

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

Ideas and Inspiration for Transforming Your Library

Transforming communities starts with transforming ourselves.

Librarians and libraries have been through a decade of great change, spurred by a revolution in technology. **Now is not the time to stop.**

We have changed how we do business. Now we must change how others see us. Marketing and communication must become as important as delivering the service.

We have a unique moment in time to transform the way the world perceives us, to build on the things that we do so well and set the stage for the next century of library service.

We know that when libraries are transformed by new services, programs, renovations or new buildings, the communities we serve are in turn transformed.

When customers realize they are getting more from their libraries, they become advocates and passionate supporters for what we do.

Change isn't easy, but it is the key to our future. I hope the ideas and suggestions in this tip sheet will inspire you.

Leslie Burger, ALA President, 2006-2007

Tips for Creating Change

1 Be passionate about libraries.

- Believe 150 percent in the power of libraries to change lives, enhance productivity, influence social policy, improve educational levels, and help businesses maintain a competitive edge.
- Be proud of working in a library. Remember librarians, library workers and library advocates are leading the charge on some of the most important policy issues of our times—filtering on the Internet, the USA Patriot Act, defending First Amendment freedoms.
- Remember, if we aren't passionate about what we do, no one else will be either.

2 Think strategically and create a vision to guide the future.

- Think competitively and creatively.
- Continually assess your library's strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify opportunities and threats that will either advance or detract from your vision.

3 Step outside the box.

- Determine what it will take to change the way people think about and react to your library, whether it's belly dancers, cooking, community forums, human rights festivals or community reads.
- Examine current practices. Are they customer-friendly?
- Consider practices of other libraries and competitors and determine what might work in your library.

4 Never stop learning.

- Transforming libraries means transforming ourselves as well.
- Take advantage of the continuing education opportunities available through ALA, your state or regional library association, regional consortia and other avenues to broaden your horizons.
- Be flexible, realistic and open to new ideas.

5 Be willing to take risks.

- Don't be afraid to take chances in the workplace.
- Ask for the money that you need. Make the case for why you need more.
- Look for creative ways to finance projects.

6 Become the change you want to see.

- Lead by example.
- Keep your eye on the vision for the library.
- Be relentless about promoting the changes you hope to implement.

7 Build a culture that welcomes and rewards change.

- Develop a team that encourages a free flow of ideas.
- Take time to retreat from day-to-day activity to learn about each other's unique strengths and talents.
- Work with your supervisor or director to help him or her achieve the operational changes needed.

8 Think all library, all the time.

- Read the newspaper, magazines, weblogs and surf the web to identify trends that might have an impact your library.
- Visit other libraries during your travels.
- Participate in professional associations.

9 Raise the library's profile.

- Engage in shameless promotion at social and business events.
- Communicate! Develop a single message that can be shared by everyone on the library staff, trustees, Friends and advocates.
- Create a strong brand or identity for your library.

10 Believe that everything is possible.

- Identify a dream and make it happen.
- Remain positive even in the face of minor setbacks.
- Never give up!

—Leslie Burger, ALA President, 2006-2007

Profiles in Change

Sandra Feinberg, Director
Middle Country Public Library
Centereach, New York
 Staff: 305 (56 full time)
 Budget: \$12.5 million
 Population served: 60,679

Sandra Feinberg knew that having a baby would change her life. What she didn't anticipate was the transformative effect it would have on her career and library.

When she returned to work as a children's librarian in the late '70s, she began to focus on parents and helping them raise happy, healthy, literate children. Realizing that she needed more expertise, Feinberg developed partnerships with schools, literacy groups and other community organizations. Today more than 200 libraries in 23 states have adopted her model known as the Family Place Libraries.

Since becoming library director in 1991, Feinberg has focused on transforming the entire library into a learning and activity center, and she continues to leverage the power of community partnerships. Last year the Suffolk Community Council named her Long Island Woman of the Year.

Feinberg is the winner of the 2007 Public Library Association (PLA) Charlie Robinson Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor to honor a public library director who has been a risk taker and change agent.

“We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten. Don't let yourself be lulled into inaction.”

Bill Gates

Transformation is powerful. The librarians profiled here are only a few of many who have risked change and reaped the benefits.

Q. How did you approach change?

Any major work we do is done in collaboration with other experts in their fields, starting with the Parent/Child Workshop. Everything grew from there. We also intensified efforts to tell our story. A politician told me, “Get on the offensive and never get off.” Now we've become a place that people come to and say, “Will you try this?” People are constantly calling.

Q. What was your biggest challenge?

Continually re-inventing the library and ourselves. It's exhilarating but exhausting. I used to have an occasional slow, boring day. Now there is no downtime. We're on the front line the entire time.

