

Winter 2014

Libraries on the Edge

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Flying, Not Falling at Otto Bruyns Public Library

By **Aubrey Gerhardt**,
Director, Otto Bruyns
Public Library

The Otto Bruyns Public Library was clinging to the past when I arrived in September 2013. It was underused and on the edge of extinction. There were outdated materials, ancient computers, a lack of regular programming, limited community participation, and minimal tie-in with the neighborhood school.

The addition of a beautiful new community room—complete with digital surround sound and a cinema-like projector—made the space prime for attracting patrons. There was a great need for outreach and fresh programming, but before extolling the virtues of the library, we had to make it relevant again.



Positive changes, from building updates to new programs, are happening at Otto Bruyns Public Library in Northfield.

moving all the signs that read "No." We stopped charging fees for DVDs. We edited the library policy to allow cell phone usage, eating and drinking, and video games on the computer, and we removed meaningless restrictions.

We clearly defined space for youth services and began to strictly enforce those boundaries. New books were purchased with an emphasis on updating more time-sensitive subjects such as medicine, technology, and politics.

We started by rearranging and updating some of the furniture, heavily weeding outdated materials, selling discarded VHS tapes, recycling stacks of back-issue magazines occupying valuable space, painting the focus wall, mounting our web address where it would be seen, and, of course, re-

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Small Library Innovations for Libraries on the Edge

By **Sharlene Edwards**,
Assistant Director, Bradley
Beach Public Library

We all know the statistics: Library use is increasing even as public libraries face financial challenges. However, difficult times are an exciting opportunity to redefine library buildings and services to showcase our strengths in new and interesting ways.

It can be hard to take risks without having the resources that would absorb a possible failure. Yes, some libraries are helping their patrons design robotic arms on 3D printers, but many of us are simply

more focused on keeping our doors open. Fortunately, you don't necessarily have to have the latest gadgetry to stay relevant to your community.

What Works in Bradley Can Work Anywhere

Bradley Beach is a less-than-one-square-mile town with a year-round population of about 4,300. Visits, circulation, and program participation statistics have increased dramatically over the last few years, with more than 43,000 visits made in 2013.

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Message from the PRESIDENT

Libraries on the Edge: Installation Speech of 2014-15 President Terrie McColl

[This speech was given by Bill McColl on behalf of Terrie McColl during the NJLA Annual Conference in June.]

The great twenty-first century philosopher—Lady Gaga—gave us these words 3 years ago:

I'm on the edge of glory, and I'm hanging on a moment of truth
Out on the edge of glory, and I'm hanging on a moment with you
I'm on the edge, the edge, the edge, the edge, the edge, the edge, the edge
I'm on the edge of glory, and I'm hanging on a moment with you
I'm on the edge with you.

Lady Gaga wrote "Edge of Glory" soon after her grandfather died. Gaga explained that the song is about the final moments of life, when you look directly at life and see that you were a champion. "I'm hanging on a moment of truth."

On Ryan Seacrest's radio program, she said: "The 'Edge of Glory' is not just about falling in love or about dying, but it's about being on the glorious edge of that glorious championship of your life." That glorious championship of your life. What an inspirational place to be.

Gaga was talking about being between one world and the next—of being in a place where what was old and familiar will be gone, replaced with something new and unknown. It's that moment when we stand between two worlds, reflecting on what has been, reflecting on what we did right, maybe reflecting a little on what we did wrong, but in the end deciding it was all good. Better than

good, it was the best we could do. And then anticipating—what will the next world bring? Will it be good? Will it be even better than before?

So, why libraries and Gaga?

Libraries are on a moment of truth. Libraries today stand between two worlds. Libraries stand where we know what we do right and what we have done wrong. And libraries stand where we are not sure what is coming. Will we be good? Will we be even better than before? We don't know, but we do know we are on the edge.

Libraries are on the edge when it comes to money and budgets. Libraries are on the edge of technology and creativity. Libraries are on the edge as the information first responders of our time. Libraries are on the edge.

New Jersey libraries are on the edge each and every year that we make our budgets. Will the one-third mil go up or go down? Will our town or the county give us more money? Or leave us flat funded? Or, even worse, cut us to the minimum funding allowed by New Jersey state library laws?

If they cut our funds will we make it? Will we have to reduce hours? Staff? Programs? Book budgets?

In 2011, budget cuts killed—yes, killed—a small association library in Bergen County. The town residents even held a funeral for the library, lighting candles and placing flowers at its door. It was closed because the local government officials didn't understand what that library meant to their community. They didn't understand what it meant to have a library.

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Editorial Statement of the New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter

The *New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter* shall provide news of NJLA and information about statewide, regional, and local library activities.

News shall be as current as possible within the constraints of the publication schedule and the publication will serve as an archival record of significant and lasting library issues and topics.

