OUTSIDE THE LINES INSPIRES LIBRARIES NATIONWIDE

Organizations plan to connect with people in bold new ways

DENVER—August 5, 2014—So far, more than 80 organizations from across the U.S. and Canada have signed up to participate in Outside the Lines, a weeklong celebration demonstrating the creativity and innovation happening in libraries. Designed by a group of Colorado library marketers and directors, the campaign is designed to reintroduce libraries to their communities and get people thinking – and talking – about these organizations in a whole new way.

Outside the Lines, scheduled to take place Sept. 14-20, 2014, is designed to help people understand how libraries have changed into dynamic centers for engagement. Participating organizations will connect with their communities through creative, unexpected activities meant to demonstrate how libraries are more relevant than ever before.

Below are the stories of three different library systems passionate about shifting perceptions of libraries in their local communities – and how they plan to celebrate Outside the Lines to do just that.

The ‘Yes’ People – Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, Alabama

Located in the Shoals region of northwest Alabama, the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library has a population service area of 90,000 in Lauderdale and Colbert counties. The Shoals is best known for its musical heritage and is home to FAME and Muscle Shoals Sound Recording Studios, where artists like Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Bob Dylan recorded chart-topping songs that are still popular today.

“While our institution is committed to preserving the area’s music and local history, that’s only one aspect of our mission as a public library,” says Abby Carpenter, adult services manager at Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. “Since our current facility opened in December 2002, we have evolved into a premiere community center. Our meeting rooms stay booked with activities of every sort,
and we partner with many local organizations to provide programs, exhibits, concerts, and even historical walking tours for the public. In the past five years, we have begun circulating Kindles, guitars and American Girl Dolls, in addition to traditional library materials. We strive to maintain an active role as the community’s focal point and want our citizens to see the library as a place to learn, gather, celebrate and explore.”

The staff at Florence-Lauderdale Public Library consider themselves the Shoals’ “yes” people.

“Where our community has a need, we provide positive, enriching solutions,” says Carpenter. “Whether it’s through our hands-on DIY series, teen-hosted podcasts, experiential book displays, or 24/7 online accessibility, we constantly offer new and innovative services to appeal to all members of our community.”

Through Outside the Lines, the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library team hopes to bolster their reputation as “yes” people and help their community to think of the library not just as a place to check out books, but a place to be informed, inspired and welcomed.

Small Town, Big Ideas – Berthoud Community Library District, Colorado

Berthoud, Colo., is a small community located in northern Colorado that has maintained its small-town atmosphere and values its agricultural heritage. Berthoud Community Library District (BCLD) serves a population of approximately 10,000 residents and includes the town proper as well as surrounding rural areas.

“The Outside the Lines initiative is important because libraries need to make some bold moves to let the public know that libraries are relevant and vital, that we embrace Google and e-books but that nothing can supplant the public library,” says Sara Wright, director of BCLD. “Our current users already know how libraries enrich lives. By stepping outside of our regular lines of communication and marketing, I think Berthoud Community Library can get the attention of non-library users as well.”

BCLD wants their community to know that the library doesn’t just passively provide content, but is actively trying new ways to spark people’s personal creativity and give them opportunities to become content creators.

“We want to demonstrate that we are firmly in the 21st century right along with [our community] by showing off the creative technology they have access to right here in Berthoud,” says Wright. “At the same time, we want to celebrate our traditional and still popular role as the keepers of story. Reading matters, plain and simple, which is why BCLD is choosing to focus on both new and traditional roles the library plays in the community.”
During Outside the Lines, BCLD is focusing on three areas: early literacy, why reading matters, and technology for fun and creative growth. To illustrate why reading matters, they have an “Occupy Mountain Avenue” event planned.

“From 8 a.m.-6 p.m., we will have volunteers stationed at every corner on the main street business district of town, sitting in chairs and reading,” says Wright. To highlight new technology, they have formed the Big Brain Band Babes who will perform a musical review showcasing how anyone can celebrate their inner musician.

**Exploring and Engaging Outside the Lines – University of Texas Libraries**

The University of Texas Libraries serves more than 50,000 students, faculty and staff in an academic environment that supports robust research, provides courses of study across myriad disciplines and contributes to societal advancement through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge.

“Our librarians and staff are excited about participating in Outside the Lines to creatively showcase the resources we provide to facilitate exploration, discovery and learning at the University of Texas at Austin – and to connect our campus and the broader community with experts and with each other,” says Jenifer Flaxbart, head librarian of research and information services, University of Texas Libraries. “Our intention is to show how, through active patron engagement, the University of Texas Libraries is evolving, how we’re changing in ways that might be different than expected, and how we’re more relevant than ever before.”

The Outside the Lines activities planned by the University of Texas Libraries staff will transform their users’ awareness and understanding of what the libraries curate, how working with their subject specialists enables them to fully utilize those resources, and why feeding their intellectual curiosity and honing their research skills yields a lifetime of benefits.

“We’re going for things that are hands-on, participatory and fun,” says Flaxbart.

The University of Texas Libraries team has some great ideas in the works, including an event promoting their new UT Poetry Center that draws on poetry, performance, and diversity; an activity that demonstrates how STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) interacts and collides with art and design; a session to promote collections and services to international students; and spinning tunes from their Historical Music Recordings Collection.
ABOUT OUTSIDE THE LINES

Outside the Lines is an R-Squared initiative designed by Colorado library marketers and directors that gets libraries “walking the walk” – taking action to show our communities how important libraries are and how they’ve changed. This celebration takes many of the concepts discussed at R-Squared – The Risk & Reward Conference, such as creativity, customer curiosity, culture, community and creative spaces, and puts them into action where they count – in our local communities. Learn more at getoutsidethelines.org.

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