The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries

in partnership with the

Sutter County Library

SUTTER COUNTY
RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A Report of the Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries
This report is written from the perspective of informed observers at the Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries. Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments, ideas or recommendations contained in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any specific participant at the Dialogue or affiliated organizations at the Dialogue.

To learn what other communities are doing to transform their libraries, download the Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries report or its companion, Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library, or to share the work that you are doing around library and community transformation in your own community, please visit the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries online at LibraryVision.org.
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INTRODUCTION

The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries in partnership with the Sutter County Library convened the first countywide, multi-stakeholder forum on public libraries in Yuba City, California, on November 16-17, 2016. The Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries is the second in a series of community and regional dialogues that are designed to address the strategic opportunities presented by the changing role of public libraries and to showcase models through which civic, government, business, education, and other community leaders working together can leverage libraries as platforms for building more knowledgeable, healthy, and sustainable communities. These dialogues are based on the framework in the Aspen Institute’s vision report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*. This framework highlights the key assets of people, place, and platform that public libraries contribute to the communities they serve and the need for libraries to effectively align their programs and services with the goals, priorities, and aspirations of their communities.

The Sutter County Dialogue provided a timely opportunity for the library and civic leaders to explore in a neutral, moderated forum some of the key economic, demographic and technological trends and developments that are having an effect on Sutter County residents and institutions now and for the foreseeable future. The convening partners asked participants to consider how these trends might open up new opportunities for personal and community development in the county, and what role the Sutter County Library can play as a partner to advance community priorities and goals in sustainable ways. In particular, the agenda and discussions focused on priorities related to innovation, youth and education, and community and workforce development.
The format of the Sutter County Dialogue included a series of community engagement workshops, a survey conducted by the library, an evening program featuring a keynote presentation, and a one-day moderated roundtable conference among leaders from government, business, education, libraries, and the nonprofit sector with the majority from Sutter County and additional experts joining the roundtable from Sacramento, Sonoma County, and the Bay Area.

The Sutter County Library conducted a series of community planning workshops prior to the November Dialogue event and augmented these workshops with a paper and online-based survey of library users. The goal of both the workshops and the survey was to engage county residents more broadly and hear directly from them about their aspirations, priorities, and goals for the county. The library developed the workshops in consultation with the Aspen Institute and drew from Sacramento Public Library for assistance with skilled facilitation. A total of four workshops were held from late September through early November, two at Sutter County Library’s main branch in Yuba City, one at Bank of America, and another at the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County. Each workshop sought to engage a different segment of the population, including youth, a racially and ethnically diverse group of residents, residents with deep roots in the community and residents highly engaged with Sutter County’s cultural institutions. Participants were asked to explore and discuss the current strengths of the Sutter County Library, the opportunities they see for the library in the near-term future, the aspirations they have for Sutter County as a whole, and what the results would look like if the library and county achieved these goals. The survey, available at the library in October 2016 and promoted through the library’s Facebook page, provided a look at how community members use the library, what resources and programs they find most valuable, and the types of programs and services community members consider most important for the library to provide in the future. The results from these workshops and the survey appear in the Appendix of this report.

The top opportunities that workshop participants identified for the Sutter County Library include:

- Better technology and more opportunities for innovation
- Newer building with more spaces for groups and events
- Opportunities for youth to be involved in the facilitation of library programs and events
- Partnerships between the library and other organizations

The top aspirations that workshop participants identified for Sutter County overall and its quality of life include:

- Culturally diverse community activities and events
- Spaces and activities to keep youth safe and involved in programs
- More jobs for young professionals
- Better schools
- A safer community

The opportunities and aspirations identified in the workshops helped to inform the roundtable discussion by highlighting specific needs and priorities in the community. Many of the goals and aspirations from the community workshops reflected priorities of the organizations represented at the roundtable.
The themes of opportunity and aspiration carried through the keynote presentation and the day-long leadership roundtable held at Boyd Hall on November 16-17. Twenty-four leaders from across the county and the state addressed four key questions:

1. What kind of community do we want?
2. What changes are necessary to make this vision a reality?
3. How can the Sutter County Library help to bring about this transition and achieve this vision?
4. How can other stakeholders in the community engage and collaborate with the library to transform it and strengthen the community, now and in the years ahead?

