



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

PUBLIC
PROGRAMS
OFFICE

ALA American Library Association

**“THE TRUTH IS LIBRARIES
ARE RAUCOUS
CLUBHOUSES FOR FREE
SPEECH, CONTROVERSY
AND COMMUNITY.”**

- Author and comedian Paula Poundstone

The stereotype of the quiet library is a thing of the past. More libraries are hosting programs that ignite conversation and healthy debate, enabling them to represent the whole community and stand as stronger and more inclusive community centers.

Cover photos courtesy of Oklahoma State University, Andover (Ohio) Public Library, Somerset (N.J.) Public Library and the Queens Museum.

THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION PUBLIC PROGRAMS OFFICE (PPO) PROMOTES CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF LIBRARY SERVICE.

Numbers give us a bird's-eye view of the communities reached through ALA's Public Programs Office. But every community is unique. In the coming pages we will look at five institutions that implemented PPO programs in 2015, reaching their communities in new and engaging ways.

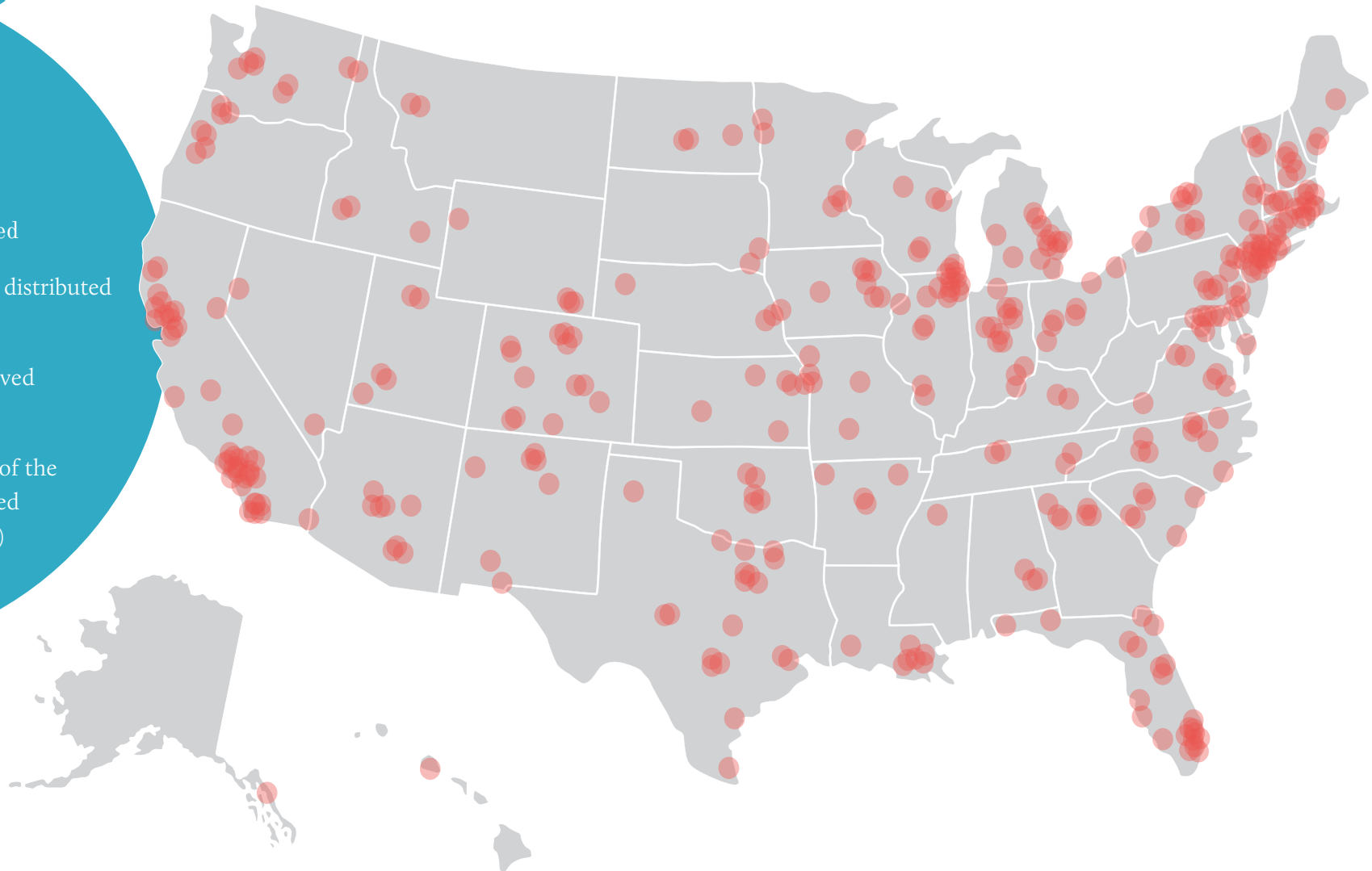
PPO BY THE NUMBERS 9/1/14 – 8/31/15

381: Total programs awarded or administered

\$1,036,500: Total funds distributed

710: Population of the smallest community served (Ignacio, Colorado)

