



...the confluence of innovative digital technology from Baker & Taylor, and the tireless efforts of librarians to expand community engagement are combining to achieve outreach success for America's public libraries.

Pop Up Libraries

TAKING THE LIBRARY TO THE PEOPLE!

A library's mission stretches far beyond its physical building and the thousands of resources they contain. With bookmobiles, remotely accessible digital collections, online educational courses, patron outreach services, and more, libraries are engaging with community members beyond the brick-and-mortar walls of their institutions. Early in 2019, eight intrepid public library systems joined with Baker & Taylor to use an innovative technology for community outreach and new patron activation called Pop Up Library. These libraries—Palo Alto Public and San Francisco Public, CA; Broward County and Orange County, FL; Fulton County, GA; Evanston Public Library, IL; Morris County Library, NJ and Oxford County Library, ON—worked with local business and government agency partners to activate Pop Up Library network devices. The Pop Up Libraries give instant access to library books where people are waiting for services or enjoying part of their day. By providing free eBooks at partner locations, Pop Up Library engages people to sign up for services that they might not have been aware their library provides. Pop Up Library is a simple and effective program for boosting awareness, driving usage and engaging underserved segments of a library's community.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGE

Dedicated staff at innovative libraries strive to find creative ways to engage community members who are often unaware of the many services and resources their library offers, or who may not be able to access its physical location. There are barriers for citizens, especially among populations who are often disadvantaged and underserved, in reaching a library, and this is part of a growing conversation around open access. So, if physically getting people to the library is not practical, how can a library reach out and bring its many resources out to where those people are?

According to a recent survey by Library Journal and Baker & Taylor, 57% of librarians responding during a webinar on community engagement stated that their libraries have dedicated staff tasked with outreach responsibilities. Challenges to outreach and

engagement goals often differ across communities. Here is how a few of the Pop Up Library early adopters speak about their needs:

At the Broward County Library, centered in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, Director Kelvin Watson states the challenge this way, *"We're always looking for new ways to overcome barriers to library service and make our resources available to everyone in the community."*

In Ontario, Canada, Oxford County Library was looking to expand its reach beyond the 14 branch locations they operate. *"We're trying to get the word out in the community and reach people who aren't regular library users,"* Oxford County Library Systems support librarian Sarah McDonald says.

Fulton County Library System faced a unique challenge in community engagement. The county library system is in process with a large renovation project, requiring closings of their central Atlanta location and several of the branch libraries. *“In response to many branches being closed, and our Director Dr. Gabriel Morley’s vision to meet our community’s needs in ways that serve them the best, our library’s staff has been tasked with creating dynamic and unique outreach programs,”* says Community Engagement Librarian Amanda Densmore.

USING POP UP LIBRARIES TO BUILD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bringing technology to bear on outreach challenges, Baker & Taylor has created Pop Up Library. Pop Up Libraries are small, self-contained electronic devices which generate a library-branded Wi-Fi network and deliver library eBooks wherever they are placed. Community partners agree to host and provide power to the devices, which run on AC, USB connection or a battery pack, and space for posters, table tents or any of the other promotional materials supplied with the Pop Up program. Users onsite at these partner locations simply log onto the open library Wi-Fi network with their mobile device and select materials to read now or take with them as a loan. eBooks are provided without requiring a library card, and are streamed online to device browsers so users do not need to have a reading app. While reading, users are prompted to provide contact information to the sponsoring library and register to take advantage of additional library services. The Pop Up Program removes traditional barriers to getting started with digital reading, and provides a powerful tool for community outreach and engagement.

Libraries are very creative in identifying locations and finding cooperative community partners to host Pop Up Libraries. From add-ons for Bookmobiles, to local Cafes and Community Agencies, at Correctional Facilities, Hospitals and Jury Rooms, in Senior Centers and Transit Stations, on Buses and at the YMCA, the Pop Up program provides free reading, and an instant connection to the library for people wherever they may be going about their daily activities.

POP UP LIBRARY UTILIZATION AND SUCCESS

The Pop Up Library program provides participating libraries with a graphical dashboard to report on activity at their community locations and to manage opt-in contact information for follow up and patron registration. By bringing their digital service out to the community, reaching people where they are, libraries are expanding their brand recognition and

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growing their engaged user base. Statistics from the Pop Up Libraries in communities served by the early adopters show high rates of engagement with the devices, demonstrating that the library's name and Wi-Fi presence is being widely discovered and utilized.

Broward County Library's outreach success has been especially strong at the local office of the Florida Department of Health and at a local alternative high school. In fact, students of the Seagull Alternative High School in Ft. Lauderdale have recently petitioned the library, hoping to continue the popular reading Pop Up Library service when school resumes next semester. Director Kelvin Watson has also invested to expand his library's participation in the program by purchasing additional Pop Up Libraries that equip local transit buses serving readers who shuttle between Ft. Lauderdale and Miami.

Morris County Library identified its county offices providing services to victims of domestic violence, and its correctional and detention facilities, as locations that would benefit from Pop Up Libraries. To aid accessibility, Morris County Library also supplied two Kindle Fire tablets to their Family Justice Center and Morris County Correctional Facility for users at those sites who may not have their own devices to access the service.

Evanston Public Library has seen high rates of engagement at its Robert Crown Community Center and Eire Family Health Center. They have also deployed Pop Up Library on their Bookmobile, so that digital content is made available as an extension of outreach when the mobile library travels throughout the Evanston community.

Following the successes of these early-adopter public library systems, interest has spread and more than 30 libraries in the US have already signed on to the outreach program, representing nearly 200 Pop Up Library community engagement devices activated in cooperation with local agencies and businesses across their service districts. The program has garnered significant media attention and positive response from the participating libraries, the community partners hosting Pop Up Library devices and the citizens those libraries serve. Clearly, the confluence of innovative digital technology from Baker & Taylor, and the tireless efforts of librarians to expand community engagement are combining to achieve outreach success for America's public libraries.

