



Demco

SOFTWARE™

Making It Happen:
Community Engagement Success Stories & Strategies
from Librarians Across the U.S.

At Demco Software, we have the privilege of working with librarians across the U.S. who are making an impressive impact on their communities. From fostering a love of reading to providing a physical space for patrons to get things done, they are expertly leveraging all the tools and resources at their disposal to provide value to their patrons.

These stories are too good not to share! In the following pages, we invite you to read about your peers' successes and gain tips on how to introduce similarly far-reaching initiatives at your library.

Lexington Public Library Goes Where Patrons Are For Optimal Engagement

Lexington, KY

The Lexington Public Library is excited about two community engagement initiatives that “take the library out into the community instead of expecting people to come to us,” shares Virtual Librarian Bobby Webb. The first initiative, launched in 2016, is a **“Student Success” partnership with the local public school system**. As part of this project, each of the nearly 40,000 students in grades K-12 in Fayette County Public Schools receives a Lexington Public Library card that can be used to borrow materials and access online resources.

The second initiative is the launch of the library’s **“Checked Out” podcast**, a “virtual book club” produced and hosted by library staff.

Tips for Reaching Busy People

“Everyone is extremely busy in today’s world,” Webb shares. “These programs reach out to customers and meet them in their own spaces, allowing the library to be part of their lives without requiring a large investment of time and effort.”

Similar efforts are made to promote the library’s [Boopsie® mobile app](#), a product from Demco Software that makes library resources accessible on smartphones, and event registration. Webb describes the pop-up messages in the Boopsie app as “instrumental in spreading awareness.” These messages appear when someone loads the library website on a small screen, and event registration via [SignUp](#), an event management tool from



Central Library, Lexington, KY

Demco Software is ubiquitous throughout the library’s website and app.

Positive Outcomes

As a result of these two programs, “thousands of young people who may not have gotten a library card otherwise are receiving one,” explains Webb, and “people who may not have the time or ability to attend a book club in one of our physical locations are able to participate remotely.”



“Student Success” program



“Checked Out” podcast

“There are three key aspects to launching a successful community engagement initiative: 1) knowing your community, 2) planning carefully, and 3) being flexible.”

Spokane County Library District Prioritizes Its Community Partnerships

Spokane, WA

Partnerships, Partnerships, Partnerships

“As an organization, we make partnerships a priority,” explains Carlie Hoffman, Virtual Services Manager at the Spokane County Library District. “We learn a great deal from other organizations about the communities they work with and the needs of the population,” affirms Hoffman. “We have found that working together and bringing our knowledge of what other organizations are doing has built bridges of expertise and community resources.”

Spokane County Library’s Unique Partnerships

- Community events
- Small businesses
- Consumers
- Chambers of commerce
- Job placement services
- Financial institutions

Hoffman notes that the library hosts a “great deal” of one-on-one appointments for topics ranging from technology to resume writing to small business planning and more. “It is so gratifying to hear from our members,” shares Hoffman, “that they have been able to use what they learned in the library to improve their lives.”

Forging these connections is not always easy. “It can take some time for an organization to realize the important role the library can play,” Hoffman cautions. “However, once they work with us for a while, we find that we become a vital resource for them.”

Partnership Tips

- Remember anyone within your community could be a potential partner.

“When you see a need in the community that the library can help with, volunteer and make yourself a valuable resource.”



SCLD participating in a parade

- Keep low barriers between the community and the services the library offers. For example, offer easy online room reservations via [Spaces](#), Demco Software’s room booking tool.
- Allow community organizations to post their events on the library’s calendar.
- Attend organization meetings and events, particularly those that have similar missions to the library.
- Focus on the issues your library feels it is well-positioned to assist with.



Touch-a-Truck Storytime



Building catapults

Park County Public Library Emphasizes Activities for All Ages

Fairplay, CO

Park County Public Library in rural Colorado believes strongly in their **cross-setting, cross-generational approach to community engagement**. Two of their community engagement initiatives show why.

Brain Training

The first project began in 2014 with the idea that libraries could better serve their communities by **adopting and adapting fully-vetted advancements in neuroscience** to facilitate real-world, real-time, life-changing improvements in literacy and cognitive skills. From this idea came the library's online suite of neuroscience-based programs which reach across settings (school, home-school, organizations, and community members) and generations (from the very young to the very mature).

