

Libraries and fiction as a resource for community health workers

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Library-public health partnerships aren't new, but much of the potential of remains untapped.



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News | Nation

Libraries, public health work together on community health: Settings serve as community hubs

Lindsey Wahowiak

The Nation's Health October 2018, 48 (8) 1-12;

When it comes to finding the best health information available, getting a blood pressure check or even finding a safe, cool place to spend an afternoon during a heat advisory, many people do not turn to their doctor or health department. In the U.S., they visit their local library.

In 2015, Americans stopped by their libraries more than 1.39 billion times, according to the Institute of

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Library-public health partnerships aren't new, but much of the potential of remains untapped.



Blog: Partnering with Your Local Health Department

April 26, 2018

By **Noah Lenstra**, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Studies, School of Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Public health professionals focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and on protecting and improving the health of families and communities. Nearly every community in the U.S. has a local public health department or some other regional health agency. According to the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#), there are nearly 3,000 local health departments across the country.

A frequently missed opportunity

The public health department is the perfect partner for a variety of health programs at your library. Much more could be done with public health departments than is currently being done.

According to Dr. Mary Grace Flaherty, author of ALA Edition's "[Promoting Individual and Community Health at the Library](#)," public libraries are the *least* common community-based entity with which public health departments partner. Dr. Flaherty notes that this fact should serve a "wake-up call for libraries to become more directly and actively involved with their local health departments" (p. 79).

Public health departments do much of their work through formal and informal partnerships, including with K-12 schools,



Public Libraries: A Community-Level Resource to Advance Population Health

“Libraries’ extensive population reach, their access to diverse sectors of the U.S. population, the public trust they command, and their diverse geographic coverage favorably position them as part of a multi-sectoral strategy to advance population health. There are unrealized opportunities for public health researchers, healthcare workers, and policy makers to leverage this potential as part of a coordinated effort to mitigate place-based health disparities.”

(Philbin et al., 2019)

Table 2

How public libraries can mitigate place-based disparities in population health

<u>Determinant of health</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Example</u>
Healthcare access	Implement and host targeted interventions in partnership with universities, community organizations and government departments	Weight loss programs 14
	Provision of health information about specific conditions or how to access care	Services that offer assistance with applying for health insurance 15
	Direct provision of health care services	Providing influenza vaccines 16
Addiction	Emergency response to opioid overdose	Staff trained to administer medications such as naloxone following opioid overdose 17
	Harm reduction response to substance use	Provision of needle collection containers and bandages to drug users 18

(Philbin et al., 2019)

Table 2

How public libraries can mitigate place-based disparities in population health

Stress	Services designed to reduce stress	Classes that teach coping strategies for dealing with stress 19
		Stress reduction therapies such as yoga and Tai Chi 20
Food	Educational services to promote healthy eating and food literacy	Nutrition workshops that teach the preparation of healthy food 21
	Direct provision of food	Provision of free school meals for children during the summer holidays 22
Early life	Services designed to promote wellbeing and learning among young children	Play-groups for children under 1 year of age and their caregivers 23
		Reading programs for parents and young children 24

(Philbin et al., 2019)

Table 2

How public libraries can mitigate place-based disparities in population health

The social gradient	Services that promote the acquisition of human capital, such as literacy, education and specific qualifications and credentials	Holiday reading programs to promote children's literacy 25
		Programs that offer academic-related qualifications such as General Educational Development and English as a Second Language 26
		Language and citizenship classes for immigrants 27
Social exclusion	Services to reduce social isolation among vulnerable groups	Services that facilitate access to homeless shelters and other services among the homeless 28
		Outreach efforts to bring library services to homeless populations through collaborations with homeless shelters 29
		Provision of safe spaces for minorities and vulnerable groups such as LGBT youth 30
		Play-groups that reduce social isolation by fostering relationships among new parents 23

(Philbin et al., 2019)