The *New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter* shall provide reports from officers, committees, roundtables, sections, and other units of the NJLA.

It shall also publish reports on trends and practices in the library profession and articles on topics of interest to the New Jersey library community. Ephemeral issues and time-sensitive topics will be covered in the listserv or the association website.

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Letter from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tipping the Edge in Our Favor

I don't think Terrie McColl could have selected a more appropriate theme for her presidential year than "Libraries on the Edge." It certainly captures the challenging, exhilarating, exasperating, and, yes, frightening world of New Jersey libraries today.

I found a definition of the word "edge" that helps put our situation in context. Although there were several meanings listed, I think this one summarizes where we are now: "An edge is a point near the beginning or the end."

Take a look at the NJLA Facebook page; there are numerous examples of new, exciting initiatives beginning at our libraries. The New Jersey State Library has started a Career Online High School Program, which offers people the opportunity to earn high school diplomas through their local libraries.

Woodbury Public Library and others are participating in the Veteran's Oral History Project; a new makerspace just opened at the Mullica Hill Branch of the Gloucester County Library System, one of many across the state. This year, many of our libraries have also become the go-to place for resources and programs that answer questions about the Affordable Care Act.

In addition, words such as *Hoopla* and *Zinio* are now a part of our library lexicon. We could not have envisioned most of these programs and services even 5 years ago, yet many innovative libraries (or, should I say, *edgier* libraries) now offer them.

Unfortunately, our Facebook page also contains stories about New Jersey libraries facing tough challenges. Over the past few years, I have posted many articles concerning budget cuts

(including staff layoffs and the reduction of hours) and the closing of library facilities.

Property values, the foundation of library funding in New Jersey, have dropped drastically over the past several years, automatically putting most public libraries in difficult financial situations.

Sadly, it is likely these circumstances won't improve in the next few years, forcing many libraries to curtail services rather than expand them. This certainly seems like the other definition of *edge*: a point near the end.

So, how do we tip the edge in our favor?

Perhaps we should review the work of the popular author Malcolm Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*.

In his book, Gladwell classifies three groups of people who can influence any situation: the connectors, who know a variety of people; the mavens, who know and share information with others; and the

salesmen, who encourage others to try new ideas.

Each of us knows these people in our communities; many are already connected to our libraries as trustees or as members of Friends groups and foundations.

It is up to us to make sure these influential people remain involved in the exciting new roles our libraries play in our communities. They can make the difference in seeing our place on the edge as a beginning for our libraries and, certainly, not the end.

Pat Tumulty



Note from the EDITOR

Ferguson PL on the Edge

When I reflected on this issue's theme of Libraries on the Edge, my first thought was of the public library in Ferguson, Missouri. Like many of you, I have been following the events happening in Ferguson since August, when a police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teen.

I grew up in St. Louis, not far from Ferguson. It has been surreal to see this quiet community, a place where I have friends who work and live, become an epicenter of violence, protests, and controversy.

When the beginning of the school year was put on hold there because of obvious safety concerns, my friend Carrie Pace (a teacher in the Ferguson-Florissant School District) worked with Ferguson Public Library Director Scott Bonner and a host of volunteers to offer math, science, and arts activities for school-aged children at the library.

Over the course of the week, the effort helped hundreds of kids, was expanded to other libraries and locations, and was aided by local organizations who offered everything from free lunches to additional cultural programming (see coverage in *Library Journal* <http://tinyurl.com/nkq2pqa>).

Thankfully, the library, located on the edge of where protests were occurring, was able to safely stay open every day. Not only was it a place for students to go, but anyone in the community seeking respite from the turmoil outside. Signs were posted around the building that read, "During difficult times, the library is a quiet oasis where we can catch our breath, learn, and think about what to do next." What a powerful message for us to remember.

The events in Ferguson have sparked heated debates on a national level, and St. Louis has a lot of healing and work to do, but one thing we can all agree on is that when a community is in crisis, libraries on the edge have the opportunity, and perhaps even a duty, to respond appropriately and to be a sanctuary—a "quiet oasis"—for all.

Megan McCarthy

Building a Renaissance Library



Exterior of Renaissance Hall, home of the new Renaissance Library, at Berkeley College's Woodland Park campus

By **Marlene Doty**, Vice President of Library Services, Berkeley College

Berkeley College opened its location in West Paterson (now Woodland Park), NJ, in 1976 on a 45-acre tract of land that became known as the Garret Mountain Campus. At the time, the college shared the location with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. In 1998, after years of sharing the campus, Berkeley College acquired use of all of the existing facilities.

In 2003, the college's Board of Trustees exercised the option to purchase the Garret Mountain Campus. The opening of Renaissance Hall, located at 44 Rifle Camp Road in Woodland Park, NJ, marks the completion of phase two of a master plan for Berkeley College's Woodland Park location.

