



Rhode Island Coalition of Library Advocates

NEWSLETTER
October 2014

EXPLORING THE NEW NORMAL: TRENDS IN LIBRARY SERVICES

Trustees and Friends: You're invited to a forum

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Thursday, November 13, 2014

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Cranston Public Library
Sockanosset Crossroad, Cranston

The world is changing, and so are libraries. Are you in the market for inspiring ideas and success stories? Come for an evening of short (15- to 20-minute) talks on cutting-edge technology – and timeless human factors. Observe 3-D printers in action. Check out a new system for browsing and borrowing eBooks and digital media. See what they're doing at other libraries are doing, and talk to the people who are making it work. Highlights:

- A look at **makerspaces**. These gathering spots for DIY (do-it-yourself) creativity, invention, and learning are a natural fit for libraries, where they often feature 3D printers, software, electronics, craft and hardware supplies and tools, and more.
- Trends in life-long learning, including **Information Literacy Instruction** (from pre-school to college and beyond) and **Learning Lounges** where teachers and technology help adults achieve their learning goals in an informal environment.
- The **Secret Shopper** approach to library assessment. (Hint: If a library visitor has to knock over a stack of books to get attention, there may be room for improvement. If knocking over a stack of books doesn't get attention? Hmmm.)

The Coalition of Library Advocates, the RI Library Association and the Office of Library and Information Services cordially invite you to join us for this lively event. Bring your Friends, Trustees, librarians, local officials, and anyone else interested in learning more about our new normal!

Refreshments will be provided.

Please register at <http://tinyurl.com/mdtltog>

SPECIAL OFFER FROM PADMA VENKATRAMAN

Award-winning author Padma Venkatraman, our guest speaker at February's annual meeting, has made a generous offer to RI libraries: affordable talks and workshops in 2014. Dr. Venkatraman's verse novel, *A Time to Dance*, came out this spring earned starred reviews. Protagonist Veda is a young girl who expresses herself joyously through dance. When she loses her leg to an accident, her teacher sees no future for her – but fortunately, she finds a new teacher, a woman of compassion who pushes Veda to develop spiritual insight even more than physical skill. This coming-of-age novel gives new depth to the classic themes of young love and triumph over adversity.

Like Veda, libraries are evolving. Dr. Venkatraman hopes they will continue to offer sanctuary, stillness, and safety – places where learners are inspired to create and discover. She offers to help you promote your library this year by working with you on programs such as:

1. An author talk (why she started writing, a brief background on each of her novels, tips for writers, readers, librarians), and an opportunity to taste Indian snacks.
2. Talks/Workshops for grown-ups on any of the following: Indian music/dance; Indian spirituality; the status of women in India over the ages; writing your life story/family history; getting published (the traditional route: finding agents/editors).
3. Talks/Workshops for educators on using multicultural novels (global narratives) and/or verse novels to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
4. Programs for young adults and children, such as: Writing camps (she loves to encourage young people to write and enjoy doing writing residencies at libraries/schools as well as single afternoon workshops on aspects of craft); Indian culture afternoon (food, craft activities, chants).

Dr. Venkatraman's usual honorarium is \$2,750, but she would like to reach schools and libraries that might not be able to afford that sum. To schedule her between now and December 2014, e-mail her at venkatraman.padma@gmail.com or padmavenkatraman@jhu.edu with "event invitation" in the subject line and offer what you can, as she is willing, for this year, to accept best offers well below the usual amount.

EDGE: WHERE PEOPLE CONNECT, COMMUNITIES ACHIEVE

At the Cranston Public Library on April 11, OLIS hosted an introduction to two related programs that should delight public library advocates: the Edge Initiative (libraryedge.org) and the Impact Survey (impactsurvey.org). Librarians know how vital it is to study community needs—and how difficult it is to gather information, analyze it, and stream it into the planning process. These new tools will put policy research within reach, even for small libraries.

The tools grew from research reported in *Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries* (2009; http://impact.ischool.washington.edu/documents/OPP4ALL_ExecSumm.pdf). Findings show that 69% of the U.S. population uses public libraries, and 32% of the U.S. population uses their computers and internet connections. Millions rely on this public internet access for education (completing homework and successful college applications), for job searches, and for health information. The study gives us “compelling evidence for the way in which one public library service—free computer and internet access—helps address a wide range of needs for residents in communities large and small.”

