Many of them became regular visitors to Saturday Storytime and to my arts and crafts workshops."

With the help of a licensed social worker, BPL meets regularly with individuals who are suffering from mental illness or addiction, or who are chronically homeless and use our libraries as a refuge. And the key to serving these and other vulnerable patrons well, according

"IT WAS AN AMAZING TURNOUT... THEY ALL CAME IN THEIR PJS: THE CHILDREN, THE PARENTS, EVEN THE STAFF. I BOUGHT MYSELF A PAIR OF TIGER PAJAMAS."

to outreach director Nick Higgins, is to develop trusting relationships. "Their need might not be the one you envision for them," Higgins says. "You have to be thoughtful and patient. Before accepting a referral to supportive housing or mental health care, some may require small gestures of compassion and support like an invitation to a program, or extra time on the computer, or a simple 'hello' every time they come into the library."

NEXT

Next: Focus Areas

As the Library continues to build upon and refine our foundational principles, we will take steps to become ever more adaptive to technological change and more responsive to community needs. Now more than ever, a cookie-cutter or franchise approach to library services will not be effective. Our neighborhoods are too diverse and our programs and resources too wide-ranging for services to be delivered the same way in every location.

Moving beyond a more traditional service model requires prioritizing relationships and partnerships, not just transactions. It requires that we do more to uncover needs and opportunities in our neighborhoods and mobilize resources to respond with the right services. In this regard, our branch libraries will need to draw on individual staff judgement and initiative, creativity and entrepreneurialism, as well as a shared understanding of core values and methods.

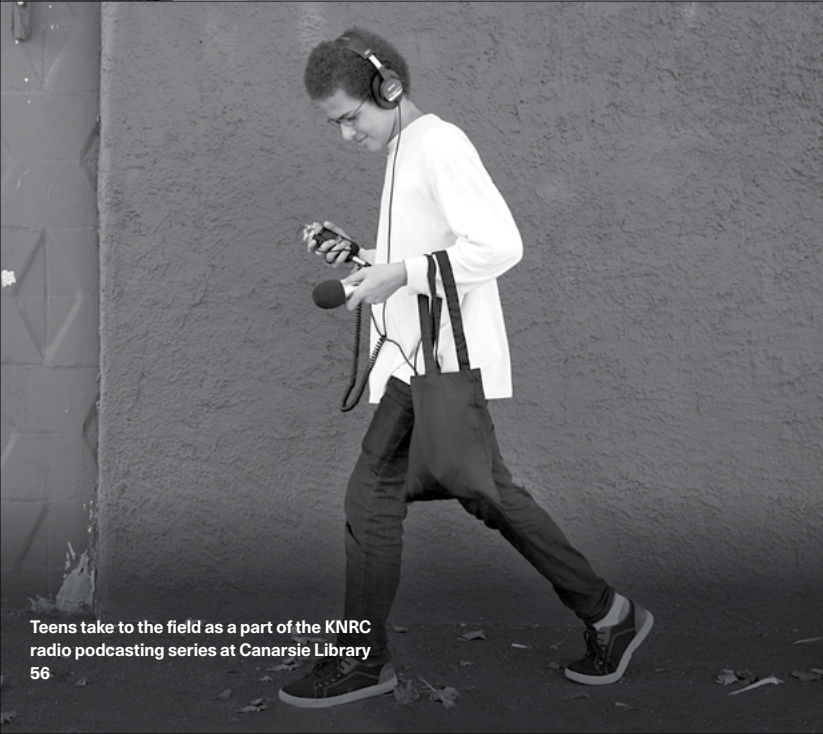
The following focus areas are meant to help us realize this vision. Though each encompasses a distinct set of initiatives, they overlap heavily and their ultimate purpose is the same: to create and deliver public library services that are high-quality and community-centered, consistent and responsive.

The first focus area, Establishing Priorities, outlines steps for designing services through clearly established internal models and outside partnerships. The second, Focusing on Community, identifies tools and practices to tailor programs to individual neighborhoods. And the third, Innovating through Collaboration and Learning, unveils a set of initiatives to enable experimentation and staff development.

These focus areas and the goals and initiatives they encompass were inspired by ideas that surfaced in our charrettes and focus groups. To ensure their successful implementation, the Library will continue to tap staff expertise in all departments and locations.