Park County Public Library is the first library to implement Scientific Learning's Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs, and is the first library in Colorado to implement Posit Science's [BrainHQ™](#), a suite of online brain fitness exercises designed to help adults think faster, focus better, remember more and enjoy life. BrainHQ is available to libraries exclusively through Demco Software.

"The open entry and exit access to BrainHQ makes it easy for patrons to engage with and extremely easy for libraries to facilitate!" extolls Shepard. Relying not only on the posters, postcards, and bookmarks that Demco Software provides to promote BrainHQ, the library also uses a young tattoo artist's artwork of the brain on its posters and T-shirts.

Full STEAM Ahead

The second of Park County's exemplary community engagement initiatives is their monthly **"STEAM Learning in the Library" sessions** offered at each of its four branches. Usually involving a make-and-take project (such as DIY tornado-making



Fairplay Library Summer Reading Program with Linda and Bernie Nagy

devices) or experience (for instance, learning how to milk a cow, followed by butter and ice cream making), the library focuses on low- or no-cost projects, with the exception of their investment in a 3-D printer that can be transported to each branch as needed.

Reasons Behind the Successes — Relationships * Fun Formats * Convenience

Patricia Shepard, Park County Public Library Manager, attributes the success of both programs not only to their relationships with community organizations and funders, but also the "substantive nature of each program, presented in engaging, entertaining, fun sessions and formats that foster success." Patrons simply "click-n-go" directly to their programs from the library's website, facilitating ease of use and further contributing to the initiatives' success.

"The key to success seems to be to transmit the joy and excitement of possibilities!"



Dairy Science session, STEAM Learning in the Library



3-D Printer session, STEAM Learning in the Library

Houston Public Library Gives Patrons What They Want, Where They Want It: From the Comfort of Their Homes

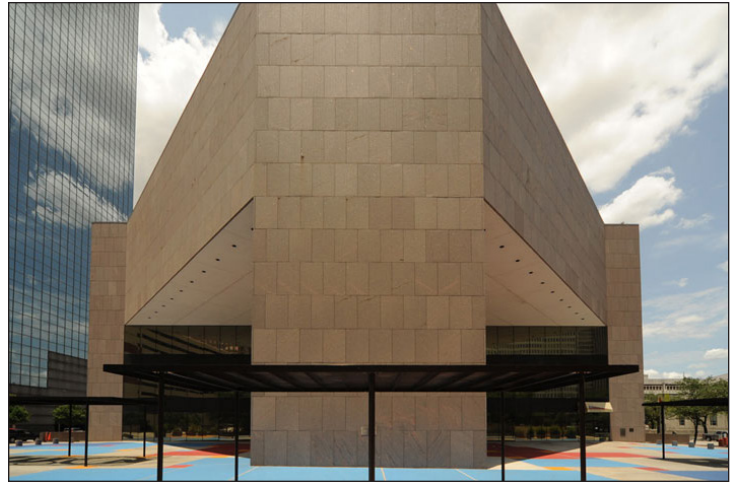
Houston, TX

“We are very excited about two new initiatives that impact our communities on multiple levels,” shares Saima Kadir, Virtual Library Services Manager at the Houston Public Library. The first, a project wherein library card holders in good standing can check out a **mobile hot spot** that will provide internet access in their home, has just launched at six pilot locations chosen based on their location and demographics. The library has plans to expand to additional locations based on data and customer feedback.

The second project attempts to improve user experience by providing Texas residents the ability to **register for a library card from the comfort of their homes** via a form on the library’s website. Once registered, patrons can immediately access the library’s extensive collection of digital media.

Positive Outcomes

Both projects have, to date, been deemed quite successful. Library staff are excited about sharing these new services with patrons, library card registration is on the rise, and patrons are steadily checking out hot spots at nearly all of the pilot locations. “The response has been phenomenal,” Kadir expounds. “I think these initiatives have been successful because we recognized a need that wasn’t being met in our communities.” Determining these unmet needs relies on planning and talking to both patrons and staff.



Central Library Branch, Houston, TX

“Finding out about user behavior from the frontline staff is crucial. Not only do you get a different perspective, but you also get staff buy-in, which is very important when you are launching a new service.”



