IMPACT OF NEVADA LIBRARIES

Meeting the Marks of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

2019
A child sitting in the storytime circle. A spirited group discussion. A businessman researching new markets. Journeys of knowledge and discovery happen every day in Nevada’s libraries. Nationwide, libraries are offering spaces and services that are transforming communities. In fact, Mesquite, Nevada opened doors to a new library campus last summer and its spaces are already showing return on investment with the expansion of their One Stop Career Center, assisting job seekers and employers. The role of libraries is wedded to the changing economic landscape, both locally and globally. The shift of the last two decades to a global information economy demands different skills and lifetime learning for the 21st century workforce. Libraries offer rich and authentic content and provide immediate accessibility to the latest knowledge. Library staff foster lifelong learning as well as help people maintain and build marketable skills. To that end, libraries are becoming more purposeful and intentional in addressing learning needs of the new economy.

Technology and media literacy skills, communication skills, cross-disciplinary thinking skills, health literacy skills, financial and business skills and more can be acquired in the library. Of course, libraries will never replace institutions of formal learning, but the reality is that people today spend much of their lives learning outside the walls of the formal classroom. In modern libraries teenagers as well as adults can participate in programs that enhance formal education and better prepare them for the workforce.

Elected officials have long recognized that libraries, as trusted community centers, are essential to building and sustaining healthy, vibrant, thriving societies that can help advance critical community priorities. A nationwide survey of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), revealed these prime areas of opportunity for library/local government collaboration: early childhood education, internet access & virtual learning, digital literacy, and primary & secondary school attainment. This report highlights how well Nevada’s libraries are providing solutions to community needs in these strategic areas.
Governor Sisolak said in his January 2019 State of the State address that it is his priority to make sure that “Nevada’s economic recovery reaches every family, that our schools prepare every child to reach their potential...we are also working to ensure that we give our students the skill sets required to succeed in these industries, with STEM education being more important than ever before.”

The Nevada State Library is working to achieve these goals so all Nevadans are better educated, workforce ready, and prepared for higher paying jobs of the future.

Education and workforce development are shifting globally to include emerging technology such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which allow for immersive learning in virtual environments. Nevada’s libraries have always been leaders in introducing emerging technology to the public (as we previously did with PCs and the internet) and thanks to the Nevada Legislature we were able to fund a pilot program for emerging technology called Nevada XR Libraries. This pilot includes 16 libraries, providing patrons and community education partners with access to extended reality (XR) equipment and programming.

The State Library put together an ecosystem of non-profits and emerging technology companies who delivered the pilot project at a financial loss. We have all been operating in good faith that this pilot would succeed, but we knew that it was not guaranteed. Here are just some of our successes that have moved far beyond our hopes:

Justin Worthy, a Churchill County School District speech pathologist, has been coming to the school library in search of something to help his student, Logan, improve his communication skills. Through the use of virtual reality programs like theBlu – which immerses you in an underwater landscape – Justin has seen a huge leap in Logan’s progress. Being in the HTC Vive headset helps the student focus on what he alone is seeing and to discuss it clearly with his speech pathologist. Logan’s instructional assistant and parents have both reported seeing significant progress at school and at home since Logan began his weekly visits to the library.

The trendsetting doesn’t stop with the virtual reality technology – the Nevada State Library is also leading the way in a first-in-the-world virtual reality cataloging project. Kelly Robertson, the Nevada State Library’s cataloging and government publications librarian, has been working with Lifeliqe, the world’s largest 3D STEM learning publisher, to create detailed catalog records and upload them to WorldCat, a worldwide library catalog maintained by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). Kelly’s work makes virtual reality even more accessible to library users throughout the world and highlights the educational nature of the technology.

Relying on the transformative partnership with XR Libraries and Lifeliqe, the Nevada State Library’s role in the pilot continues to be one of development and guidance. With so many virtual reality (VR) experiences available, it is essential to provide subject expertise to ensure that quality and authoritative VR content is provided to Nevadans, especially in an educational context.
Digital Literacy

Statewide Projects: Coding in the Library

Coding, or computer programming, is a digital literacy skill that has become as important as reading and writing in the 21st century. According to MIT professor Mitchel Resnick, coding is a gateway to broader learning. “When you learn to read, you can then read to learn. And it’s the same thing with coding: If you learn to code, you can code to learn.”