Making Space, designed by SITU Studio, is being piloted at Flatbush Library



Teens take to the field as a part of the KNRC radio podcasting series at Canarsie Library
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Teen readers at their first training for BookMatch Teen, a patron-powered readers' advisory service.
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INVITING STAFF INTO THE PROCESS OF CREATING NEW PROGRAMS EMPOWERS THEM TO MAKE MODIFICATIONS AND IMPROVE- MENTS OF THEIR OWN.

Establishing Priorities

One reason for being explicit about core principles in this plan, and for going into so much detail about our established approaches and methods, was to give our staff and service partners an opportunity to reflect on our work. This is a process that we will continue over the next few years during the plan's implementation, and it will require us to adjust our approaches and occasionally scale back or even eliminate services when they aren't in alignment with these principles, or prove ineffective.

In order to accommodate a growing number of services and programs, the Library must also find ways to increase internal capacity while maintaining or even improving service excellence. To do this, BPL will identify and test models for new services and streamline partnerships with outside organizations and stakeholders.

Drawing on clearly defined models when introducing new and specialized services can help us better coordinate efforts and ensure the highest potential impact. Whether in the form of toolkits, playbooks, or programs in a box, models can encompass a wide variety of different programs and services, including everything from literacy classes and digital media workshops to open houses and retail marketing practices. They should be prototyped and documented, and packaged with instructions and any necessary materials for replication.

One of the purposes of the Library's BKLYN Incubator program, which awards innovation grants to staff members and their community partners, is to identify and test innovative new services that can be adopted in other neighborhoods. One incubator program that has already been piloted and replicated

by other staff members is Cypress Hill's Career Exploration Academy. This program consists of three librarian-led workshops that introduce participants to resources at the Library and three guest lectures by a variety of local professionals. When implementing the program, librarians receive a detailed curriculum and information on how to recruit guest speakers.

Other successful incubator programs that have, or will be, adopted at new locations include a small business program for childcare providers which recently won a prestigious Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant, a podcasting program, and a teen journalism program. Each of these has a clear set of parameters and instructions for customization and replication, and some include specialized equipment and materials.

The Youth and Family Services Department has taken a similar approach in dramatically expanding STEM programs for school-aged children. In partnership with the New York Hall of Science, the team developed a set of hands-on learning activities that can be easily administered in a library setting, sourced the necessary materials, and developed instructions and training sessions for the librarians who manage them. Library Lab STEM programs are now a major part of BPL's educational repertoire.

This process of testing and replicating models not only makes it easier to incorporate new services, it enables staff members from across the organization to contribute innovations. By inviting staff into the process of creating new programs and making our source material easy to use and adapt, we empower them to make modifications and improvements of their own.

Another important way to create organizational capacity while maintaining a high level of excellence is through partnerships with outside organizations. In Fiscal Year 2017, BPL hosted a record 63,000 program sessions for more than 977,000 attendees. Many of these were designed and managed internally but a large number involved outside partners, including citywide institutions or agencies and local community-based organizations.

As the Library increases collaborative efforts with external stakeholders at the branch level, it will take

steps to clarify and streamline the process of creating and managing partnerships. In addition to facilitating agreements, this will involve collecting and sharing information about high quality organizations and the outcomes of particular partner-supported services. It will also involve clarifying rules around community room use and updating community room designs to better accommodate the Library's growing range of educational and cultural programs.

Key Initiatives

Making Space

To better accommodate educational and cultural programs, BPL is developing a new vision for the community room. The Library is creating a kit of parts—including customized storage cabinets, mobile media stations, signage, and lighting—that can be deployed in different ways to create classrooms, maker labs, performance spaces and more.

Programs in a Box

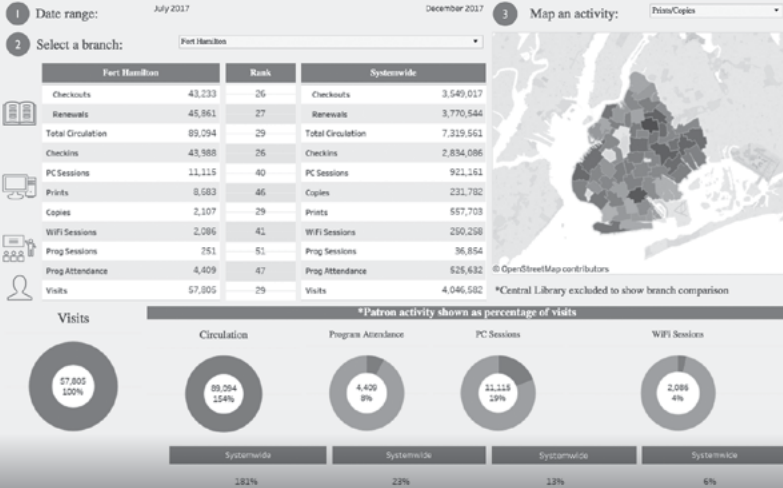
BPL is developing a series of programs that come with prepackaged activities, supplies, and hands-on training to make replication and customization easy for public service staff. These “Programs in a Box” include a new astronomy program for children and a podcasting program for young adults, among others.