Q. What advice would you give to another library?

You can't do it alone. You have to partner with community groups/nonprofits/schools. Stay open. Try not to say “no” right away. Just say, “Let me think about that,” or “Let me do some research and see if that's been tried anywhere else.” Never be afraid to call on other people and ask them what they think. Let other people help you with the new reality of a public library. When you ask their opinion, you get their support.

Q. What resources would you recommend?

- Other libraries—many have undertaken some wonderful initiatives. Calling them will save a lot of energy.
- People—especially potential partners. If we get an idea, it's usually because someone has come to us.
- “Family-Centered Library Handbook,” Sandra Feinberg, New York: Neal-Schuman, 2007.
- *Beyond Books: The Middle Country Public Library* (DVD), Centereach, N.Y.: Middle Country Public Library, 2007. Contact peterersonjoan@mcpl.lib.ny.us.

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www.mcpl.lib.ny.us

Lucy Hansen, Lead Librarian**Biblioteca Las Américas****Mercedes, Texas**

Students: 1,500 (two high schools)

Budget: \$590,953

Staff: 9 (3 full-time librarians)

Biblioteca Las Américas moved from a cramped 4,500 square-foot space to a 33,000 square-foot freestanding facility on Jan. 1, 1998. But the physical transformation was only the beginning.

With support from an Empowerment Zone grant, the staff expanded from four to nine and the library extended its hours for student and public use. Students attend rock concerts in the library's main area. Dance groups and string quartets practice in conference rooms. Students give presentations, and community organizations hold meetings in the 128-seat lecture hall. ESL and GED classes are offered in the evenings and on Saturdays.

The library also sponsors Viva, an award-winning student-peer tutor project with a goal of increasing community health literacy. The project has evolved to include a summer institute, online symposium and school-wide health fair.

The library's online services include a rich web site, online catalog, databases with home access, email reference service, and an online reservation and service request system.

The library received the 2006 American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National School Library Media Program of the Year Award sponsored by Follett Library Resources

Q. How did you approach change?

We see change as a constant and actually seek it out by listening to our students and looking for ways to reach them and meet their needs. Generally we plan very carefully, using a logic model to focus on outcomes. We may make an action plan with a detailed timeline that lists each action, persons responsible, resources needed, and evaluation method. We also look at our district plan, state and national standards, and conduct surveys and needs assessments.

Q. What was your biggest challenge?

First, involving students, staff, administration, parents, the school board and community in helping to establish our vision, discussing the issues, focusing on outcomes, choosing how to move forward, taking the leap of making a decision, locating funding, and then planning through all the steps down to the tiniest details.

Second, ensuring implementation by taking action, overcoming the force of habit, tackling the paperwork, and focusing on the positive throughout the process. You need to have excellent staff who share the vision and are forward-thinking. You need to hire talented, creative, student-centered, cooperative people, and you may need to help those who cannot adapt find another home.

Q. What advice would you give to other libraries?

- Listen to all of your patrons and to your staff. Brainstorm together and talk things through. Think together about why you are contemplating this change and what outcome(s) you hope to achieve. Where is it that you want to be? What is your goal? How will you know when you have reached it?
- Once you reach consensus, make a detailed Plan A, along with contingency plans B and C. Learn technology. Implement the plan. Act!
- When you make mistakes, admit them and make things right.
- Carry on with good cheer and always look to the next level.

Q. What resources would you recommend?

- Outreach Evaluation Resource Center, National Network of Libraries of Medicine
<http://nmlm.gov/evaluation/>
- *AASL Advocacy Toolkit*: www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/toolkits/aasladvocacy.htm

For more information:
lucy.hansen@stisd.net
<http://bla.stisd.net>

Richard Meyer, Director
Georgia Tech Library & Information Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Students: 18,000
 Budget: \$12 million
 Staff: 120 (35 librarians)

Six years ago, the Georgia Tech library had fallen off the campus map.

Library visits had dropped an average of 5 percent a year for the past 15 years, with students and faculty complaining that the library had become irrelevant. The library interiors were drab, with collections dominating the space. The library was not part of campus discussions about technology,

Today the library is again recognized as the heart and soul of the campus. Faculty praise the library's digital delivery systems. Computer login records show that almost every student visited the library at least once during the last school year. One student reported turning down a Fulbright scholarship at another campus to attend Georgia Tech because of the library's information commons area. A columnist for the campus newspaper cited the library for its efforts to gather and use student input—claiming it was the first time she had seen that happen.

The library was awarded a 2007 Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Excellence in Academic Libraries Award sponsored by Blackwell's Book Services.

