

VT Libraries Benefit from FiberConnect Project

The Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA) and Sovernet Communications last month announced the completion of the Vermont FiberConnect Project, bringing gigabit Internet service to 43 of the state's libraries in the mostly rural counties of Bennington, Caledonia, Orange, Rutland, Washington, Windham, and Windsor via a 900-mile network of fiber-optic cable. Previously, most of these libraries relied on residential cable broadband service, provided for free as part of an agreement between Comcast and the state. Although this type of service was adequate for some of the smallest libraries, many others had been facing growing strains on bandwidth, Vermont State Librarian Martha Reid told *Hotline*.

Gigabit networks, offering Internet speeds up to 50 times faster than typical residential broadband service, are still relatively uncommon in the United States, although Google is currently rolling out fiber networks in Austin, TX; Provo, UT; and Kansas City (MO and KS). And municipalities including Chattanooga and Lafayette, LA, implemented their own gigabit networks with community utilities companies.

The service will also enable libraries with community videoconferencing equipment to facilitate new types of public programming, such as Skype visits from authors, Reid added. In addition, 42 of the 43 libraries are on a new state-run network that will enable the Vermont Department of Libraries (VDL) to host networkwide programs as well.

Unlike the Comcast service, FiberConnect access is not free for the libraries, which has led to some minor discord from a few of the smallest facilities involved in the program. The Vermont Department of Libraries (VDL) worked with Sovernet early in its grant-writing process to negotiate a rate of \$200 per month per branch for commercial-level use. When combined with E-Rate Discounts of 50 percent to 70 percent, none of the libraries pays more than \$100 per month, and many are only putting up \$50 to \$60, making the service relatively inexpensive, Reid said. As a point of comparison, residential Google Fiber Gigabit Internet subscriptions currently cost \$70 per month, and small business subscriptions cost \$100.

However, leaders at some of the smallest libraries—which weren't facing bandwidth issues before, and

Interview

Rich Harwood

Rich Harwood is an author and speaker and the founder and president of the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to change in the public sphere.



How did you move from community engagement to running the Public Innovators Labs for Libraries with the American Library Association?

Libraries still have a great reservoir of trust that a lot of community and public institutions no longer have. I think they're essential right now to helping us rebuild our sense of connection to one another and the ability of communities to come together to solve problems.

How is your approach different from standard library outreach?

Outreach activities tend to be around something the organization has created that it wants to promote. A lot of times these things don't necessarily reflect the aspirations and concerns of the community itself. Libraries need to be aligned with the things that actually matter to people in their community if they want to be relevant and have impact.

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now have a new monthly bill for next-generation technology that may be underused by their community—have expressed concerns about the necessity of the program and the cost of participating.

However, VDL believes the high-capacity FiberConnect infrastructure will help prepare the state's libraries for future applications and ever-growing demand for bandwidth.

Vermont FiberConnect is described as a "middle mile" project in telecommunications industry parlance. Initially funded in 2010 by a \$33.4 million federal National Telecommunications and Information Administration Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant to VTA and Sovernet Communications, the grant enabled Sovernet to build the large fiber network offering wholesale data transport to regional service providers such as ISPs and cellular networks, while connecting community "anchor institutions" such as universities, K-12 schools, hospitals, and government buildings. The 43 libraries were included thanks, in large part, to a separate \$550,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Reid said. With this ground-work laid, it now becomes economically feasible for Sovernet to build out "last mile" connections at rates affordable to homes and local businesses.

BiblioTech for Bexar Cty. Housing Development

Eager to expand the reach of their innovative all-digital library, officials in Bexar County, TX, plan to open a second full-service BiblioTech in June as part of a sprawling public housing development on San Antonio's west side.

The new 2,100 square foot BiblioTech is envisioned as a featured amenity of the recently completed third phase of the Gardens at San Juan

Square, a \$31 million mixed-use project built by the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA). Existing space originally earmarked for commercial use will instead be retrofit into the new BiblioTech, which will be about half the size of the Pleasanton Road facility that created a sensation when it opened in September 2013 as the country's first bookless public library.