8,400,000: Population of the largest community served (New York, New York)



HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

POP. 125,017



“I would describe our role not just as a place for people to come but for being a change agent and an agent of hope in the city of Hartford”

Matthew Poland

Former CEO, Hartford Public Library

LIBRARIES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Like all cities, Hartford has its challenges. Hartford’s library is ready to step in and help. After years of economic hardship and social divisions in some of its more underserved communities, some residents felt a rift forming between them and the police. Already practiced at community engagement work, Hartford Public Library was one of ten public libraries chosen to take part in ALA’s Libraries Transforming Communities Public Innovators Cohort, an intensive, 18-month training program that taught libraries new ways to address challenges facing their communities.

In Hartford, library staff began by bringing together residents

for eight candid conversations about their feelings on Hartford, their hopes for the city, and the challenges they face. Residents’ chief concerns centered on violence, public safety, and the relationship between residents and the police. Seeking to break down those barriers, the library invited area police and community members, ranging in age from 18 to 87, to a dialogue about what residents liked about their community and what they would like to change, as well as each groups’ role in making those changes happen. The conversation centered on how police and residents can work together, rather than what separated them.

Photo credit: Judy Wyman Kelly



FLINT, MICHIGAN

POP. 99,763



“**Flint is writing a new story, a story and a future its young people will own. The Flint Public Library [brought] StoryCorps @ your library to Flint to help our community celebrate its remarkable past while embracing a transformative future by connecting the voices of young people with the voices of their elders to imagine Flint together.**”

Kay Schwartz

Director of library services, Flint Public Library

STORYCORPS @ YOUR LIBRARY

When the city of Flint announced a new 20-year master plan in 2013, the Flint Public Library recognized itself as an integral part of the transformation. As part of its vision for change, the library applied to be part of StoryCorps @ your library, a project that provided libraries with resources and training to implement StoryCorps’ unique interview methods in their communities.

StoryCorps @ your library gave Flint residents a chance to have their voices heard and their stories told—and their stories were fascinating. One participant talked about growing up as an African American child during the civil rights movement in

1960s Mississippi; another spoke on the lasting impact of losing her father and her home to fire on Christmas Eve; a third related his feelings when he was forced to give up hockey after an injury and then found happiness and health through dance. The oral histories were shared throughout the community and will be archived at the American Folk Life Center at the Library of Congress.

Photo credits: Kay Schwartz

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

POP. 177,994



“*Café Recuerdos* is a place to find commonality. We wanted to provide something familiar to help spark conversation and invite all of the varied stories from our community’s Latinos.”

Marta V. Martínez

Executive director, Rhode Island Latino Arts

LATINO AMERICANS: 500 YEARS OF HISTORY

Since the 1950s, Rhode Island’s Latino population has grown considerably; today, representatives of more than 20 Latin American countries call the Ocean State home. In 2015, Providence residents found common ground over cups of coffee at the Southside Cultural Center’s *Café Recuerdos*, or traveling memory cafe, sponsored by Rhode Island Latino Arts in partnership with the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. The Rhode Island Council for the Humanities was a recipient of Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, a nationwide initiative produced in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities,

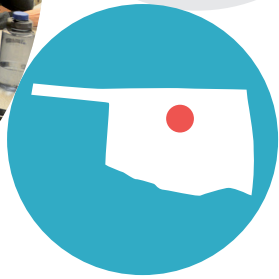
which supports the exploration of the rich and varied history and experiences of Latinos in the United States. The portable coffee cart-turned-art installation, designed by Cuban-American artist Ana Flores, was created to inspire conversation about the Latino experience in Rhode Island. Participants shared their hopes and regrets upon leaving their native countries, their experiences and discoveries as new residents of the US, and even their reactions to seeing snow for the first time (like in a movie, said one young participant). The stories were as unique as the individuals that told them, but also shared common threads.