Creative Book Displays

BPL is creating a set of tools and guidelines for showcasing books and other materials in an attractive, timely and consistent manner. These displays will reflect community interests and both system wide and branch specific programming themes.



BPL's Adult Learning team hosts a networking event with over 70 partner agencies



Staff at all levels of the organization are learning to use data to inform key service decisions



Planning a new library with Sunset Park residents, a process designed by Hester Street Collaborative



A community-curated DiscoTech (Discovering Technology) event at Stone Avenue Library

**IN A BOROUGH
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LIBRARY.**

Focusing on Community

In a borough as diverse as Brooklyn, different communities often require different things from their local library. Demographics and neighborhood amenities can vary dramatically from place to place. Some neighborhoods have a large population of aging residents and few resources aside from the library to keep their minds active. Others have a large number of immigrants with low levels of English language ability and not enough support services or English classes. In some neighborhoods teen programs are in high demand, while in others services for young families are the highest priority.

To become more responsive to the different needs of our neighborhoods, BPL will prioritize two things: data and community engagement.

Over the last year, BPL has been developing a series of data dashboards with key user metrics and demographic data for each branch and its community. Though user data is aggregated to protect the privacy of our patrons, staff members at all levels of the organization have access to current and historical data on what drives the activity in every branch, and can compare branches with similar usage patterns. In some locations, checkouts predominate, while in others patrons primarily use the internet or take part in public programs.

Demographic information is tied to each branch's specific service area, and includes up-to-date Census data on age, educational attainment, English proficiency, languages spoken at home, and more. Branch staff can use this information to prioritize resources or plan new services, while drawing upon personal knowledge of patron needs and community issues. For example: branches with high circulation

levels might prioritize customer service and programs that build on the collection; branches with relatively low circulation numbers might focus on educational and community-building programs; and branches with both low circulation numbers and visits might emphasize outreach and community partnerships.

BPL will balance the use of data with input from residents, community leaders, and organizational partners.

At present, branch staff regularly attend community board meetings and select tenant association meetings at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses, and build and manage a wide range of community partnerships, including 30 Friends Groups at neighborhood libraries across the borough. Over the next several years, the Library will continue to encourage staff to take community leadership roles, participate in important neighborhood meetings and events, and initiate open houses and facilitated discussions with residents. The Library will also prioritize outreach to neighborhood schools and community-based organizations, and, as mentioned, will clarify guidelines and expectations regarding partnerships.

Lastly, BPL will prioritize community engagement for all major capital projects over the next several years. During the design and development of new facilities in Brooklyn Heights, Greenpoint, and Sunset Park, the Library held facilitated discussions with a wide variety of neighborhood stakeholders. For the design of the soon to be built Sunset Park Library, for instance, BPL hosted two large-scale charrettes with residents and three meetings with smaller groups of stakeholders, and conducted in-person surveys throughout the neighborhood. Discussions were held in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese, and organizers made a concerted effort to facilitate discussions among immigrants, older adults, school children, and more.⁶

Though resources may be more limited in future projects, the Library will use the Sunset Park engagement process as a model for the future, one that sets the stage for meaningful discussions about the new or renovated facility and the Library's broader role in the neighborhood.

Key Initiatives

Data for Decision Making

BPL is developing a series of user-friendly data dashboards that allow staff members from across the organization to access and manipulate large data sets, including those encompassing neighborhood demographic and branch performance information. Staff members are trained to use and interpret the data when prioritizing resources or introducing new services or programs.