This report synthesizes the discussion at the Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries and highlights the major points, ideas, and themes raised by participants. The report concludes with a set of recommendations and actions steps proposed by roundtable participants to move the library forward.

Setting the Context for Dialogue

Sutter County is located in Northern California about 40 miles north of Sacramento along state route 99. The Feather and Sacramento Rivers flow through the county and the Sutter Buttes mountain range is visible to the northwest. Two-thirds of Sutter County’s 96,463 residents live in Yuba City, the county seat, which has its own municipal government. Other people have settled in and around the city of Live Oak (population around 8,488) or smaller towns and unincorporated areas of the county.

Agriculture has long been the economic engine driving Sutter County’s economy (Sunsweet is headquartered here), followed by government, healthcare, and retail as key economic drivers. With Sacramento relatively close by, there are a number of people who live in Sutter County and work in Sacramento, and others who commute still farther into the Bay Area, causing some to label Sutter County as a budding “bedroom community” for workers in these larger economic hubs. Reflecting on the fact that Sutter County’s economy has not come back as strongly as these larger hubs following the Great Recession, one participant described Sutter County as a “lag economy.”

Socio-economic trends in Sutter County reveal a mixed picture. Sutter County is a slow-growth county with a very modest number of building permits issued for new single-family home construction. While the unemployment rate has been falling, the poverty rate has been increasing. Sutter County’s high school graduation rate is above the statewide average in California, but the county’s working population (18 years and older) is below the state average for educational attainment (high school diploma or GED earned).

One of the distinguishing features of Sutter County is its large Sikh population; some are recent immigrants while many others are descendants of immigrants from Punjab, India, who immigrated to the area over a century ago for farming. The Punjabi population in Sutter County is one of the largest outside of the Punjab state in India.¹ There is also a small but growing Afghan community, with mosques joining Sikh temples in a county where leaders and residents remark about the strong commitment to religious traditions and active participation in churches, temples and mosques. Notable in current kind in the United States. The event draws nearly 100,000 participants and spectators.

¹ Each year, people from the Sikh faith gather in Yuba City for the Guru Gadee parade, the largest gathering of its kind in the United States. The event draws nearly 100,000 participants and spectators.
demographic trends cited by participants at the Dialogue is a growing Hispanic population. The Sutter County Library began its service in 1917. As a department of county government, it provides library services to all residents of Yuba City and Sutter County through four branches: a main branch in Yuba City and three branches in the rural communities of Live Oak, Sutter and Rio Oso. The library offers a variety of services and programs including an active children’s library and a widely recognized literacy program with English language and citizenship classes. In January 2016, the library entered the era of high-speed broadband when it connected to the state’s CENIC (Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California) network. CENIC is a nonprofit corporation that provides high-performance, high-bandwidth networking services to California universities and institutions. This service has enabled the library to offer a more robust online platform and to think about new opportunities and innovations that can be created for residents now that the library is equipped with a gigabit of bandwidth.
THE REPORT
SUTTER COUNTY RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A Report of the Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries

Overview and Key Themes

“A good hockey player plays where the puck is, and a great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.”
-- Wayne Gretzky quoted by Norman Jacknis in his keynote presentation at the Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries

Norman Jacknis, PhD, is a technologist with deep experience in local government and libraries. He currently serves as an adjunct professor at Columbia University in New York and president of the Metro New York Library Council. He also is a senior fellow at the Intelligent Community Forum where he has led the forum’s Rural Imperative, working with communities to develop future-oriented economic growth strategies. In his keynote presentation to the Sutter County Dialogue, Jacknis emphasized two themes that were important to keep in mind as he opened a window into the world of technology that is shaping and reshaping communities: first, libraries do not exist in isolation from the rest of the world and, second, libraries need to lay the foundation for where they need to be in the future.