Bexar County and SAHA officials are touting the plan as the first marriage of public housing and state-of-the-art library innovation. BiblioTech already operates a satellite location in the central jury room at the Bexar County Courthouse, and it has a range of ongoing projects with 14 regional school districts. But BiblioTech administrator Laura Cole said a search had been ongoing for a second "anchor" facility, and the Gardens at San Juan Square proved to be the right match.

The Gardens' third phase includes 252 residential units and 4,000 square feet of commercial/retail space. Twelve units have been designated work-live areas in which residents operate small businesses on the ground floor, with living quarters upstairs.

SAHA and Bexar County will share construction costs, Cole said, although the exact split is still being negotiated.

BiblioTech, officials said, will also provide critical online access to a segment of lower-income residents, including children, who currently lack sufficient Internet resources.

Cole said the plan is to operate the new BiblioTech along the same parameters as the original facility, keeping its doors open eight hours a day, seven days a week. Forty desktop computer stations, available free of charge, will dominate the floor plan, and e-readers will be loaned to patrons.

The first-year operating budget has been estimated at \$500,000, Cole said, with FTEs providing the bulk of expenses.

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Bexar County operates BiblioTech independently of San Antonio Public Library (SAPL), which runs 26 branches, including a handful outside the city limits serving unincorporated communities. In past years, long before the first BiblioTech was built, the county contributed to SAPL's operating budget, including a \$3.78 million payment approved last fall that was folded into the city system's \$35 million spending plan for FY14–15.

But tensions arose in 2014 when Bexar County officials indicated a desire to pay less in future years, arguing that they had no say in SAPL's budget and BiblioTech alone served as a vital contribution toward regional library services. SAPL leaders, careful to laud BiblioTech's impact, were equally adamant that a county payment was both fair and necessary to keep the city system financially solvent.

In November 2014, Seth Mitchell, assistant to the Bexar County manager, informed SAPL director Ramiro Salazar in a letter that the county intended to "step down" its annual contribution by \$300,000 a year over four years, for a total reduction of \$1.2

million. "To fill this gap, we offer to become the digital provider of library materials to the San Antonio Library system," Mitchell wrote.

Salazar has previously maintained that any rollback of Bexar County's financial contribution was unacceptable, arguing that SAPL provides invaluable library services for untold numbers of county residents.

NYC ID Will Do Double Duty as a Library Card

On Monday, January 12, New York City began taking applications for its long-awaited municipal identification card (IDNYC). Not only will this be the first photo ID card ever issued by the city, it will also serve as a library card at all three New York City library systems—the first time a single card will grant access to the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), New York Public Library (NYPL), and Queens Library (QL).

Bearers will be able to use the IDNYC card to enter city buildings such as schools and to access city services. Police officers will accept it as valid identification. And the card will

be integrated with all three library systems, allowing the bearer to register for a card within any or all of the three agencies. Once this is done, the card can also physically serve as a library card, allowing users to check out books, place holds, and access equipment—and users who already have a library account can link it back to their IDNYC card.

However, cardholders who wish to use more than one system will need to register for each individually, and the accounts themselves will not be linked. All three of New York City's library systems will remain separate and distinct.



The IDNYC card will be available to all residents over the age of 14, regardless of immigration status, homeless status, or involvement with the criminal justice system. Cardholders may self-designate the gender by which they wish to be identified.

While proof of identity and residence are required, a care-of address can be used, or a letter from a shelter or city agency can be provided. Applicants can request that an address not appear on the card, which makes it a safe proposition for undocumented immigrants or those concerned about the stigma of a shelter address, as well as people returning to the community from prison who may have difficulty getting the necessary identification to access basic services.

However, with this concession comes a new concern: that the IDNYC card will be perceived as a benefit primarily for those who need that level of anonymity.