Mobile Serve

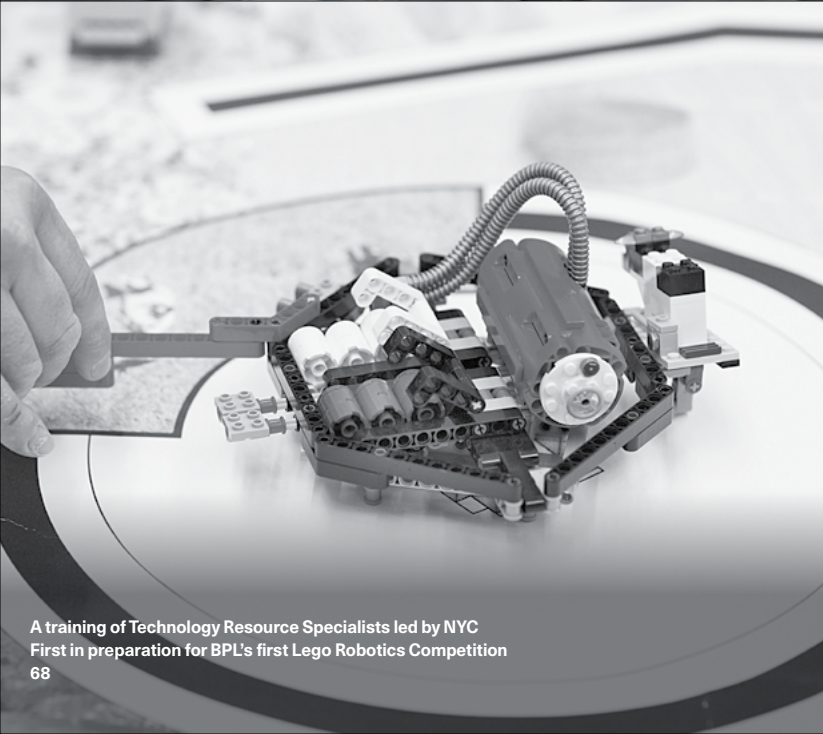
BPL is developing a mobile reference device that will allow front-line staff to create library cards and provide reference support from anywhere inside or outside the branches. Mobile Serve supports proactive, community-centered librarianship by freeing staff from their desks and even their buildings, and enabling them to bring key library services to schools, community-based organizations, fairs, and elsewhere.

Community Engagement and Outreach

Through the BKLYN Incubator, Outreach Services, and Government and Community Affairs, BPL is creating a series of toolkits and model programs for community engagement events and community partner “meet and greets.” The Library is also working with key staff members at every branch to expand leadership roles in their neighborhoods, including roles in key community-wide meetings, such as community board meetings and Tenant Association meetings at select NYCHA campuses.



Participants, judges, and audience members prepare for a pitch competition as a part of BKLYN Incubator



A training of Technology Resource Specialists led by NYC First in preparation for BPL's first Lego Robotics Competition
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When choosing a network affiliation, staff will draw from demographic data tied to their service area
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THROUGH A SYSTEM OF BRANCH NETWORKS BPL WILL DO MORE TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIONS AMONG STAFF.

Focus Area 3

Innovating through Collaboration and Learning

During the strategic planning process, the lack of communication and collaboration across different Library locations and departments was raised as a big concern among participants. Our staff are eager to learn more about what their peers are doing, what initiatives are taking place in other communities, and what expectations or guidelines to consider when implementing a new program or moving to a new location.

To improve on these fronts and better support a culture of collaboration and innovation, BPL will prioritize three interrelated initiatives: a system of branch networks focused on distinct areas of service, a set of improved internal communication processes and tools, and expanded resources for professional development.

Through a new system of branch networks we can elevate challenges that may not be widely known or understood and test or prototype solutions before adopting them system wide.

Over the next year, BPL will introduce five distinct networks of branches, each dedicated to a particular set of issues, including immigration services, young adult services, older adult services, collection management, and community outreach. Branches, including Central Library, will draw on demographic and performance data as well as staff knowledge of their communities to choose their own network affiliation.

While supplementing the geographic service model currently in place, these networks will be charged with developing and piloting new services. Members will meet regularly to prioritize and pursue new ideas. Once the networks have identified challenges and proposed specific next steps, representatives from relevant administrative departments will help members resolve issues and establish protocols.

Though every branch is required to join one of the five networks, the affiliations are fluid. Branches will have an opportunity to change networks and propose new ones. Frontline staff will have an opportunity to learn about the issues and progress relevant to each network through reports and system wide meetings.

To support these efforts, BPL will prioritize internal communications, including clear messaging to staff about internal policies and procedures, guidelines for programs and services, and information sharing about key initiatives, projects, and events. The Library will look to revamp its intranet, while introducing new practices and digital tools to support collaborations across the system. The Library will also do more to find and share models of excellence. In this strategic plan, we are setting an example with the spotlight stories on pages 44–51, which feature staff members who have developed successful and replicable approaches to key library services, including outreach at homeless shelters, creative partnerships with community stakeholders, and safe havens in culturally diverse neighborhoods. Going forward, BPL will continue to highlight models of excellence in a staff newsletter and on its website and social media channels.

