



Transforming Libraries, Building Communities: The Community-Centered Library

Julie Biando Edwards, Melissa S. Robinson, Kelley Rae Unger

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This book is for those moving their library beyond places to find information. Written by practicing public librarians and an academic librarian with an interest in public libraries, the book focuses on how public libraries can become more community centered and, by doing so, how they can transform both themselves and their communities. The authors argue that focusing on building community through innovative and responsive services and programs will be the best way for the public library to reposition itself in the years to come.

Repositioning the library acknowledges that information is in abundance in contemporary life. And while accessing information will always be at the heart of what libraries do, it isn't the only thing they do. It may not be, in the future, even the most important thing that they do. This book encourages librarians to admit that our role has evolved and to reframe the discussion so that it is about what we actually can do – play an essential role in meeting community needs and building strong and vibrant local communities. The authors argue that repositioning libraries as community centered institutions is a responsibility. Libraries bring people together. They create community, and they also create mini-communities – everything from book groups to writing circles to new citizen groups to linguistic or ethnic communities reflected in programming and in collections. These mini-communities help provide fellowship and foster relationships amongst the group members, but also, because they exist in the public place that is the library, help the larger community recognize and learn about the mini-communities that create the larger community. This is the work of libraries.

The book is divided into three parts which include explorations into the importance of the community centered library, practical advice on making your library more community centered, and a showcase of community centered library programs, services and initiatives across the United States. A special focus of the book is on how community development literature and practice can inform librarianship, with an emphasis on Asset Based Community Development principles. The book looks at how community centered libraries build individual and community assets and how, in doing so, they serve as essential community anchors and institutions.

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