Librarians on the Run
BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Maggie Killman, Youth Community Engagement Librarian
Gabriel Venditti, Community Engagement Librarian

Shaker Heights Public Library
Shaker Heights, Ohio
Gabriel Venditti

Has worked in libraries for 16 years in a variety of roles

Has worked as a Project Manager for community organizing nonprofit

Well, maybe your old man is just a little bit cooler than you thought he was.
Maggie Killman

8 years in library service

Experience in both Adult and Youth Services

Has managed library partnerships in many forms since 2014

“We need to remember what’s important in life: friends, waffles, work. Or waffles, friends, work. Doesn’t matter, but work is third.”
What is Community Engagement?

• Relationship-Building

• First Conversations Quick Tips

• Community Mobilization

• Goals
Relationship Building: Engaging Residents

• Meet people where they are

• Don't be afraid to work on the small scale

• Offer opportunities for dialogue

• Find out what they want!
Relationship Building: Engaging Local Leadership

- Government offices
- Schools
- Neighborhood Associations
- Law Enforcement
- Local nonprofits
- Local businesses
- Local religious institutions
- PTA/PTO
Relationship Building: Engaging Local Leadership

Can the library play, too?!
Relationship Building: Some Quick Tips for Conversations

• Take your time, focus on the quality of your conversation

• Both sincerity and humor go a long way towards building trust

• Ask questions to get the full story
Community Mobilization: Putting Relationships to Use

• The core of librarianship is connecting people to resources

• The relationships we build in the community become the resources we share with the community.

• Your Relationships = People Catalog
Goals: Social Capital

*Social Capital*: A person or groups' ability to enact change in their community through their relationships, access to resources, and their knowledge of how to utilize them.

*To learn more, see Putnam (2000)*
Goals: Capacity Building and Asset Mapping

• Improving the overall capacity of the library and partners to meet the needs of the people

• Develop a deep understanding of our collection of relationships and the various resources they provide. This is called "Asset Mapping."
Mission, Vision, and Values

WHAT WE DO AND WHY
Mapping the Ideas

- Facilitating dialogue
  - Responds to actual community needs/wants
  - Adaptability (responsiveness)

- Organic Library Service
  - Facilitating community input in services
  - Relationship building
  - Establishes credibility which in turn gives us "seat at the table" for future community efforts

- Partnerships
  - Librarianship: Connections to resources

- Social capital
  - Removing barriers to access to community resources

- Utilizing collective power of residents to effect positive change in community

- Asset mapping
Community Engagement Mission

We build community through partnerships and responsive services—connecting people, ideas, and resources.
Community Engagement Vision

- Partnerships
- Community-Responsive Service
- Community Building
Vision: Partnerships

The library cultivates relationships with community organizations in order to build mutually beneficial programming and services. These relationships enable us to share resources with our partners to creatively solve problems.
Gondor calls for aid!

And Rohan will answer.
Vision: Community-Responsive Service

The library cultivates relationships with community members and encourages them to share their ideas, passions, and needs with the library. This input will inform decision-making about library programs and services.
Vision: Community Building

The library employs its resources and relationships to facilitate connections among community members and to help these residents create the change they want to see in their own community.
We value:

- Strong relationships
- Community pride
- Open dialogue
- Free, equitable, and confidential access to community resources
- Continual development of community leaders
1. Defining "Community Engagement"
2. Mission, Vision, and Values
3. CE in Action
4. Practical Advice
5. Activity
CE in Action

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR GREATER ENGAGEMENT
Community need: After school tutoring/homework help

Resources required: staff time, trained teachers, ability to screen and supervise volunteers, accessible location

Library's limitation: cannot provide resources other than space

School's limitation: geographically inaccessible after school to lower-income neighborhood

Solution: Library provides space, school provides teachers

Mercer-Moreland Homework Center
"Too often institutions see only the risk in sharing power and remain blind to the potential rewards... [This program] is example of the good things that can happen when institutions give up a measure of control and work with residents as true partners."

- Kevin and Lee Kay, Community Partners
Safe Place

- National program
- Run through Bellefaire JCB in Cuyahoga County
- Resource sharing
- Access to social workers for library and youth
- Result of relationship building
Pop Up Game Days

“I’ve lived here for 12 years and it’s a friendly neighborhood, but I still met new people today - families who were walking by and joined us. As we talked we found connections. We definitely want to have more events like this.”

- Kate Bennett, resident
Road Map

1. Defining "Community Engagement"
2. Mission, Vision, and Values
3. CE in Action
4. Practical Advice
5. Activity
Practical advice

Meet
• Meet everyone, cultivate reciprocal relationships

Define
• Define your vision for your relationship with your community
• Define roles and responsibilities for each side of a partnership

Set
• Set attainable, shared goals

Tell
• Tell your story
• Regularly solicit feedback from residents and partners
Road Map

1. Defining "Community Engagement"
2. Mission, Vision, and Values
3. CE in Action
4. Practical Advice
5. Activity
Activity Time

There's So Much Room For Activities
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Suggested Reading


Contact

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Gabriel Venditti: gabriel.venditti@shakerlibrary.org