Q. How did you approach change?

We began to listen to students and faculty. For example, we had a team go to five study areas around campus to interview students. It wasn't about asking, "What can we do to help you?" It was to find out what they were doing and figure out how we could help them do it better. We now have a Student Advisory Council representing various groups. Our students and faculty told us to move swiftly and effectively to provide digital content and to make our services evident and relevant. A five-year strategic plan was crafted with both librarian and staff participation.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Charles Darwin

Q. What was your biggest challenge?

We had to work a lot with the computer center. They speak a different language. It took several weeks for us to begin to understand each other. Now we work very effectively as a team.

Q. What advice would you give to another library?

- Stay current. Know what faculty are involved in, what's changing in the world that impacts us.
- Bring in experts to share.
- Focus on what is most important and do a couple of things really well. People want to support successful things.
- Give your staff free rein. Let them figure out what the needs are and how to address them.
- Become the nexus of engagement with undergraduates. Provide them with the tools they need to succeed.

Q. What resources would you recommend?

- *Libraries Designed for Learning*, Scott Bennett. Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), 2003, No. 122.
- *Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space*, CLIR, 2005, No. 129.

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<http://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/12982>

Lucinda Zoe, Director
Hostos Community College/
City University of New York
Bronx, New York

Number of students: 4,500
 (60% Hispanic/Latino, mostly female)

Budget: \$875,000

Staff: 15 full-time (8 library faculty)

When Lucinda Zoe says her library could be “the poster child for transformation,” she isn’t kidding. When she arrived in 2001, the library had had 10 chief librarians in 10 years. Two staff librarians had not spoken to each other in five years. There were no Technical Services, no instructional programs. The library was in such bad shape that the college was in danger of losing accreditation.

Today the library is the “go-to” place for faculty and students. All freshmen are required to take the library’s three information literacy workshops. The library publishes an award-winning poetry journal and regularly hosts open mics, poetry and other events. On its home page, the library asks, “How are we doing?” and regularly receives comments such as, “I think this library gives so much support to all students. Keep up the good work.”

The library received a 2007 ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award sponsored by Blackwell’s Book Services.

Q. How did you approach change?

We latched on to the college mission statement. We identified the most important initiatives—student retention, writing across the curriculum, general education, language acquisition—and attached ourselves to them. The turning point was investing some extra funds from the Chancellor’s office, around \$6,000, in professional and staff development. We had a two-day “Professional and Program Development” retreat in June 2004 to examine our organizational culture, our programs, and our work life. We hired an excellent facilitator/consultant. The next year we

had a second retreat, hired the same facilitator and did strategic planning. We identified five strategic areas that we all agreed we wanted to focus on, and then set up management teams to identify key objectives and develop a three-year plan for each area.

Q. What was your biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge was recasting the library image. The perception of the library was so negative. It was a huge culture shift to even acknowledge there was a library, that there was anything in it and that the library faculty could be an active partner in the learning process. Students didn’t use it. Faculty didn’t use it. They didn’t refer people there. We’ve had to keep putting ourselves out there.

Q. What advice would you give to another library?

- Invest as much in your support staff as you do in your professional staff. When the message is that you care about them, want them to be happy, they give back. It creates synergy. Empowering and investing in them is the key to transformation.
- If they don’t give you money, go find it—write grants!
- Tie everything you do to the mission of the college. You are the best friend of the college. You want to make that visible and clear in your reports to the president and provost. It’s basic management stuff but we forget it.

Q. What resources would you recommend?

- ACRL Harvard Leadership Institute
www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlvents/upcomingevents/
- Frye Leadership Institute
 Sponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources, EDUCAUSE, and Emory University
www.fryeinstitute.org

For more information:
LZOE@hostos.cuny.edu
www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/

Lessons from the Change Masters

While their libraries are very different, the four directors profiled have more than a little in common when it comes to transforming their libraries.

- All recognize a need for libraries to become more active partners in learning and to create environments and programs that support that role.
- Whether it's through surveys, focus groups or chatting one-on-one, they make a point of listening—and responding to what they hear.
- They are generous in giving credit to their staff members and recognizing the unique talents and energy each brings.
- All say investment in staff development is critical.
- Communication is a priority—with their staffs, as well as with external constituents.
- They see change as an ongoing process. Nothing is so good that it can't be improved.
- They look to other libraries for inspiration and guidance and are glad to give others the benefit of their experience.
- They appreciate the power of partnerships.
- All have strategic plans.
- While lack of funds can be an obstacle, they say it also can spur creativity. All are adept at seeking outside funding through grants, gifts and partnerships.
- They evaluate constantly and don't hesitate to make adjustments.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Today's library users enjoy an unprecedented array of tools and services on- and off-line. Yet the future of libraries and free access to information cannot be taken for granted.