Finally, BPL will take steps to increase and better organize professional development opportunities for staff. Today employees take advantage of training sessions in a wide variety of areas, from workplace issues to government regulations to literacy and digital privacy. Specialized trainings are offered for branch supervisors, custodians, public safety officers, technology resource specialists, children's librarians, and more. But the Library will do more to create individualized development plans and incorporate new learning and development approaches; and it will increase the number of offerings in several priority areas, including community outreach and engagement.

Key Initiatives

Branch Networks

BPL will be introducing five distinct branch networks, each encompassing a particular set of topics, including immigration services, young adult

services, older adult services, collection management, and community outreach. These networks are meant to facilitate collaboration and information sharing across different locations and departments, while helping the Library better tailor services to particular community characteristics and needs.

Internal Communications

BPL is revitalizing its approach to internal communications with the dual goal of keeping staff members informed and inspired. An internal communications committee will be charged with revamping the broad spectrum of existing employee communications—from digital and print announcements to employee orientation and benefits materials—as well as introducing technology to encourage collaboration among staff members, including a redesigned intranet and online sharing tools.

BKLYN Incubator

In addition to providing a safe space for experimentation and testing, BKLYN Incubator is a project-based learning program that offers a variety of interactive workshops. Among other things, participants learn to uncover opportunities for new services in their communities, write compelling proposals, create and deliver dynamic presentations, and use iterative design processes to test new ideas.

What approaches are most effective when it comes to community outreach?

What tools and practices can we adapt from other community-based organizations?

How can the Library make small local efforts reverberate throughout the system and the borough?

These were just some of the questions raised during our strategic planning process, which started in the summer of 2016 and ended in early 2017. To kick off the process a team from the design firm IDEO led us through three days of charrettes, during which teams of staff members and trustees discussed a wide range of issues.

The teams identified core values of the library and worked together to flesh out over 40 ideas for new services and internal processes, including new teen training programs, dinner-and-dialog stakeholder events, a community partner catalog, and more. One team developed a messaging campaign called Ask Me Anything that promoted questioning and critical thinking. Another devised a series of events called Challenge Shares that would give staff an opportunity to advise and learn from one another. Yet another designed a method for sharing, testing, and improving new services and programs by taking them from branch to branch and carefully documenting the outcomes.



Over 300 librarians, clerks, administrators, and trustees participated in visioning sessions and focus groups

The results of these charrettes were turned into an idea gallery, with illustrated posters organized into themes such as staff connections, community outreach, and telling our story. Throughout the summer, the posters were displayed at staff receptions held at five different branches across the system. Attendees were directed to leave stickers next to the ideas they liked most as well as Post-it notes with additional questions or concerns. By the end, over 300 staff members from across the organization had participated, including over 60 who took part in the full day charrettes.

Throughout this process staff members were consistently drawn to ideas that amplified our communities and patrons, and connected us more meaningfully to partners and stakeholders. There was an overwhelming desire for more collaboration and learning across the system, and for trying new things and documenting their outcomes. Among the concerns were a perceived lack of focus on collection management and internal operations, two topics we hope to address more fully during the plan's implementation.

In the fall and winter of 2016/17, we held retreats with the Library's leadership team and board of trustees to discuss many of the issues and ideas raised during our staff engagement sessions. They helped us select and refine many key ideas as

well as the overall vision of a community-centered BPL. But we hope it is obvious to all those who took part in our charrettes and idea galleries that the resulting plan owes its existence to their ideas and insights. As we begin the process of implementation, we will continue to leverage staff expertise to improve the services of the Library and deepen its impact on patrons and communities across the borough. As we move closer toward our goal of becoming a community-centered library, we look forward to engaging our patrons and partners and incorporating what we hear in our services.