Houston Public Library App Ad



Houston Public Library Logo

Patrons that Need Space Find it at Their Local Springfield-Greene Library

Springfield, MO

Patron Convenience is Where It's At

The Springfield-Greene County Libraries are having great success with [Spaces](#), the **online room reservation** system offered by Demco Software. Nine of the library district's ten branches used to have multiple meeting and study rooms that could only be reserved by telephone or email. On February 1, 2017, the libraries rolled out the Spaces online reservation system, and by day's end individuals and groups had logged 525 room reservations!

Advantages of Online Room Reserving

- Positive community service: Patrons take advantage of the many community rooms and study rooms for job interviews, club meetings, staff trainings, public hearings and private study.
- Convenience: Patrons were eager to adopt the new online system due to its simplicity and around-the-clock availability.

How to Implement & Promote a New Self-service System

For libraries considering a similar initiative, the Springfield-Greene County Libraries offer a number of recommendations.

- "Shop for an online reservation system that is simple for both staff and patrons," suggests Kathleen O'Dell, Community Relations Director.



Midtown Carnegie Branch Library's Fix-it-Fair

- "Allow at least a month before going live to allow staff to become comfortable with the system."
- "Conduct staff training sessions, especially for those on the front line who may have to answer questions but don't typically book rooms."
- "Do general and targeted promotions to frequent meeting and study room users."
- "Check in with patrons who use the service to ensure that it's meeting patron needs and expectations."

"Allow at least a month before going live to allow staff to become comfortable with the system, and conduct staff training sessions, especially for those on the front line who may have to answer questions but don't typically book rooms."



The Library Center, Springfield, MO



Fix-it-Fair, featuring Members of the Ozarks Beard and Mustache Federation

Reading's on the Rise Thanks to St. Louis County Library

St. Louis, MO

Start Young

"Studies have shown that families who start reading aloud to their children at birth help strengthen language skills and build vocabulary," shares Jennifer McBride, Communications Manager at the St. Louis County Library. This knowledge motivated the library to introduce its "[1000 Books Before Kindergarten](#)" campaign, which encourages families and caregivers to read 1000 books with their young children before they enter kindergarten.

The library is also engaged in a multi-year capital improvement campaign called "Your Library Renewed," which aims to fund new facilities, upgrade existing structures, and enhance library programs and services.

Positive Outcomes

Both programs have increased library usage: Since launching the "1000 Books" campaign in August 2016, over 6,000 children have registered for the program, and new and renovated locations are seeing new library cardholders and significant increases in circulation and program attendance.

Steps for Success

- Start the planning process early.
- Set clear goals.
- Get staff buy-in.
- Communicate with staff.
- Create multi-layered marketing campaigns.
- Gain substantial media coverage.



Family at the Lewis & Clark Branch

Multi-layered marketing has also helped the library promote their [Boopsie® mobile app](#), a product from Demco Software that makes library resources accessible on smartphones.

As McBride describes, the library promotes their app "via digital signage in our branches, on the St. Louis County Library website and our social media channels, with paper flyers in our branches and at outreach events with instructions on how to download the app, and through word of mouth advertising from staff to patrons."

"... start the planning process early, set clear goals, and communicate with staff"



Kids at the Natural Bridge Branch



1000 Books Before Kindergarten participant, Henry

Historical Ties Endear Cypress College Library to Its Community

Cypress, CA

How to Win Students, Faculty and Communities Over? Offer Compelling Attractions

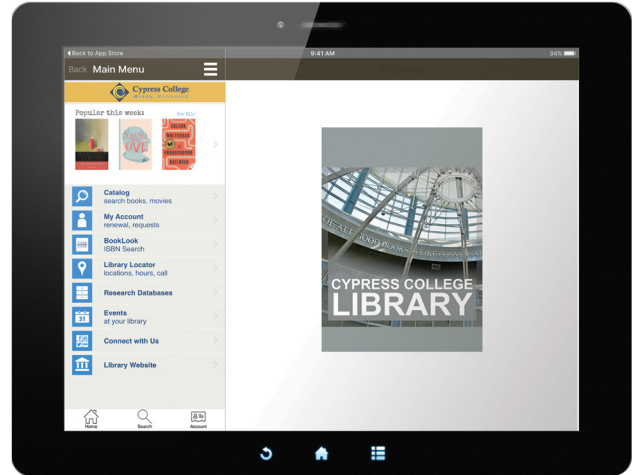
As part of Cypress College's 50th anniversary celebration on April 1, 2017, the Cypress College library created a "50 Years of Cypress College" display. Open to the community, students, staff, retirees and alumni of the College, the exhibit featured athletic uniforms, photographs of original faculty, a history of student life on campus, and more.