Speakers Samantha Becker, Dawn La Valle, and Amy Greer described how librarians can implement the programs—and use outcomes for both planning and advocacy. Takeaway: the Edge will help us speak our funders' language.

We expect to hear more about these tools, as several RI public libraries have already begun to implement them and more will participate in the next wave of testing.

ALLACCESS RI

By Karisa Tashjian

Distinct streams of federal and state funding flow into the workforce, adult education, and public library systems in Rhode Island. About 65,000 adults received workforce services in 2012, including employment services and occupational skills training. Over 7,200 adults received adult education services, including adult basic education, ESL, high-school equivalency, and work-readiness programs. Over 520,000 Rhode Islanders hold library cards for the 50 library systems in the state. Libraries are predominantly locally funded but not at the levels necessary to meet the ever-expanding and urgent workforce and educational needs of Rhode Islanders.

ALLAccess in the Libraries (ALL is an acronym for Adult Lifelong Learning) is a program that leverages libraries to innovate and integrate adult education and workforce services to meet the varied and diverse needs of adults in Rhode Island. The program serves all adults but with a particular emphasis on underserved populations: adults with low levels of digital literacy, low education attainment, low English literacy, and adults with disabilities. With the help of two years of funding from an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership demonstration grant, program partners Providence Public Library and the Cranston Public Library are in the process of developing and implementing access and service models that establish best practices and demonstrate the potential for libraries to engage the community in education and workforce services. Both libraries have been responding to the demand for technology access, digital literacy, and education and workforce services through creative programming. With the expanded resources, partnerships, and focus, these librar-

ies expect to substantially increase their ability to provide services and tools for these underserved adults.

While positioning the libraries to be community anchors for underserved adults in their service areas, ALLAccess will also be developing resources at the state level. It will also provide a blueprint for other libraries to develop similar programs and resources, replicating both the program and its impacts and transforming the role of libraries across Rhode Island and the United States. ALLAccess is highly adaptable and will produce not only a model for these types of information services but also data to support their provision. Data from the program will be used to continue to build the case for libraries as vital providers of informal adult education and workforce services by providing actionable and robust insights to the public library field. Specifically, we will analyze data from demonstration sites, use that data to capture educational and workforce outcomes for patrons who engage at the library; and use it to inform ongoing outreach and communication to program partners, collaborators, and key constituents.

Core team partners of ALLAccess include the Providence Public Library, the Cranston Public Library, RIFLI, the Rhode Island Adult Education Professional Development Center (PDC), TechACCESS of Rhode Island, MJIF Consulting and the Center for Human Services at the University of Rhode Island. Steering Committee members include the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS), the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Broadband Rhode Island (BBRI), and Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston. We are interested in having other libraries in Rhode Island join our effort. Please visit us at www.allaccessri.org, on Twitter @ALLAccessRI, on Facebook and by email at ktashjian@provlb.org.

FRIENDS' CORNER

We are looking for information from any of the Friends Groups at the many libraries around the state. If you have an event you would like to publicize or have someone you would like to recognize statewide, please contact gale.eaton@verizon.net with the details for inclusion in the next newsletter. The deadline for inclusion is December 15.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This fall's newsletter is all about how RI libraries empower our communities to meet the future. Karisa Tashjian explains how ALLAccess RI supports adult learning. COLA, OLIS, and RILA invite you to an event that features new library trends, from makerspaces to metaliteracy. I had to look them up. (Google helped; see definitions on page 1.) Then I got excited. Libraries are about books – but more than that, they're about intellectual freedom and growth. So are these innovations.

The American public library movement began in the 1850s, when a worker on the Erie Canal could make \$1.00 or \$1.50 a day, the average price of a book was \$1.00, and hardly anybody went to high school. Communities pooled resources to buy books individuals couldn't afford alone, and the public library became "the poor man's university."

Ready access to information is a major support to intellectual freedom. Libraries may fight censorship, but they also support the freedom to think by giving people access to intellectual content and skills. Freedom of thought needs exercise. It calls for open, civil discussion of ideas. Today's libraries aren't always quiet, but they still support – and stimulate – intellectual freedom for thinkers of all ages.

Have you updated your COLA membership lately? If not, please use the enclosed form or the online form at <http://colari.org/membership/> to renew through December 2015.

Gale Eaton, Chair