A 35,000 square foot, \$9 million renovation and expansion now includes six classrooms, an atrium, large and small meeting rooms, lounge, fitness center, dining facility, bookstore, academic support center, and the new Renaissance Library.

The principal challenge in designing the Renaissance Library was to create a research, study, and learning environment sufficiently flexible to balance present needs with the future evolution of use. We also wanted to provide a library that would create a sense of community, enhance the adventure of the academic experience, and advance the institutional goals of the college.

We relied on the growing resource of literature on the topic of library as "place" and the sociability, comfort, linkages, and image attributes that motivate the college community to use it. Television programs like *Cool Spaces* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRAf7wfrXfw>) also provided inspiration for new ways of thinking about library design, function, and technology.

Once the design process began, the library staff worked closely with the design team from Workspace Technology, Inc. (in conjunction with Spiegle Architectural Group) to conceptualize a flexible, functional, and desirable learning place. Our plan was to segment the existing L-shaped space into different types of use and seating options that would

ultimately encourage the students to decide what type of social interaction they would want, from contemplative study to spirited collaboration. The design included group-work booths, individual study tables that could be easily reconfigured, desktop PCs, and a modular lounge area—all powered for technology and access to virtual resources.

Journals, magazines, media, new title displays, laptop lending, printer locations, and wireless network configuration were well thought out to ensure they blended seamlessly into the design.

We did away with traditional periodical shelving and selected Demco's magbox storage for a sleeker look, installed slotted shelving behind the desk for efficient lending of laptops, grouped printers in a wide open and central location, and placed power receptacles with USB charging portals on desktops throughout.

The library's print and media collection (which holds 40,000 of the 114,033 total items Berkeley College Library maintains in its collection) is now split into two areas: the main floor book collection is limited to the newest titles arranged by either program of study or popular fiction, while the lower level library houses the rest of the print collection in an open access, high-density mobile shelving system with additional study table seating.

Technology, aesthetics (everything from carpet, wall color, and lighting to architectural details), debate about the declining use of physical books in an increasingly digital world, and the ability to serve the new learning paradigm all influenced the design process.

When it finally opened, the Renaissance Library, officially the namesake of Board of Trustees emeritus Walter A. Brower, received rave reviews. With its state-of-the-art renovation, the library now serves the college community in ways never imagined when it was first dedicated in Dr. Brower's honor in 1981.

Marlene Doty is Vice President of Library Services at Berkeley College. She has oversight of 10 campus libraries throughout New Jersey, New York, and online. This is her eighth library renovation project for the college. Her email address is marlene-doty@berkeleycollege.edu.

Modular seating, moveable work tables, and USB charging portals create a flexible library workspace for BC students



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Small Library Innovations...

People of all ages visit Bradley Beach Public Library for books, magazines, music, and computer use, but they also come for programs.

In 2013, we held 581 programs, which generated the attendance of 4,104 individuals. Collaboration is an element of most of these programs. We partner with our local elementary school and our town departments, as well as community organizations, clubs, and businesses. Last but not least, we work with other small, independent libraries in the area, which enables us to benefit from increased visibility, reduced costs, and be part of creating a shared mission for our community as a whole.

Working together to do low-cost, high-impact programs has helped the library become what our mayor calls "the heart and soul of the community." Perhaps the most important element of our programming has been a willingness to just do it! Not all of our ideas and efforts have been successful, but we have certainly learned something from all of our attempts.

In this article, I'm sharing with you a sampling of the initiatives that have been wildly successful at our library; I believe these examples can be easily adapted by libraries throughout New Jersey, or at least provide plenty of inspiration!

Bringing History Alive

When we first discussed hosting a historic walk in Bradley Beach, I was skeptical. What event of historical significance could have possibly happened here in our little shore town? But, like any good librarian, I did some research.

After consulting with our borough historian and the historical society's museum curator, I learned that Bradley Beach's history is filled with small, fascinating moments. For example, there is a house in town where Babe Ruth attended a reception, which became the perfect opportunity during the historic walk to discuss the Negro Baseball League and the barnstorming tours that were popular in the 1920s.

Our first walk was very successful; subsequent editions have been consistently updated, improved, and have steadily grown in popularity. The only cost we have incurred for the historic walks has been the copying of walk brochures.

If your town has a historian or a historical society, tap into that resource, spread the word to uncover local history enthusiasts to help you research your town history, or go it alone and tailor your walks however you'd like!

Accentuate the Positive

What better way to reinforce the library's role as the center of the community than by encouraging others to recognize good neighbors? Last year, we created "Thank You, Neighbor" as a positive way to observe the anniversary of Hurricane Sandy.