Library staff handed out customized cookies and helped children and visitors create "I Love the Cypress College Library" buttons.

"The library has reestablished a connection with the rest of the campus by playing a large part in filling in the historical perspective for each of the departments and the associated student body on campus," shares Monica Doman, Systems and Cataloging Librarian at Cypress College.

Progressively Move Forward

Doman stresses that careful planning also has a serious impact on the eventual successes of any initiative. For example, two years ago, Doman investigated whether or not the library should develop a mobile app. With careful planning, Doman was able to acquire funding not only to launch a [Boopsie® mobile app](#) from Demco Software that makes library resources accessible on smartphones and devices, but also to hire two



Cypress College mobile app offers easy access to the most desirable resources

new user experience librarians to market the library's new and existing resources.

Doman attributes the success of the "50 Years of Cypress College" event to those two UX Librarians.

"They are full of great ideas and energy," gushes Doman. "They find out what the students want and/or need, and are doing a great job of marketing the library's resources."

"... careful planning also has a serious impact on the eventual successes of any initiative."



Cypress College Library

Tempe Public Library Engages and Empowers Senior Residents

Tempe, AZ

Brain Power

At Tempe Public Library, the Senior Library Outreach Coordinator Nicholas Escalante has developed and implemented the **Exercising My Brain series** which focuses on brain health and cognitive improvement within the senior population. The series is designed to be sustainable. By providing classes demonstrating, for instance, how to register for the program or use online resources, the library “places the power and ability back in the hand of that person, helping seniors to feel independent and an active part of the community,” Escalante notes. Classes are currently at full capacity, and the program is also provided for outside organizations, such as Banner Health and the Tempe YMCA.

Library’s “Exercising My Brain” Series: 4 Programs in 1

1. **BrainHQ™** a suite of online brain fitness exercises designed to help adults think faster, focus better, remember more, and enjoy life. It is available to libraries exclusively through Demco Software.
2. **“Use It, Don’t Lose It”** mental fitness activities
3. **“Keep Your Brain Alive”** neurobic exercises
4. iPad® Photo Walks

How to Reach Adults

Escalante believes the success of the Exercising My Brain series lies in its outreach services, which “provide the opportunity for non-traditional library users to have access to Tempe Public Library services and programs. By providing library services outside the walls of the library, we have expanded the role of the library in the community.”

Escalante began “using **non-traditional techniques during non-traditional hours**” to engage with the communities he wanted to serve.

Tactics to Try

- Eat at area **restaurants** and ask about being a speaker or advertising opportunities



Seniors enjoy BrainHQ™ exercises at Tempe Public Library

- Speak with **religious leaders**
- **Visit doctors’ offices** to learn about the programs and services they offer

After a few visits, some of these locations allowed Escalante to hang flyers. This, coupled with an announcement made during a church service by a local priest, dramatically increased enrollment in the program. “You must embed yourself into the communities you are serving,” Escalante asserts. “Reaching the correct populations is vital for any program to succeed ... but it has become more than just programs; it has become a platform for conversations, awareness and information.”

For libraries hoping to launch similar initiatives, Escalante recommends keeping a positive attitude, having clear objectives, and thinking outside the box. For programs targeting seniors, Escalante suggests librarians remember how challenging technologies can be for senior populations. Having a program that slowly, simply and directly walks them through the steps of registration and participation is key.

“You must embed yourself into the communities you are serving.”



Adults of all ages benefit from BrainHQ™



Exercising My Brain Series



Outreach iPad® Lab allows library programs to go anywhere

Data — and the Freedom to “Fail” — Helps Multnomah County Library Extend Its Reach

Portland, OR

When You’re Just Getting Started With Engagement ...

Multnomah County Library is currently embarking on the initial phases of a community engagement process that will attempt to improve the library’s strategic priorities and services by better understanding their community’s aspirations, needs and obstacles. This process, while new, stems from a clear devotion to reaching as many people within their community as possible.