To support learning opportunities for this new and vital literacy, the Nevada State Library has partnered with NCLab, a Reno-based technology company, to 1) provide all public libraries with access to NCLab’s web-based, all-ages, computer programming and 3D modeling courses, and 2) create a series of in-person and online coding workshops for frontline library staff. Thanks to this initiative, most libraries in Nevada are now offering coding classes, camps and clubs. Learning to code means learning how to think creatively, reason systematically and work collaboratively.

While community engagement is an important benefit of coding camps and classes, coding is recognized as a critical component of 21st century STEM job skills. The national average salary for IT jobs is around $80,000 and the number of jobs is set to expand by at least 13 percent from 2014 to 2024 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Library Spotlight: LVCCD - Building the Next Generation Workforce in Libraries

The Brookings Institute reports that STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) industries represent an important source of high-value economic activity for Nevada, but the state suffers from critical skills gaps in the current workforce. More importantly, there is a lack of a strong pipeline system that prepares the next generation for STEM careers, demand for which in 2018 was estimated to be nearly 50,000 jobs.

Las Vegas Clark County Library District brought 12 STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) camps and 80 interactive STEAM programs to youth ages 4-14. Many participants come from economically disadvantaged families with few STEAM activity opportunities. Each program was age-appropriate and project-based learning activities crossed many engineering disciplines, captured the curiosity of kids, and built skill sets that are needed in next generation jobs. The main goal of the project was to build skills in problem-solving, and higher-level thinking skills, all vital tools for STEAM-related tools and careers.

Participant surveys showed strong results in three areas:

- 96% of respondents said they increased their knowledge of a STEAM subject.
- 82% said they learned something interesting about a STEAM career.
- 83% said they identified a STEAM career path they wish to pursue.
Library Spotlight: Henderson District Public Libraries

The Henderson District Public Library was able to provide their very first Community Scanning Day program at the Paseo Verde Library branch in April of 2018. The purpose of the Scanning Day event was to grow the library’s community-built Digital Collections and to teach basic preservation techniques to library patrons and community members who have little or no access to preservation equipment. Participants were encouraged to bring in up to 10 items, preferably family memorabilia such as photographs or documents to be digitized and preserved by library staff with the hopes of adding relevant content to the Digital Collections.

The inaugural event drew 28 participants who saw 170 individual items scanned. Unfortunately only 6 items met the criteria for inclusion in the Digital Collection, but the remaining items were able to be scanned and preserved for the community members, who were grateful for the service. After the event, the Library’s Digital Collections website saw a 45% increase in usage. The event also showed how many patrons would benefit from scanning and preservation services at the library, as several patrons asked for additional events or individual appointments to scan and preserve materials.

Library Spotlight: White Pine Library

The White Pine County Library used an LSTA grant to purchase a 3D printer to use in conjunction with their NCLab coding club and their experiences highlight how coding is a gateway to broader learning.

White Pine County reported that although they usually target ages 10 through 18, they soon discovered there were many adults interested in the coding and 3D printing as well. Two of the oldest participants are in their 80s and have been the most dedicated in attending the workshops. In fact, they are the farthest in the coding program! It has been exciting to see the mix of generation interaction.

One patron (in his 80s) used to keep pretty much to himself. Since his involvement with the coding and 3D printing workshops, he has opened up to library staff and others.

Every 3D printing project brings excitement throughout the library. Patrons discover the print in action and stand to watch in amazement. The library has had individuals come out of the meeting and study rooms to witness the 3D printer in action.
Internet Access & Virtual Learning

The Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund (E-Rate) assists schools and public libraries in obtaining affordable internet access and technology. Program discounts range from 20-90%. In large part to the efforts of the Nevada Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation, and Technology (OSIT), Nevada libraries are already beginning to see the benefits of E-Rate: as of January 2019, 50% of Nevada’s public libraries are participating in the program while several more are exploring implementation.

**Why this matters:** Technology and internet access are increasingly important to modern life yet due to cost and/or geographic location, not every community in the state has reliable internet technology, connectivity or bandwidth. This lack of equitable access is known as the digital divide and E-Rate can help solve for this problem. “The state E-Rate team has been amazing in working with us to understand the process, and to submit a qualifying application. We are excited about the benefits that E-Rate funding will provide for our patrons, and very grateful for the role that the E-Rate team played in the process,” said Forrest Lewis, North Las Vegas Library District Director.

**Library Spotlight: University of Nevada, Reno - Rural Access to Health Information**

**Community Need:** Library patrons are often ill-equipped to navigate the overwhelming amount of web based health information, much of which is unreliable, biased, commercially motivated, or out of date.