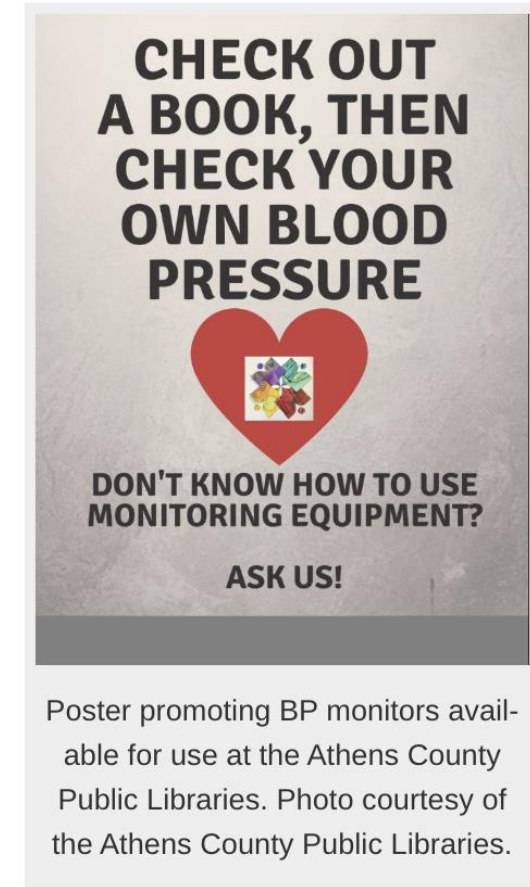
Work and unemployment	Services that provide training for specific occupations	Job-training programs including health aides and security guard training 31
	Services to assist with job seeking	Resume preparation classes 32
Disaster relief	Provide disaster relief services following tornadoes, floods and hurricanes	Following hurricanes, libraries have served as evacuation centers offering electricity and internet and providing a space for various disaster relief organizations to deliver their services 33
	Provide space to meet and recover during periods of civil unrest	Following the civil unrest in Ferguson Missouri in 2015, the local Ferguson Municipal Public Library provided a space in which local residents could meet, respond and recover 34
Social support	Services that facilitate access to existing social welfare and legal services	‘Know your rights’ that connect immigrants with legal specialists 35
	Services that foster social support through cultural and civic events such as concerts, art shows and other projects	X-Bowling league for older adults to reduce social isolation 36
	Services that promote civic participation	Voter registration centers 37

(Philbin et al., 2019)

Partnership Examples



- The Athens County Public Libraries in southeast Ohio partnered with the Athens City-County Health Department on a blood pressure monitoring program for people diagnosed with prediabetes or uncontrolled hypertension.
- Community Health Workers assisted individuals with measuring their BP and answered any health-related questions.

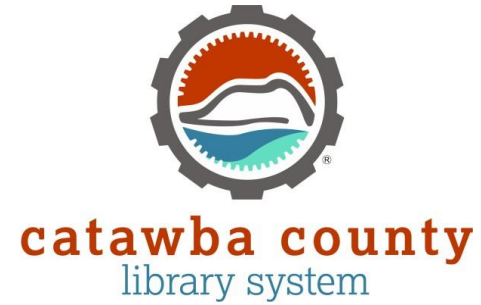




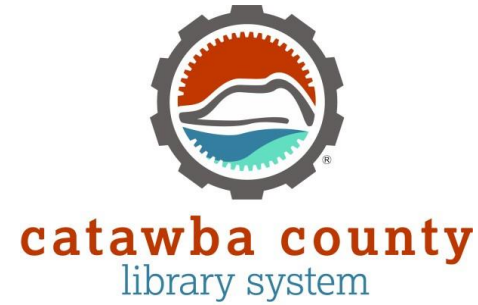
- The partnership also supported a program called “What the Health is Going on Here?”, in which Community Health Workers held drop-in sessions to talk about health.



The Athens City-County Health Department tabling at the Athens Public Library. Photo courtesy of John Halley of the Athens Messenger.