Data Shows the Way

One recent initiative within the library was to explore how they could better serve the segments of their population with the fewest resources. After examining the data, it was clear: **the areas with the highest rate of restricted access or blocked cards due to fines were the same areas with the highest rates of poverty.** The library’s solution was elegantly simple: waive existing use fines, and stop collecting fines on youth accounts and on youth-related materials altogether. The library undertook this initiative at the start of its 2016 summer reading program, a huge point of engagement for large sections of the community, in which over 100,000 children participate each year. By waiving these fines, the library restored access to about 8,000 young people and their families.

Try an Online Librarian

A second recent initiative was the launch of My Librarian, an online portal for people to connect with librarians to find their next great read. The portal introduces patrons to librarians with compelling images and a host of information regarding the librarians’ reading preferences.

“One of the highest value-adds the library brings the people it serves is the personal connection,” shares Shawn Cunningham, Director of Communications and Strategic Initiatives. **“We wanted to transfer that essential human connection between a patron and a librarian to a digital format.”** This initiative, too, was rooted in the data. After learning that more people use the library online than in person, the library engaged in focus groups, learning more about how people were using the library before designing the service. “We were looking for ways to make the process of reader’s advisory something people could engage with from their phone, tablet, or computer,” adds Cunningham.

“We are always trying new things, and have an incredible number of pilot efforts, both big and small.”



Profile photos for “My Librarian” initiative

Key Takeaways

1. Try new things. It’s OK to fail.
2. Be a shapeshifter. “Flexibility shows that the public library isn’t static.”
3. “Serve people where they are, in the ways they want to use the library” through partnerships with community-based organizations and nonprofits.
4. Find where you can “plug-in” and leverage existing channels and networks in creative ways. Through these avenues, the library is able to “constantly listen to what our community wants, making changes based on changing patterns of behavior and how people use the library.”
5. “Steal our library’s stuff [ideas], or if not ours, someone else’s! Libraries are about sharing and collaboration — leveraging good ideas that exist for the common good.”

Collaborative Planning Ensures Participation at Greenwich Library

Greenwich, CT

Read Together

Since 2011, the Greenwich Library in Connecticut has conducted **Greenwich Reads Together, a community-wide reading experience in which residents explore a single book together.**

In 2016, nearly 20 community organizations and more than 7,500 Greenwich residents participated in events based on Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*, including readings, expert panels, book discussions, storytelling and film screenings. To ensure that elementary and middle school aged children could participate in the program, two companion books for younger readers were also selected. Since its launch, the program has seen more than a 375% increase, and the circulation of the selected and related titles have also increased significantly.

Play Together

At the Greenwich Library, an initiative which attempts to engage all members of the community is, well, par for the course. This year saw the library's first ever **Library Mini Golf event**, during which the library was transformed into a miniature golf course, with greens winding through the stacks.

Each of the 18 holes were sponsored by area businesses, schools and organizations, and the fundraiser featured both an "After Hours" event for adults, as well as a "Family Fun Day" during which golfers of all ages could enjoy the course. Library Mini Golf attracted regular library patrons and residents who may not have visited us in a long time, reinforcing that the library is truly the hub of the community," shares Barbara Ormerod-Glynn, Director of the library. "The layout, spaced across three floors, also introduced patrons to areas of the library they may never have visited and provided an



Greenwich Public Library

opportunity to showcase services that they may have been previously unaware existed, including how to reserve the rooms via [D!BS](#) and [Spaces](#), how to find and register for events in [SignUp](#) and how to participate in upcoming reading programs through [Wandoo Reader](#)."

Greenwich Library's Tips for Well-orchestrated Events

- Allow ample planning time before launching a community initiative to engage partners
- Develop a timeline
- Secure funding
- Cultivate strong partnerships within the community

"Involving the community at every stage of the process is important, and as a result, our initiatives grow year after year."

CONNECT ... MOTIVATE ... EXCITE YOUR COMMUNITY!

We hope you enjoyed these 10 inspiring stories and have new ideas you'd like to try out.

Demco Software is committed to helping you successfully reach your community and give them the 21st century experience they require. Our integrated suite of engagement tools — from a mobile app to online room booking and automated event management — helps you serve people wherever they are.

Engage. Manage. Go Mobile. To learn more, visit demcosoftware.com



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