We asked individuals to nominate others that they wanted to recognize as good neighbors, and invited both the nominators and the "good neighbors" to a modest party in the backyard of the library to celebrate our town and each other. We held our second "Thank You, Neighbor" event this past September. More than 100 people were recognized.

This event has generated enormous good will—and positive media coverage—for the library and the town. Our only costs were printing nomination forms, invitations, and postage. All communities are filled with generous, talented people, and this is an amazing way to gather them all together;

plus, it might lead you to individuals and groups interested in becoming more active in your library and town.

It's Better Together

As a Jersey shore town, Bradley Beach's population increases six-fold during summer months.

To meet demands created as a result of this ballooning population, we designed a summer reading passport program in 2013 tailored specifically to our community's unique needs. The passport put an emphasis on community engagement, exploring multiple literacies, and, of course, having fun!

Seeing it as a perfect opportunity for collaboration, we reached

out to our town's recreation department about incorporating the summer reading program into their established summer camp. Each week, the library's teen volunteers visited the camp, read stories to the younger children, and checked passports.

We also invited neighboring Avon Public Library onboard and for the last two years, we have held joint summer reading launches and finales and have used the same summer reading passport design. Joint participation nearly doubled our program registration! Other summer reading partners were the local businesses who donated incentive gifts.

Expenditures for the eight-week summer reading program included the supplies for our launch and finale (which we split with the Avon Public Library) and the cost of printing the passports. Not surprisingly, by reducing the stress of summer reading, we found that many kids—particularly "reluctant readers"—showed signs of really enjoying reading and participating in the program. By our standards, this program was a great success.

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Local residents celebrate during the "Thank You, Neighbor" program, held last year at Bradley Beach PL to commemorate the anniversary of Hurricane Sandy.

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Small Library Innovations...



Bradley Beach PL's Book Bike is unveiled at the town's annual Memorial Day Parade.

Moreover, the local elementary school is considering using the summer reading passport as part of its summer reading program in 2015!

Get Out of Your Library

While every library wants to promote reading, we have a special challenge reaching our summer population. In response, we installed two Little Free Libraries on the boardwalk. The engagement has been tremendous, even spreading to neighboring towns. The Little Free Libraries are stocked with donated materials and are cared for by volunteers.

We also created a Book Bike stocked with great reads and library information that staff members ride along the boardwalk during the summer months. The Book Bike, which was launched at our town's annual Memorial Day parade, also includes chalkboard signage to promote our latest library events.

Using donations and volunteers, the cost of these endeavors has been very small and we were fortunate to be able to use funds from our Friends of the Library group. For the Little Free Libraries, we splurged and spent \$400 to purchase pre-built structures from the Little Free Library website (<http://littlefreelibrary.org>) because of concerns about the proximity of the structures to the ocean. For the Book Bike, we worked with a local bicycle shop to upcycle an old bike for \$200.

These outreach initiatives definitively brought new users into our library building, associated reading with fun and relaxation, and made our "summer people" feel more welcome. Funds well spent!

Put the "Fun" in Fundraising

It's fair to assume that all public libraries need to fundraise. While you work to develop a strategy that best suits your library and your community, don't forget the fun!

Inspired by the Upper Darby (PA) Public Library (www.udlibraries.org/), Bradley Beach Public Library held a

jewelry sale this past summer that cost absolutely nothing and raised \$2,000! We collected used and handcrafted jewelry, scarves, and bags for several months to prepare. Two nights before the date of the sale, we set up our meeting room with donated jewelry stands and felt-covered display shelves.

We held a preview party for Friends members the night before the sale, and opened up the sale to the public at the beginning of the weekend. The Friends enjoyed getting a first look at the preview party, the public enjoyed shopping, those who donated were glad to clear out their old stuff, and the library made a significant amount of money in a short period of time.

Yes, You Can Do It!

The key to any successful service is understanding your community. While surveys and focus groups can help gather information, in my experience, the best way to determine the needs of your community is to talk to your patrons, and, more importantly, to attend community programs, such as festivals, volunteer fairs, and back-to-school nights. Attend events as a community member or a library representative with a table or booth. Either way, make it a priority to reach new segments of the population. Get involved.

And, of course, if you have a great idea for low-cost programming that could be useful to your extended community of fellow librarians, share it! The NJLA Small Libraries Section has a listing of resources and programming inspiration at the NJLA website (<http://njla.org/content/small-libraries-section>); email me to share your programming successes!

Sharlene Edwards is Assistant Director at Bradley Beach Public Library. She holds an MLIS from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. She introduced her ideas for low-cost programming for small libraries during the 2014 Big Talk from Small Libraries national online conference (<http://nlcblogs.nebraska.gov/bigtalk>). Her email address is sharlene@bradleybeachlibrary.org.



One of Bradley Beach PL's Little Free Libraries, installed near the boardwalk to engage summer residents

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Libraries on the Edge...