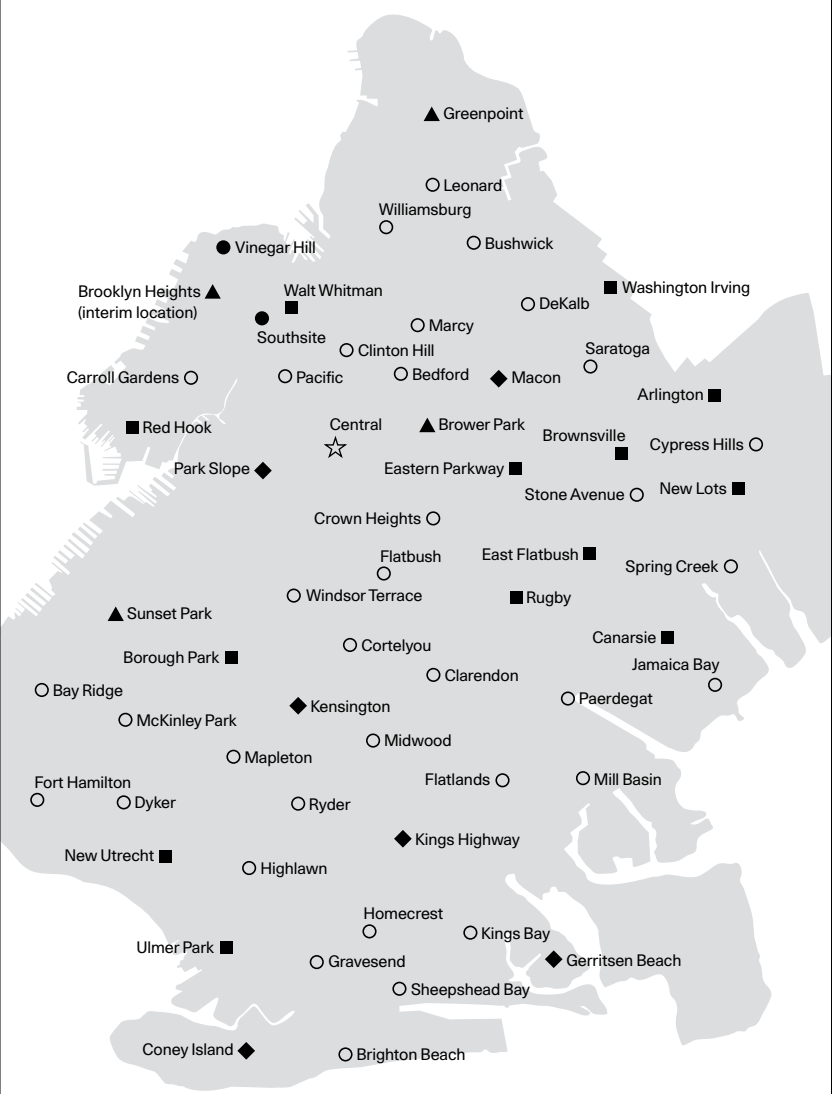


An idea gallery event at the New Lots Library

Notes

- 1 In Fiscal Year 2017, BPL served more than 977,000 attendees in its public programs, including 256,000 in 0-5 year old programs, 330,000 in 6-12 year old programs, 69,000 in teen programs, 290,000 in adult programs, and 32,000 in older adult programs.
- 2 In BPL's collection, there are 3.9 million physical items and 260,000 e-materials. Items encompass 126 different languages. Outside of English, the highest circulating languages include Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Arabic.
- 3 BPL's extensive local history archive, the Brooklyn Collection, is made up of more than 200,000 items, including 467 historical maps and 6,500 photographs.
- 4 See Osborne Associates, "New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Fact Sheet." According to this report, "53,891 minor children in four of the five boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens) were impacted by the arrest of a parent or caregiver."
- 5 Of BPL's 59 libraries, 18 are Carnegie libraries and 11 are Lindsay box libraries, though another 16 branch buildings have Lindsay box characteristics.
- 6 Hester Street Collaborative led community engagement for the Library's Sunset Park project.

Brooklyn Public Library Capital Improvements
by Location



- New Branch Planned
- ▲ Total Branch Reconstruction Planned
- Full Renovation Planned
- ◆ Recently Completed Projects
- ☆ Main Branch
- Branch

See pages 41–43 for more information
on BPL's capital investments.

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Brooklyn Public Library reflects the vibrant, complex, and constantly changing communities we serve. This plan is the expression of our ambition to carry on that work, and to do it more effectively, more collaboratively, and more creatively than ever before. Part One—Now—articulates who we are: an institution that offers everyone the dignity and exhilaration of learning. Part Two—Next—articulates who we are striving to become: a truly public forum that transcends well-worn divides to gather people together, generate genuine dialogue, and energize a sense of possibility. Taken as a whole, it is proof that the public library—extraordinarily versatile and fiercely democratic—is as vital as ever.