**Solution:** Rural library patrons view their public libraries as trusted community resources. With this in mind, the UNR Savitt Medical Library, in collaboration with the Lyon County Library, conducted a Lyon County health needs assessment. Savitt Medical Library specialists then taught frontline library staff how to effectively understand the technology and health needs of their community’s unique demographics. They then created a targeted training and a learning guide to make the process of finding credible, authoritative online health information, for staff and patrons, easier and more productive.

**Results:** Through community assessment and targeted trainings, this project 1) provided a starting point for librarians to understand their patron demographics as well as their unique health information needs and technology skill levels, and 2) taught essential 21st century digital literacy skills and search strategies that empowered patrons to find credible online health information.

**Why this matters:** In remote and rural areas, where lack of local healthcare options results in “medical deserts,” the need for reliable health information is especially significant. Libraries, as trusted community centers, can fill in critical gaps in our social safety nets.
Early Childhood Education

The first five years are critical to childhood development and Nevada’s libraries are there to help nurture curious young minds. In partnership with local community organizations, libraries offer welcoming spaces and a wide range of programs geared specifically to young children, families and caregivers that emphasize the social, emotional, core motor skills needed for reading and school success. Libraries also can provide a welcoming venue for parental support networks, connecting families to community health and educational organizations and resources, and ensuring Nevada’s children get the foundations and essential skills to prepare them for productive and meaningful lives.

On the horizon is a Nevada State Library-sponsored early and family literacy pilot initiative that will provide a comprehensive, flexible, and community driven educational support model to library staff, parents, caregivers, and community partners - stay tuned and check out nsla.libguides.com often for more information.

Library Spotlight: North Las Vegas - Learn & Play Kits

Community Need: Play is a significant part of every child's development, as it provides the foundation for reading and writing skills. It also helps with the development of a child's social, emotional, physical, and mental abilities.

Solution: To encourage that development, North Las Vegas Library District purchased educational toys, specifically for children under the age of 5, to be rotated through their three branches.

Results: Survey and observation revealed that all patrons found the play area to be a positive learning experience for children:

1. Storytime attendance increased at all branches.
3. Some families stayed for an hour or more in the play area.
4. More families returned weekly for storytime and stayed longer, forming deeper relationships with each other and the librarians.

Why this matters: Libraries are places of active learning. Incorporating carefully curated play opportunities into early learning activities adds an additional level of service for children and families and strengthened community relationships.

Ash Michaels plays with an ABC puzzle at the North Las Vegas Library.
Library Spotlight: Mineral County Library - AWE Early Literacy Tablets

**Community Need:** In this small community library, it is difficult to schedule early literacy programs that meet parent and caregiver scheduling needs, so a flexible, user driven resource was needed to ensure that the community’s littlest members were learning critical foundational skills.

**Solution:** AWE Early Learning stations were purchased. These are award-winning bilingual technology platforms specifically designed for ages 2-8. These machines are intuitive, child-safe, and offer engaging content in STEM, reading/writing, art, music and social studies.

**Results:** Mineral County’s youngest patrons are now able to engage in quality learning opportunities, at their own times, at their own learning pace. Adult’s conflicting schedules are no longer an obstacle to learning.

**Why this matters:**

“As a retired teacher I find wonderful information available that I didn't have in the 60s through the 80s. These machines are a great assistance in increasing our learning.”

“I have watched my daughter, who is autistic, play for an hour at a time. I'm amazed at her enjoyment of some of the more academic "games".”

A 5-year-old, hearing-impaired child and his little sister: “Ellie and I are going to learn!”

“Because of the Early Literacy Library Program, my grandchild has skipped a whole grade in school!”

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**AWE Early Literacy Tablets**

Pershing County, Mineral County, White Pine County, Amargosa Valley, Churchill County, Douglas County, Las Vegas/Clark County, Henderson, Washoe County, & Elko-Lander-Eureka

**Bilingual Storytime**

Carson City, Lyon County, Humboldt County

**Baby/Family Storytime**

Pahrump County, Las Vegas/Clark County, Washoe County, Elko-Lander-Eureka, Humboldt County, North Las Vegas

**Launchpad Early Learning Stations**

Henderson, Pershing County

**1000 Books Before Kindergarten**

Washoe County, Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas/Clark County

**Raising Las Vegas/Mind in the Making**

Las Vegas/Clark County

**Educational tablets are a great early literacy tool for some children.**
A strong, diverse economy and a skilled, productive workforce are built upon a strong educational system. Yet for many years, Nevada students have scored poorly on national educational proficiency assessments. As trusted and safe spaces for all community members, libraries are natural community allies when it comes to supporting school success and providing out-of-school time educational opportunities. Statewide and local library-based programs and initiatives, such as summer reading, online high schools, career exploration software, and computer coding camps help students attain their educational goals and become leaders, entrepreneurs, and job creators in Nevada’s new economy.