After all, why do you need a library when we have the internet, right? They didn't understand the role the library had in their community. So that library sadly didn't make it because of budgets cuts.

Or did it?

A year later the town took the space the library was in and created a media center. A media center with lots of new computers and ebooks and volunteers to run the place. They added storytime for the kids and a summer reading program. Hmm. Sound familiar? And then this year they changed the name.

The media center is now the "library and community center." Library? Yes, library. On the media center's Facebook page they say the name change is "to offer residents a more accurate understanding of what the center has to offer." Let me repeat that: A more accurate understanding of what the center has to offer.

Apparently they don't realize that what they are doing is recreating what they already had. Little by little they are putting back all the pieces. All the pieces that their community is yearning for. All the pieces that they took away when they foolishly thought "Who needs a library when we have the internet?"

The town is trying to transform the media center into a library, but, even better than that, a grass roots movement has been started in that town for a referendum for a municipal library.

The residents want a real library run by professionals, not by volunteers. They want a library that they can be proud of, a library that gives that community the services, technology, and access to information that it deserves. They want a library that is on the edge.

And New Jersey libraries are on the edge of technology. Makerspaces are hot! Lots of libraries are creating them. You'll be hearing tomorrow from Nate Hill about how Chattanooga [Public Library in Tennessee] transformed its building around the idea. Some libraries have simple makerspaces, just some equipment on a cart that they roll out when needed. Other libraries are carving out spaces to put in 3D printers and other cool, creative equipment. Others are having artists come in and work with their communities.

Wyckoff Public Library just won a \$25,000 grant, one of only two New Jersey organizations to do so, from the State Farm Neighborhood Assist program to create a makerspace. And there are several cool programs at the conference that are all about makerspaces. But while makerspaces are the hot thing in libraries today, will they last? Or are they a fad? I don't know.

What I do know is that they put libraries on the edge. What about the future? Six months, a year, 5 years from now? Makerspaces may be around or something newer and hotter may take their place. Just like VHS, BETA, cassettes, micro-

film. Remember? They were all once staples of our libraries but are now just distant memories.

My point is that the hot, sexy, technology, thing, or whatever is not the essential part of the library, but it is a vehicle that draws people in. Our customers, patrons, sometimes even non-library users (you know, *those* people)—the people we serve [are the essential part]. Whether they support us or not, [they are] the reason why we exist. Technologies come and go.

Once upon a time, monks chained down the books in the library, now we have fancy security systems. Once upon a time, books were a physical object and now they exist in two worlds, physical and electronic. And dare I say it—the way our libraries look now may go too. Ebooks, emagazines, e-everything may just change how our brick and mortar buildings look forever. I don't know that, but it is a possibility and one that we should not ignore.

Last year, Eileen Palmer, who, by the way, did a phenomenal job this year (Thank you, Eileen!), mentioned the Five Laws of Library Science in her inaugural speech. Eileen singled out Rule No. 5: "The library is a growing organism."

Truer words were never spoken about libraries. The libraries of yesterday, today, and tomorrow are and always will be a growing organism. Libraries respond to the needs, wants, and vitality of the communities they service.

This puts libraries on the cutting edge of what is new in information technology. This puts libraries on the cutting edge of what is new in creative learning. Libraries are on the edge of technology and creativity. Libraries are on the edge of information first responders.

When my son was small, his favorite movie was *Ghostbusters*. He watched it so many times the videotape wore out. ("This chick is toooassst...") The film, aside from having a couple of great scenes in the New York Public Library, has a really cool theme song with the catchphrase "Who you gonna call?"

In the movie, they call ghostbusters, but in real life, who are you going to call when you need to find something out? When you need information? When you want to have fun and lose yourself in a good book or film? Who you gonna call? The library.

After Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, where did people go to get warm? Where did they go to charge their phones? To get on the internet to try and contact loved ones? To get information about what was going on and how to get help? The library.

And what did we—we the staff members in those libraries—do? We let the people in and we let them break every single rule that is so important on "normal" days. I know for the short period of time we had power in New Milford after Irene, we had people sitting on the floor and we had power strips in almost every outlet, so that as many people as possible could charge their computers and phones.

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Flying, Not Falling...

As the new library director, I felt ill throwing away the old holdings of magazines that the previous administration thought we were required to keep. When we put the VHS tapes in the book sale, I was worried that someone would come in and ask specifically for those tapes. When the boxes of audiocassette tapes were deleted from the system, I questioned my decision.

Every step that I took to update and make the library relevant plagued me with a nagging fear that I was about to make a mistake. The Otto Bruyns Public Library was making big changes at a fast pace, in the spotlight of the press.