Too many people still are not aware of the resources and assistance available at their community, school or campus library—or choose to turn elsewhere. Too many decision-makers question the value of a library in an electronic age.

Transformation begins with a strategic plan, a mission, vision and services that both address and anticipate needs. But it's not enough if libraries are to be recognized as essential, relevant services. There must also be a plan to communicate library services in a consistent and powerful way. Put the two plans together and you have a marketing plan.

Marketing is about creating an experience that people will seek out in person or online. It means getting smart about how we communicate—having a clear and consistent message, identifying key audiences and getting strategic about how we reach out to them.

Marketing encompasses communication in all forms—advocacy, advertising, publicity, partnerships, public relations, print, electronic, word of mouth. Getting savvy about how we use these tools and techniques is key to our future.

“Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.”

Unknown

“You really can change the world if you care enough.”

Marian Wright Edelman

Three Things You Should Know About Marketing

1. Marketing is everyone's job.
2. It's about people—not what's on the shelf.
3. Listening is as important as selling.

Getting Started @ your library®

Learn more about how to develop a marketing/communication plan and find tools you can use in the @ your library® toolkits developed as part of ALA's Campaign for America's Libraries.

Tools for public, school and academic libraries can be found at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary. You'll find sample messages, downloadable art and a wealth of strategies for reaching out to students, parents, media, funders and more.

Tools You Can Use

ALA Advocacy Center: Issues & Advocacy
www.ala.org

Library Technology Reports:
www.techsource.ala.org/ltr/

Smart Libraries Newsletter:
www.techsource.ala.org/sln/

State of America's Libraries: www.ala.org/2007state

ALA Communications Handbook for Librarians:
www.ala.org/ala/pio/mediarelationsa/availablepiomat/commhandbook.htm

For Academic Libraries

The Changing Academic Library: Operations, Cultures, Environments. John Budd.
ACRL Publications in Librarianship, No. 56.

Constancy and Change in the Worklife of Research University Librarians.
Rebecca Watson-Boone. ACRL Publications in Librarianship, No. 51.

For Public Libraries

The Small but Powerful Guide to Winning Big Support for Your Library: www.ala.org/ala/olos/oloscommittees/rnt/advocacy.htm

"Technology for Results: Developing Service-Based Plans," Diane Mayo. Chicago: American Library Association, August, 2005.

"Creating Policies for Results: From Chaos to Clarity," Sandra Nelson and June Garcia. Chicago: American Library Association, 2003.

"The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach," Sandra Nelson. Chicago: American Library Association, 2001.

For Youth Librarians

"New Directions in Library Services to Young Adults," Patrick Jones. Chicago: Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), 2002.

"Excellence in Library Service to Young Adults," 5th edition. Chicago: Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), 2007.
www.alastore.ala.org

Partnership for 21st Century Skills:
www.21stcenturyskills.org

YALSA Wiki:
http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/Main_Page

More Help

For more resources to help transform your library, check out the following ALA units.

ALA Editions

www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/publishing/alaeditions/editions.htm

ALA Graphics

www.alastore.ala.org/

American Association of School Librarians (AASL)

www.ala.org/aasl/

Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS)

www.ala.org/alcts/

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)

www.ala.org/alsc/

Association for Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA)

www.ala.org/alta/

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)

www.ala.org/acrl/

Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA)

www.ala.org/ascla/

Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA)

www.ala.org/lama/

Library and Information Technology Association (LITA)

www.ala.org/lita/

Office for Diversity (OFD)

www.ala.org/ala/diversity/diversity.htm

Office of Government Relations (OGR)

www.ala.org/ala/washoff/contacttwo/ogr/ogrofficegovernment.cfm

Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP)

www.ala.org/ala/washoff/contacttwo/oitp/oitpofficeinformation.cfm

Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF)

www.ala.org/oif/

Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS)

www.ala.org/ala/olos/literacyoutreach.htm

Office for Research and Statistics (ORS)

www.ala.org/ala/ors/researchstatistics.htm

Public Information Office (PIO)

www.ala.org/pio/

Public Programs Office (PPO)

www.ala.org/ala/ppo/publicprograms.htm

Public Library Association (PLA)

www.ala.org/pla/

Reference and User Services Association (RUSA)

www.ala.org/rusa/

Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

www.ala.org/alcts/

Washington Office

www.ala.org/ala/washoff/washingtonoffice.cfm

**“They say that time
changes things, but you
actually have to change
them yourself.”**

Andy Warhol

“Nothing endures but change.”

Heraclitus

**“If you don't like change,
you're going to like irrelevance
even less.”**

General Eric Shinseki

**“Tears will get you
sympathy; sweat will get
you change.”**

Jesse Jackson

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