People

Jane Blue was named Head Librarian/Branch Manager at the Andrews Public Library, the Nantahala Regional Library System, NC. She was previously Non-fiction Selector at Prince William Public Library System, VA.

Heidi Dolamore was named Assistant Director for the San José Public Library, CA. She was previously Deputy Director of Public Services at Solano County Library, CA.

Cindy L. Grove was appointed Director of the Rockport Public Library, MA. She was previously Head of the Reference Department at Tewksbury Public Library, MA.

Mary Elizabeth Harper resigned as Executive Director of the Tuscaloosa Public Library, AL. She was first hired in February 2011.

Karen Mellor was promoted to Chief of Library Services at the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, Providence. She previously served as a Program Manager.

Shawn Morin was named President and Chief Operating Officer of Ingram Content Group Inc. He has been Chief Operating Officer of the company since June 2012.

Karen Padzamsky retired as Director of Filger Public Library, Minonk, IL. She had been in the position for 27 years.

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To combat that possible problem, Mayor Bill de Blasio's office hopes to position the card to appeal to all sectors of the population, starting with its convenient access to the city's libraries. Five of the 18 permanent IDNYC enrollment centers will be located in those institutions.

In addition, individuals who sign up in 2015 will receive one-year memberships to 33 popular citywide cultural institutions, including the Bronx Zoo, American Museum of Natural History, and Metropolitan Museum of Art.

While combining a municipal ID and library card would seem to be a logical choice, few have merged the two (although Connecticut's Elm City Resident Card, New Haven, which also serves as a New Haven Free Public Library card, has been in use since 2007).

Creation of a municipal ID card had been on de Blasio's agenda since taking office in January 2014, and discussions with the city's libraries began the following spring. All three systems were enthusiastic partners from the outset.

No matter how many New Yorkers plan to apply for the IDNYC card for the cultural extras, there is no denying its advantages for undocumented new Americans—and that libraries are positioned to help them as well.

Nick Higgins, BPL's director of outreach services, told *Hotline* that he has been spreading the word about the card to the immigrants, formerly incarcerated, and older adults served by his office. He is also making sure that the library's IDNYC enrollment office has plenty of information available, in multiple languages, about BPL's outreach programs. It's a win-win situation, he believes.

A soft launch was conducted during the first week of January at the library enrollment centers and several city agencies, with many employees enthusiastically signing up for the card themselves.

CO Library's Robotics Program Helps Kids with Autism

For months, 12-year-old Deacon Kaufman has spent his Sunday afternoons at the TinkerMill Maker space in Longmont, CO, where the Longmont Library Innovation Team, comprising Deacon and nine other kids in grades seven to 12, work on building BiblioBot, a library robot prototype geared to serve children with autism. The Innovation Team is a low-cost robotics partnership program between the Longmont Public Library (LPL), CO, and Robauto, a Boulder, CO-based robotics company. Many of the children on the Innovation Team, including Deacon, are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Ideally, BiblioBot will be able to talk, tell jokes, and use a scanner to locate misplaced books while it moves along rows of stacks. Moreover, it will be able to connect with the library's Apple TVs so that users can view video feed from the robot's perspective.

Jalali Hartman, the CEO of Robauto, said that the robot is helpful to children with ASD because the machine is a comfortable intermediary for those who are uncomfortable with the nuances of social interaction.

The seed of this initiative, which won the 2014 Library Program of the Year from the Colorado Association of Libraries and the 2014 Intellectual Property Champion Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, began with Hartman's robotics savvy and desire to work with Boulder County families impacted by ASD. He initially reached out to the Autism Society of Colorado and the Autism Society of Boulder County and was introduced to the staff at LPL in April 2014.

To create BiblioBot's function and design, Hartman surveyed 500 parents, teachers, and students in the Longmont community. After that feedback, the youngsters on the project sat down with an industrial designer. The result is a model with a rectangular head with two large eyes perched atop a vase-shaped body covered with a multicolored fabric.