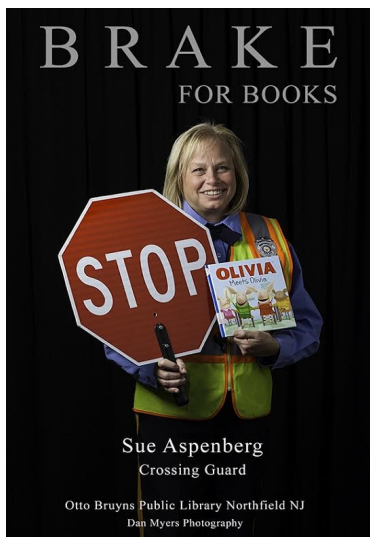
Upgrades and Enhancements

We purchased additional computers (using funds from the capital budget) and installed on those computers Microsoft Office Suite and Gimp (www.gimp.org), the GNU image manipulation program. Each computer came with an SD card slot to make digital photography classes much easier.

A low cost, credit-card sized computer called a Raspberry Pi (www.raspberrypi.org) replaced the PC we were using for our online catalog. The computer we were using for our online catalog was transformed into a Minecraft server for our Minecraft gaming program (<https://minecraft.net>). One of the computers being replaced was used as an offline workstation uploaded with Scratch (<http://scratch.mit.edu>), a desktop and online multimedia authoring tool.

We had a security system installed (also a capital budget expense) to ensure the safety of staff and library members and to protect the new equipment in the library. We made major purchases directly from a vendor to update our juvenile nonfiction collection and, in the process, received two free Kindles, giving us the opportunity to write a Kindle circulation policy and offer the devices to the community for borrowing.

The Spotlight



A poster from Otto Bruyns PL's public relations campaign featuring local heroes supporting the library

As all of these physical changes were happening, library staff began reaching out to community organizations. With the help of a local photographer (who volunteered his time), we orchestrated a photo shoot/reception of local heroes supporting the library.

We invited officers from the Fire Department and Police Department, both school superintendents, school principals, the high school librarian, a crossing guard, local coaches, and the mayor to participate. Large canvases were printed of these community leaders reading. The canvases were then put on display in the library, public schools, and local businesses. They received a lot of media attention.

I kept the Otto Bruyns Public Library in the press by writing weekly press releases, sending photos and captions to local newspapers, and creating unique photo opportunities for press photographers. When there was no news, we made it—literally. I built a snowman reading a book on the front lawn of the library and sent a photo of it to the press. We partnered with the superintendents' office to have library fliers sent home with every child. I attended city council meetings and spoke at them on a regular basis.

We invited the community's participation in new ways: library dance parties (DJ'd by yours truly), a classic car show in the parking lot, and a 24-hour comics event. We injected the library into the community: a poetry festival in the park, a float in the Fourth of July parade, and a table at National Night Out. When we were looked over in municipal events, we invited ourselves.

When I was chosen for the *Atlantic City Weekly's* "Top 40 Under 40," I made valuable connections for the library and used the networking opportunity to bring library awareness to local businesses and politicians. I took the ALS ice-bucket challenge, despite being way too busy. I made time to be present in the pulse of the community.



Director Aubrey Gerhardt at a Classic Car Show hosted in the parking lot of Otto Bruyns PL

Regularly Scheduled Programs

In the summer, we hosted weekly programs for children, teens, and adults. One such program was our multi-user Minecraft World. With help from our IT company, who put together our Minecraft server, and a phenomenal teacher from our community school, I set up 10 laptops in our meeting room and projected the screen from one of those laptops onto our movie screen so one student each week could show off his or her work.

Because we had a limited number of laptops to use, I set up tables for Legos and chess for students waiting their turn to play. We also made sure to pull out all of our Lego and Minecraft books and put them on display. Each student would take a book home and get a new one the following week. In the fall, we continued by hosting a weekly Lego Club that is very popular and allowing access to our Minecraft server through the library computers in the Youth Services section.

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Flying, Not Falling...

With our library so close to a bike path, we also planned a program about bike safety. A police officer came and spoke on bike safety and then each student was given an electroluminescent (EL) wire to light up his or her bike.

In addition, digital photography classes, computer classes for adults, robotics for students, yoga classes, free movies, and more were offered on a weekly basis. These programs kept the community coming into the library frequently. The instructors leading the classes were members of the community willing to instruct for a very minimal compensation, basically volunteering their time. Additionally, we added materials to the collection to support these interests.

We hosted a monthly poetry workshop with volunteer published poets that culminated in a Poetry Festival at our local park. We created a stone poetry garden in our front yard, words written on stones that are re-arranged by the public on a regular basis. We reached out to Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, and they obtained a grant to continue hosting monthly poetry workshops for senior citizens at our library through their Stockton Center on Successful Aging program. This monthly gathering pulls in new library users, and we have begun to amass a collection by local poets.