The summer reading program is an excellent example of libraries stepping up to fill a gap in their communities’ educational needs. By keeping children reading and learning during the summer they could help prevent “summer slide,” the regression of academic skills that are common, especially in at-risk populations, between school years. The costs of summer slide in lost time, lost resources and lost achievements are critical and can be overwhelming to educators. Libraries, as community partners in education and lifelong learning, are equally critical in halting summer slide and reinforcing primary and secondary school attainment.

Over time, summer reading has expanded in scope to include year-round lifelong learning opportunities for all ages. Libraries are also offering programs that build skills in social and emotional learning, focus and self-control, communication, creative problem solving, analytical thinking, and team building. While not purely academic, these skill sets are essential for developmental growth and achievement. In fiscal years 2016 and 2017, nearly 100,000 Nevadans participated in 7,500 different summer reading programs. This participation helps nurture curious minds, leads to broad and deep experiences, encourages connections and ultimately strengthens our communities.
Public libraries are active supporters of workforce development in their communities, offering free computer and internet access, resume writing classes, and career exploration through STEAM programming and makerspaces. A prime example of library and community workforce initiatives is the partnership that the Las Vegas Valley libraries have with Nevada Workforce Connections One Stop Career Centers. Thanks to the leadership of the Las Vegas Clark County Library District (LVCCLD), four of their library branches now have One-Stop Centers, providing patrons with all of the tools and resources they'll need to land their dream jobs. Boulder City, Henderson, and North Las Vegas Library leadership have also been instrumental in establishing and supporting Career One Stop Centers embedded within the library for their communities.

Building upon this collaborative library and One Stop Career Center foundation, the Nevada State Library has implemented the Nevada Career Explorer, an interactive online platform that allows users to 1) find which careers they would be most suited for, 2) explore certification options, 3) learn about employers and universities, and 4) to see the most in-demand occupations vital to Nevada’s growth.

The Nevada Career Explorer has been rolled out as a demonstration project in the southern Nevada libraries mentioned above with One Stop Career Centers as well as in Churchill County Library. Additionally, LVCCLD brought the Nevada Career Explorer into local area high schools so students could access the database for engaging career development experiences. During his January 2019 State of the State address, Governor Sisolak said “Success doesn’t always have to start with a four-year degree. Quality job training programs, apprenticeships, business partnerships, and community college degrees can help Nevadans of all ages get the skills they need for the jobs that are out there today.” In support of the Governor’s vision, the Nevada Career Explorer will expand to all northern Nevada public libraries in the coming year. Additionally, The Nevada Career Explorer is made possible through a combination of state and federal LSTA funds.
With the assistance of LSTA funding made available through the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records, the Carson City Library launched a Makerspace in March 2018 in order to provide a collaborative workspace to promote learning and skill development for adults. The Makerspace is now able to support existing local makers and encourage others to engage with electronics, 3D printing, multimedia, textile design, laser cutting/engraving, traditional arts and crafts, and more.

The Carson City Library’s Makerspace has a stunning array of maker technology - from state-of-the-art 3D printers to sewing and embroidery machines, the space has something for nearly everyone. The Library had already found a high demand for maker programs at the library, and requires all participants to have a premiere level library card and to complete certification programs for each piece of equipment a patron will use in the Makerspace.

Makerspaces promote science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) learning, opportunities for community partnerships, a place to enhance workforce skills, and facilitate life-long learning. These skills are increasingly becoming integrated into the workplace and everyday life, and the ability to develop skills outside of traditional post-secondary programs will support adults in developing the skills necessary to compete in the job market. The Carson City Library’s Makerspace has created a dynamic environment for residents to work with equipment and tools that are otherwise too costly for an individual to obtain, creating new opportunities for patrons to learn skill sets previously only obtainable through a formal higher education program.

Above—community members and library staff get ready to operate the laser cutter in the Carson City Library’s Makerspace. Below—a patron uses the soldering station.