The prototype is expected to be available in 2015 and cost \$975, following successful beta testing in three Longmont branches. The program directly serves LPL's initiative to expand its outreach to underserved populations and received grants from the Library Services and Technology Act through the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the CAN'd Aid Foundation, and the Friends of the Longmont Library.

According to the Robauto website, it costs \$198 to purchase the Robot Inventor Kit, both software and hardware, plus training for an Innovation Team member. Currently, the LPL robotics program has a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo to raise \$4,500.

For libraries interested in replicating the project, visit www.robauto.co, or email Jalali Hartman at jhartman@robauto.co.



Deacon Kaufman's sketches of BiblioBot.

Student Monitor: Campus Libraries Hold their Value

Student Monitor (SM), a market research firm specializing in data generated by college students, recently released some encouraging facts from its semiannual Lifestyle and Media Study, which is designed to investigate stu-

dents' attitudes about school and non-academic interests: what they read, watch, and listen to and how those choices influence their consumer behavior, perceptions, and experiences.

Among the attitudes tracked is how they feel about their academic libraries. Current data, said SM managing partner Eric Weil, reflected the

same patterns as surveys in the past few years. Nearly two-thirds of the students questioned expressed satisfaction with their campus libraries—35 percent very satisfied and 29 percent somewhat satisfied. Women had a higher level of satisfaction than men, at 68 percent versus 60 percent. As library users became more sophisticated with each undergraduate year, that perception increased incrementally as well, with seniors reporting the highest levels of happiness with their college libraries. Unsurprisingly, students who lived on campus expressed greater satisfaction than did those living off-campus.

To gather data, researchers talked to 1,200 students on 100 campuses nationwide and conducted detailed interviews face-to-face—a method that returns far more accurate results than online surveys, according to Weil.

Because the surveys are conducted twice a year, during spring and fall semesters, SM is able to track whether answers stay the same or change and what triggers those changes. Libraries, as it turns out, are one of the more consistent variables. “Students have always rated their campus library at the top in terms of their levels of satisfaction or getting value,” Weil told *Hotline*. Student housing, the cost of textbooks, and campus dining services, on the other hand, “have traditionally ranked at the very bottom.”

The library question, Weil explained, was first framed in the student interviews within the broader context of educational worth, asking, “Are you getting fair value for the cost of your education?” (In the most recent survey, nearly a third of the students felt they were not.)

Even allowing for fluctuations, college students have remained consistently loyal to their campus libraries.

“You’re talking about a group that’s typically rather cynical,” Weil noted. “So those are pretty good numbers.”

Branching Out



According to the *Eagle Pass Business Journal*, the Eagle Pass City Council, TX, approved a method of competitive sealed proposals for the expansion and renovation of the historic 13,450 square foot **Eagle Pass Public Library**. The estimated \$2.5 million project will include upgrades to make the facility Americans with Disabilities Act compliant.

Grand openings times two were celebrated in St. Paul in November with the completion of major renovations at the **Sun Ray** (pictured) and **Highland Park** branches of the Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) (see *Hotline*, 1/6/14). The Highland Park facility gained 5,000 square feet of public space in the \$7.9 million project and now houses a street-level Express Center, a community meeting room, a larger children’s area, a new teen space, comfortable reading areas, and an outdoor reading garden, according to *MinnPost.com*. The Sun Ray building, larger now by 2,500 square feet and costing \$5.5 million, also expanded its dedicated sections for children and teens, opened up the community room to after-hours activities, enhanced natural daylighting, and installed public art. Designed by LES Architects, both efforts were funded through a public-private partnership between the City of Saint Paul and the Friends of SPPL.

The **Peru Public Library**, IN, is getting ready for a yearlong renovation that will refurbish the 1902 Carnegie building, according to the *Kokomo Tribune*. The \$1.3 million work on the 10,750 square foot facility will include the installation of a new HVAC system, upgraded windows and insulation, a new elevator, additional meeting rooms, and a new auditorium, along with an open concept design. krM Architecture+ is behind the project. The library is now in its temporary storefront location in a strip mall.