Photo credit: Marta V. Martínez



**STILLWATER,
OKLAHOMA**

POP. 47,186



“**The Science Café series delivered using OSU professors at the top of their fields and experts from the State of Oklahoma. It was a very informative series that really didn’t take sides but showed the process involved thoroughly from a variety of perspectives. The depth of information given was impressive and yet presented so that most in the audience could understand.**”

Angela Spotts
Stillwater resident

SCIENCE CAFÉ AT OSU

In Oklahoma, where the oil industry is critical to the economy, hydraulic fracturing has left some communities divided. Some residents point to this controversial method of oil extraction, also known as fracking, as the cause for a spike in earthquake activity in recent years, as well as other environmental issues.

Wanting to address these concerns, the Oklahoma State University Library created a series of programs to put not only students, but community members, face-to-face with the experts who could help answer their questions. Over the course of six evenings, Science Café at OSU: Potential Impacts of Oil

and Gas Exploration featured campus professors discussing such topics as Hydraulic Fracturing: Implications for Land, Water and Communities, Drilling Basics, Communities and Housing, and Costs and Benefits. This informative, topical and collaborative Science Cafés program garnered OSU Library ALA’s 2015 Excellence in Library Programming Award. Supported by ALA’s Cultural Communities Fund, the award recognizes a library that demonstrates excellence by providing programs that have community impact and respond to community needs.

Photos courtesy of Oklahoma State University



EPHRATA, PENNSYLVANIA

POP. 13,516

“The Ephrata Public Library wishes to be a leader within the community by giving free access to honest and forthright information, to be a catalyst for positive change and to help define what it means to be human. We cannot change peoples’ beliefs, but we can be the vehicle to promote education and enhancement of peoples’ lives.”

Penny Talbert

Executive director, Ephrata Public Library

EXPLORING HUMAN ORIGINS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

Staff at the Ephrata Public Library knew they were in for a challenge when they applied to host the Exploring Human Origins traveling exhibition. Created by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, the exhibition invites audiences to explore milestones in the evolutionary journey of becoming human—from walking upright, creating technology and eating new foods, to brain enlargement and the development of symbolic language and complex societies—milestones that define the unique position of humans in the history of life. But many Ephrata residents fundamentally disagreed with the ideas put forth in the exhibition.

Library leaders saw not only the challenge that lay ahead, but also the opportunity. Instead of shying away from the divisions in the community, the library embraced them, partnering with members of the local clergy as well as area museums and colleges to present a total of fifteen public programs.

While the programming was not supported by all members of the community, Executive Director Penny Talbert found “the most valuable take-away from the Exploring Human Origins exhibition, by far, was that people were able to have respectful conversation with each other.”

Photos courtesy of Ephrata Public Library and Matt Ferry

JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT PROGRAMMINGLIBRARIAN.ORG

ProgrammingLibrarian.org is a place for library professionals to share, learn and be inspired to present excellent programming for their communities. Created in 2008 with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Programming Librarian was relaunched in 2015 with a new look and improved features.



Photos (l to r) courtesy of:
Enoch Pratt Free Library, Madlyn Schneider, LP Fisher
Public Library, Chicago Public Library, Los Angeles
Public Library, Livingston Parish Library, Bedtime
Math Foundation, South Sioux City Public Library

HOW DO CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE GET STARTED IN COMMUNITIES?

PCPAC AND CCF

For the programs featured on the preceding pages, the Public Programs Office relied upon the support and expertise of an experienced group of programming librarians. **The ALA Public and Cultural Programs Advisory Committee (PCPAC)** promotes excellence in cultural programming; assists library staff in becoming more effective providers of cultural programming; identifies and disseminates resources for cultural programming; and promotes the Cultural Communities Fund.

More programs are supported every year by the **Cultural Communities Fund (CCF)**, an endowment started in 2003 as a challenge grant from the

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support cultural programming in libraries. Since 2003, funding has grown to more than \$1.9 million, supporting:

- professional development opportunities for libraries that address practical issues related to cultural and community programs
- awards and grants that recognize excellence in library programming
- development and promotion of effective library programming models

To make a contribution—and join the more than 500 librarians, foundations and corporations that already have—visit ala.org/ccf.

FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

PPO's work with, and impact on, communities large and small would not be possible without the following funders and partners.

- Afterschool Alliance
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Cincinnati Museum Center
- FINRA Investor Education Foundation
- Folger Shakespeare Library
- The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- John Templeton Foundation
- Lifetime Arts, Inc.
- Lunar & Planetary Institute
- Mount Holyoke College Library
- National Constitution Center
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Library of Medicine
- National Science Foundation
- Oklahoma State University Library
- Peter Buck Human Origins Fund
- Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History
- Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History
- Space Science Institute
- StoryCorps
- WETA Washington, DC



ALA American Library Association

Public Programs Office
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Phone • 312.280.5045
Toll-free • 800.545.2433
Fax • 312.280.5759

publicprograms@ala.org
www.ala.org/publicprograms