- Partnered to incorporate health programming into the library's offerings
- Library participated in the health department's community health assessment process
- Library staff trained to take phone calls and set COVID vaccine appointments



- Library services expanded to provide Zumba class and new partnerships
 - Farmer's market for food program
 - Hospital for nutrition and health education classes
 - Legal Aid for help with Medicare and Healthcare Marketplace open enrollment periods
 - Local dentist who guest-hosted a story time to promote good dental hygiene to children and gave away toothbrushes and toothpaste

Public Libraries and Violence Prevention

- Free gun locks distributed at public libraries in Anne Arundel County Maryland
- More than 2,300 gun locks distributed from April to September 2023, including to parents seeking to secure their firearms from their kids and one grandparent whose grandchild took the grandparent's gun to school



ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY



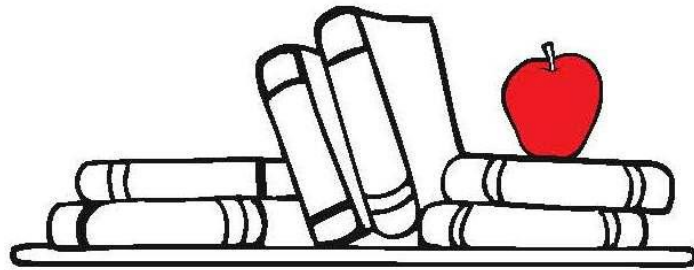
Anne Arundel County
Department of Health



Virtual Supermarket Program

- Online grocery ordering and delivery to bring food to neighborhoods with low vehicle ownership and inadequate access to healthy foods
- Residents order groceries at their local library senior/disabled housing or from a designated site
- 1st program in US to accept food stamps for online grocery shopping and delivery
- Staff and Neighbor Food Advocates teach residents online grocery shopping and community organizing skills to encourage ownership of their local food environments as well as healthy eating
 - Neighborhood Food Advocates are trained community members whose mission is to generate community-driven approaches to increase food access.

Do you know about the resources available from the Network of the National Library of Medicine?



READ FOR
HEALTH

Network of the National Library of Medicine

- The mission of the **Network of the National Library of Medicine** is to advance the progress of medicine and improve the public health by providing all U.S. health professionals with equal access to biomedical information and improving the public's access to information to enable them to make informed decisions about their health.
- The Program is coordinated by the National Library of Medicine and carried out through a nationwide network of health science libraries and information centers.



Network of the National Library of Medicine

INITIATIVES

- Confronting Health Misinformation
- Bridging the Digital Divide
- Environmental Determinants of Health
- Citizen Science and Crowdsourcing
- Data Science
- Student Engagement
- Substance Use Disorders

Network of the National Library of Medicine

- NNLM offers a variety of online, on-demand and in-person training opportunities to support professional development and continuing education for librarians, educators, and health professionals.

Consumer Health Information Specialization

- Trains library staff to become confident, expert providers of health information to the community
- Training offered by the Medical Library Association
- 12 hours of continuing education over 5 Competencies for Level 1
 - Know the Community
 - Know the Health Consumer
 - Knowledge of Subject Matter and Existing Resources
 - Health Information Evaluation
 - Communication and Instruction



Consumer Health Information Specialization

- 12 hours of continuing education over 3 Competencies for Level 2
 - Literacy and Health Literacy
 - Technology and Health
 - Ethical and Legal Issues



https://www.nlm.gov

Click to go back, hold to see history >/training/schedule

NIH National Library of Medicine
Network of the National Library of Medicine

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Scheduled Classes

Event Title	Date(s)	Summary
NNLM Book Discussion: "You Just Need to Lose Weight" And 19 Other Myths About Fat People by Aubrey Gordon, August 1, 2024 – October 31, 2024	August 1, 2024 - October 31, 2024	Join us August 1 – October 31, 2024, to discuss the book "You Just Need to Lose Weight" And 19 Other Myths About Fat People by Aubrey Gordon. Platform/Location: Zoom, Moodle
Bioinformatics and Biology Essentials For Librarians:	August 26, 2024 -	Registration opens July 1, 2024. This 15-week, 30

IN THIS SECTION

- Available Classes
- Class Catalog
- Class Recordings

FILTER THE CLASSES

NNLM Reading Club



What is the Reading Club

Learn more and find tips for facilitating a health discussion.