Epic Failures

Not every new program we offered was an instant success. I had a day that I cried after a robotics class, thinking what a failure it had been. The instructor had been unprepared and the outcome of the day's work was sloppy. Mid-cry, I received a call from a mother to say how much her son loved Robotics Club. Even though that particular day's project was not a success, her son, unfazed by the day's failure, was looking forward to fixing the robot the following week. She thought we had done a fabulous job teaching the importance of learning from our mistakes. We were falling and she saw us flying. I took a deep breath.

On the first day of our Minecraft program, there was a line outside the door. In a mad rush, I had 14 students ready to play Minecraft and not one student had a Minecraft account. I had assumed they would have their own accounts. The students were fine with the failure. The parents were furious. I cursed the NJLA Conference session that had inspired me to try the program in the first place ("Just dive in!" they said) and rushed to make a few guest accounts back in my office.

I was shaking inside as I returned to the disappointed students and angry parents, but I smiled, braced my knees, and encouraged everyone to come back next week. Afterward, our entire library staff was overwhelmed and discouraged; however, I regrouped, and the second week was a success: I had a backup plan (Legos and chess); guest accounts and a sign-up sheet; basic club rules (be nice); and a script written that I could read to any angry parents.

When the furniture arrived to hold our DVDs, we were able to pull the collection together into one space with room to expand. The problem was that I had ordered it in white, not ivory to match the rest of the shelving, and didn't even notice until it was half-way assembled. Everyone noticed. The DVD shelves look less atrocious when they are filled.

We also ordered a custom-made desk to fit around the pillar to the right of our circulation desk. This furniture was to be a great space saver and accommodate four computer workstations. The problem was that in reality it only seated three comfortably.



Photo ops, like this snowman outside of the library, have helped keep Otto Bruyns PL in the press on a regular basis.

Eventually the computer stations were arranged to make sense.

Successes to Draw Upon

I have learned a lot from my first year as a library director. I am doing my best as a public servant to provide for a community that I believe in. I jumped into this chasm of uncertainty, maintained my composure, and found that the entire neighborhood supported my efforts, even those efforts that did not succeed. I have included some suggestions to help you:

- Find community members willing to teach some classes and offer programs at the library for free or little compensation. People who are really good at specific skills and have a passion for a topic are often willing, if not eager, to share that skill or passion with others.
- Make technology available. Offer programs and resources to help the community learn that technology. Offer programs on a weekly and monthly basis, depending on interest (this establishes a regular crowd at the library, camaraderie among participants, and a community connection after several months of participation).
- Write articles for the press; take photographs. Get your library's name in the paper on a regular basis. Be present at neighborhood events. Be outgoing, even if it's as uncomfortable for you as it is for me. Be nice. Listen to find out how you can get involved and meet community needs.

So much is changing in the world of libraries because so much is changing in the world. There are no clear answers anymore. For public librarians, it is important to remember that citizens find it refreshing to see government workers striving to provide the best possible services. Our effort as public servants is appreciated. The worst thing is not failure but stagnation. Do something.

Aubrey Gerhardt is Director at Otto Bruyns Public Library in Northfield. She holds an MLS from Simmons College in Boston. She is founder of the South Jersey Poets Collective. Her poetry has most recently been published in the *Seneca Review*. In a former life, she worked as a reporter for a free weekly newspaper in Atlantic County. Her email address is agerhardt@nflibrary.org.

People & Places Around the State

Honors, Awards, and Recognition

Middletown Township PL was awarded *Asbury Park Press* Readers' Choice Award for being "Best of the Best" in Monmouth County.



Middletown Township PL (Monmouth County) recently received an Asbury Park Press Reader's Choice Award.

Renee Swartz, chair of the Monmouth County Library Commission, was honored recently by Monmouth County officials for her service to the library community at the Archives and History Day held at the Monmouth County Library.

Appointments and Elections



Meaghan Darling is the new Youth Services Librarian at Long Hill Township PL. She previously worked at Plainsboro PL.

Debbie Maynard was named Director of Pequannock Township PL. She previously worked at West Milford PL.

Siobhan McCarthy is the new Electronic Resources/Serials Management Librarian at Caldwell University. She previously worked at Bergen Community College.

JP Porcaro

JP Porcaro, Acquisitions and Technological Discovery Librarian at New Jersey City University, is one of four candidates

running for ALA President this year. The election will be in the spring.

Celebrations

BCCLS, the Bergen County Cooperative Library System, celebrated its 35th Anniversary in October.

Hudson County Community College opened its newest library facility in Journal Square (Jersey City) in September. The building is six stories with 112,000 square feet of library and learning space.

Ocean City Library honored its late Director **Christopher Maloney** with an unveiling of his portrait at the library in October.



Hudson County Community College's newest library facility in Journal Square (Jersey City)

Resignations/Retirements



Jean Edwards will be retiring as Director of Cumberland County Library at the end of the year.