The **Charles M. Bailey Public Library**, Winthrop, ME, began a \$945,000 renovation and expansion project that will enlarge the 1916 facility from 3,300 square feet to 8,400 square feet. The undertaking also includes mechanical upgrades to the heating and cooling systems, according to *Central Maine.com*. The work is expected to be completed this summer.

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Scholastic Report: Kids' Attitudes on Reading

The divide between frequent and infrequent readers is marked in Scholastic's "Kids & Family Reading Report, 5th Edition" survey, conducted in conjunction with YouGov, an Internet-based market research firm. The report found that while 51 percent of children age six to 17 are currently reading a book for fun, 97 percent of frequent readers (FR), or children who read books for fun five to seven days a week, said they are currently reading a book for fun or have just finished one (from the same age group). Meanwhile, an overwhelming 75 percent of infrequent readers (IR), or children who read books for fun less than one day a week, said they haven't read a book for fun in a while.

FRs (age six to 11) read an average of 43.4 books a year, while IRs clock in at 21.1 books annually. The gap is even more substantial as youngsters get older. Among ages 12–17, FRs read 39.6 books a year, and IRs read a mere 4.7.

Released on January 8, the report also found that 75 percent of parents with children six to 17 said that strong reading skills are the most important skill a child can have, while 54 percent of youth agreed. Parents (of children in the same age range)



responded similarly: "I wish my child would read more books for fun" (75 percent) and "I wish my child would do more things that did not involve screen time" (71 percent).

According to the report, the three most powerful predictors for frequent

reading in children age six to 17 are when they are more likely to rate themselves as "really enjoying reading," have a strong belief that reading for fun is important, and have parents who are frequent readers.

Other predictors among age six to 11 include reading aloud early and often and spending less time online using a computer. From age 12 to 17, predictors are reading a book of choice independently in school, e-reading experiences, having a large home library, having been told their reading level, and having parents involved in their reading habits.

Seventy-three percent of parents with youth age zero to five responded that they started reading aloud to their kids before age one. Sixty percent of parents with children age zero to five have received advice that children should be read aloud to from birth.

Fifty-four percent of children age zero to five are read aloud to at home five to seven days a week. In kids age six to eight and nine to 11, this figure drops to 34 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

All in all, young people want books they've chosen themselves, said 91 percent of six- to 17-year-olds. They also want books that make them laugh, according to 70 percent of respondents. Other wants: books that make them use their imagination; books that tell a made-up story; books that have characters that are smart, strong, or brave; books that teach something new; and books that have a mystery or a problem to solve.

The percentage of children who have read an ebook has increased across the board since 2010—25 percent versus 61 percent today. However, 77 percent of children who have read an ebook said that most of the books they read are in print, and nearly 65 percent said they'll always want to read books in print.

News in Brief

The **Library of Congress** acquired the archive of documentary photographer and writer **Camilo José Vergara**, born in Santiago, Chile, in 1944. More than 5,000 selected photographs will be housed in the library's Prints and Photographs Division.

Halton Hills Public Library, Ont., Canada, has selected **Innovative's Sierra Library Services Platform**. It will migrate from a Horizon system provided by SirsiDynix.

OCLC WorldShare Interlibrary Loan platform was fully integrated into the **British Library Document Supply Service**, London. This will help users of the service confirm the availability of required documents before placing an order.

The **Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University**, New Haven, CT, acquired the literary archive of dramatist **Paula Vogel**. Vogel is the first American female playwright to have her archive included in the Yale Collection of American Literature.

Fourteen fellows were chosen to participate in the **Association of Research Libraries Career Enhancement Program (CEP)**. CEP will provide MLIS students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups with hands-on experience in research libraries.

Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL), BC, Canada, signed a five-year agreement with **SirsiDynix**. GVPL selected Symphony as well as multiple BLUEcloud products.

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