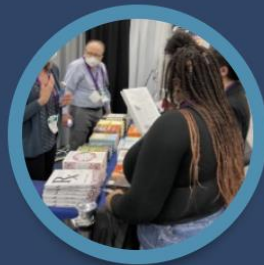
Recommend a Book

Do you have a book to recommend? Tell us. We may select it.



Share Your Story

Have you used the Reading Club? Share your thoughts.



Diverse Voices Toolkit Collections

Build collections that reflect the communities you serve.



Reading Club Collection

Download the complete 2018-2021 NNLM Reading Club Collection - including discussion guides!



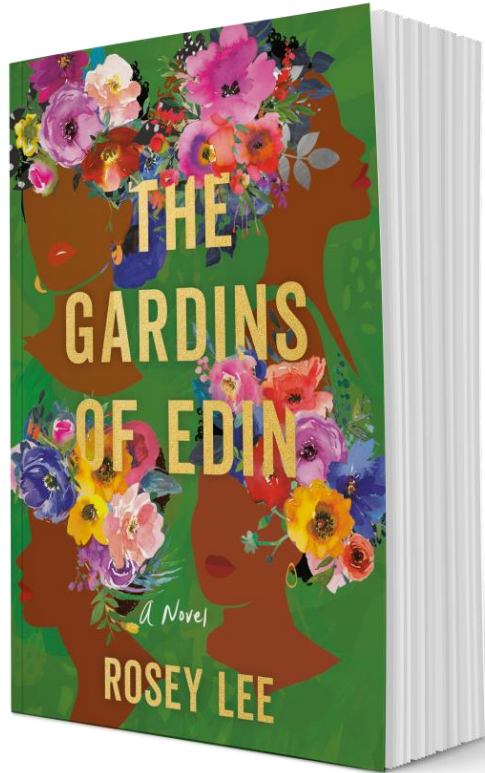
The Rest of the Story

From 2020-2021, the NNLM Reading Club hosted five virtual author talks. Watch the recordings.

The Diverse Voices in Health & Medicine Collections

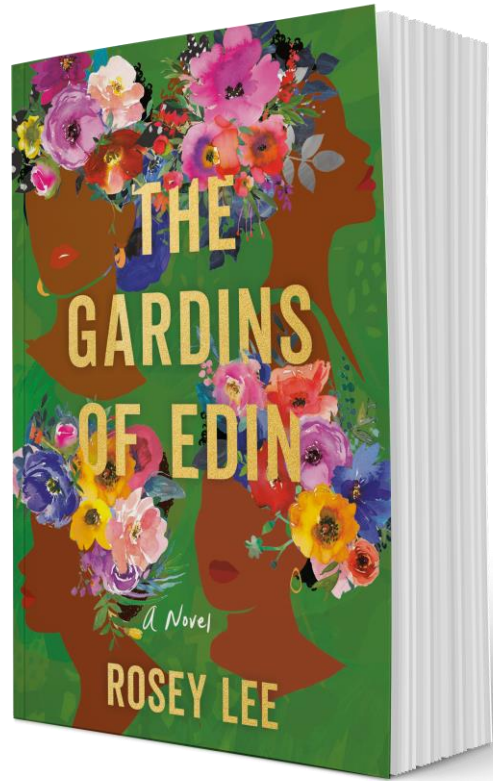
- Adult Collection
- Children's Collection
- Young Adult Collection
- Zines Collection
 - For adults
 - Independently published works often created for niche communities
- Graphic Medicine Collection
 - Refers to the potential therapeutic effects of comics and includes illness memoirs, educational comics, academic papers and books, gag strips about healthcare, as well as fictional and non-fictional practices and source material.

A practical example using a newly released novel



- A heartwarming story of a Southern family and all its many complexities
- Multigenerational - 30s, 50s, 70s
- Features
 - Themes around mental health, heart health, and the connection between them
 - Lifestyle medicine/plant-based food options

A practical example using a newly released novel



- Programming Ideas
 - Health-focused highlight in a traditional book club
 - Health-focused book club selection
 - Pair with a cooking demonstration
 - Heart Month or Mental Health Month activities
 - Potential speakers:
 - Author
 - Local mental health professionals
 - Staff from local mental health organizations



Penguin
Random
House