Marianne Gaunt will be retiring as Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian at Rutgers University at the end of the year.

Joan Henry will retire as Director from the Dunellen PL this fall.

Gloria Urban will retire as Director of Vineland PL in December.

Marianne Gaunt

Deaths

Alice Bumbera, former Director of the Crosswicks Library, passed away in September. She had worked at the Crosswicks Library for over 40 years.



Hillsdale PL celebrates BCCLS' 35th anniversary.

Compiled by **Mary Marks**, Associate University Librarian at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison.

Libraries on the Edge...

(Continued from page 7)

We all did this without thinking because the most important issue at that moment was whether or not our patrons had access to the information they needed. Rules, smiles, it didn't matter. Information mattered! And getting it to the people mattered. Why? Because that is what we do!

We—the librarians and library staff of the world—we are different from most people. We like to share. We like to share what we know and even what we don't know. Just give us a minute or two and we will find it for you. We are the great equalizers of our society.

Libraries hold the information our communities want, need, and desire. Whether it is serious research, a fun movie for a night with the kids, or creating something in a makerspace, libraries provide information to all who walk through the door. It doesn't matter who you are or how young or old you are, or whether we like you or not, we will help you. And we will help you with a smile.

There is that famous Mr. Rogers quote that circulated after the Newtown tragedy, where he says: "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." Libraries and library staff are helpers. We help people find the information they seek, not only during times of tragedy, but mostly during normal, routine days. Libraries are on the edge of finding information. Libraries are on the edge as the information first responders of our time.

So, what does all this have to do with NJLA? NJLA supports and advocates for proper funding for our libraries. NJLA supports and provides opportunities for librarians to learn and bring new ideas to their libraries. And NJLA supports and champions the right to library service for all. NJLA is the training ground for future library leaders. It is where you can meet your peers and talk about the issues and struggles you face in your professional life. NJLA is where colleagues become friends.

There is so much that NJLA provides to our libraries and librarians. It is the support system that keeps us going when times are hard, when money is tight, and when laws affecting our governance are threatened. NJLA is the support for libraries on the edge.

So, I have a three part challenge for all of you this year. For all the librarians, all the library staff, all the trustees, and all the friends of New Jersey libraries—everyone. A couple of years ago, I made it a personal challenge to visit 75 libraries in 5 days. I did it, and I enjoyed it so much the following

"We—the librarians and library staff of the world—we are different from most people. We like to share. We like to share what we know and even what we don't know. Just give us a minute or two and we will find it for you. We are the great equalizers of our society."

year I visited 34 libraries in just one day.

What impacted me most out of these library visits was seeing how great our New Jersey libraries are. From small libraries with small budgets to big libraries with big budgets, the thing I came away with was how perfectly they fit their communities. The programs they offered and the service they gave were a real reflection of the community they served. "A perfect fit," as past-president Karen Klapperstuck would say.

So, part one of my challenge to all of you is to visit as many other libraries in New Jersey as you can. Maybe it will only be one other library or maybe 75 like I did, but whatever it is, visit other libraries. Take in what they are doing and how they are doing it. Look at their community and how they are serving it. Look at it all with a fresh eye. Then go back to your library and do the same. I guarantee you will see your library in a whole new light.

The second part of my challenge is a little bit, well, challenging. I challenge you to see where your library is on the edge. Is it your funding? Are you providing really cool programming and events? Are you fighting to keep your doors open? Have you become your community's center? Where is your library on the edge and how are you dealing with it?

Lastly, I challenge you all to join and support NJLA. NJLA supports us. NJLA supports libraries on the edge. We need to return the favor. Because libraries will always, always be on the edge. Libraries will always be on the edge of providing what it is that our communities want, at the time our communities need it, and in the way that our communities want it. That is what we do! That is how we roll! Libraries on the edge.

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much.

Terrie McColl

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Write for the Next Issue

Spring 2015

Money Matters at Your Library

Does your library provide programs or resources to help users with financial planning, taxes, student loans, couponing, or other money matters? Tell us about it!

Propose by January 2

Members: To contribute an article, just email a proposal to newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org!

If your idea is approved, the editor will arrange details for your assignment.



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Don't miss these upcoming NJLA events!

Teen Librarian's Toolbox: Tips and Techniques

Are you a new teen librarian? Join seasoned professionals for this (free) one-day workshop designed just for you!

December 12, 2014
at Cherry Hill Public Library
9:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

February 6, 2015
at Louis Bay 2nd Library
(Hawthorne)
9:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

NJLA Micro-Conference

Join us for engaging programs on the latest trends, tech, and topics New Jersey librarians are discussing!

January 14, 2015
at Mullica Hill
(Gloucester County)
9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

February 10, 2015
at Montville Public Library
9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.njla.org