Jacknis suggested that the ways in which we view community development and the direction that the world is going in terms of technology and the economy both point to the importance of public libraries today. Libraries have the resources, spaces, skilled staff and expertise to be key centers for access to information, skills and conversations with other people that individuals and communities need to flourish in a knowledge-based economy. Oftentimes, community leaders overlook the role that public libraries are playing, or could play, as partners in addressing community priorities, especially where these roles relate to technology. As anchor institutions in their communities, libraries connect people to the internet, training in digital literacies, and a vastly expanded world of economic and social opportunities. According to Jacknis, these opportunities can be as available in rural places such as Sutter County as they are in Sacramento, the Bay Area or any other community.

Jacknis highlighted seven key trends or advances related to the development and use of technology and identified opportunities that these advances present for libraries and their communities. The table below shows the seven trends and the corresponding opportunities arising from each.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Trend</th>
<th>The Opportunity</th>
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<tr>
<td>The digitization of information</td>
<td>New opportunities to curate and create content that is customized to the individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>The internet is everywhere</td>
<td>Library services can be everywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>High quality visual conversations anywhere (e.g., video chat, conferencing software)</td>
<td>The library can bring people from the whole world into any connected community</td>
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<td>An increasing number of people who make their living in the knowledge economy</td>
<td>People need lifelong learning and access to knowledge, which libraries can provide most cost-effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation is a competitive edge, but increasingly requires collaboration</td>
<td>People need a space where they can collaborate and also get outside information, which the library can provide</td>
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<tr>
<td>People producing as well as consuming content</td>
<td>For most people, the platform that will enable them to distribute their more creative content is provided by a library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Machine intelligence continues to improve</td>
<td>With the leadership of a networked library community, these technologies will help people get beyond the limitations of current “search” engines</td>
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With more information digitized or born digital all the time, a library’s collection in the 21st century is virtually limitless. With gigabit broadband connectivity, the services and applications that the library can offer to the community expands exponentially. Learning and skills training can take place in Sutter County that previously would have required travel to another city or a physical visit by a knowledgeable expert. As one example, Jacknis showed how augmented reality is being used to deliver training to field service technicians, saving significant time and cost while delivering the skills training when and where it is needed.

Susan Hildreth, professor of practice at the Information School at the University of Washington who had previously served as California State Librarian and head of the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services, added a brief coda to the Jacknis presentation. She highlighted the importance of the library’s gigabit connection to CENIC and the impact it will have on the future of the library and community. She encouraged the leadership roundtable to think about the big challenges in Sutter County and how the library can bring together its assets and resources to address those concerns.

The themes of the keynote presentation—new technology, laying the foundation for the future, and placing the library at the table with other community organizations—set the tone for thinking about how these trends and opportunities apply to the issues of concern and priorities of Sutter County residents.
“Public libraries that align their people, place and platform assets and create services that prioritize and support local community goals will find the greatest opportunities for success in the years ahead.”

--Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries

Sutter County is representative of many communities and counties in California that are experiencing significant changes to local industries and economies, especially those that traditionally have been based on agriculture. Shifts in population are transforming the social, political, and economic environments of places like Sutter County. Young people are leaving the small towns and rural communities where they grew up for larger urban areas with more educational and professional opportunities. Less than 200 miles away are Silicon Valley and the Bay Area with exciting new economy start-up businesses and plenty of opportunity for hard working, creative individuals. Sutter County is grappling with this “brain drain” – the flight of highly skilled or educated people moving from small and rural towns to urban locations. As one participant noted, “Kids that go away...most of them don’t come back to our cities. How do we make Sutter County the place where they come back and work?” Participants identified a need to create opportunities for young people to live and raise their families in Sutter County.

The “brain drain” issue seemed to encapsulate the broader set of issues that roundtable participants identified as current challenges and issues of importance for the county’s future: economic development and jobs, education, youth opportunities, health and poverty (including homelessness), public safety, and civic engagement. The discussions surrounding each of these issues included plenty of information and data on the negative aspects of trends seen in Sutter County, yet the orientation of this group toward strategic opportunities shifted the discussion to finding ways to create disruptions in these negative trends. Participants asked, “How can we create a new narrative for Sutter County that banishes negative thinking and old mindsets, and how can the library dialogue contribute to this new narrative?”

Participants were asked to consider how Jacknis’ insights on trends in technology could suggest new opportunities for leveraging the assets of the library and fostering collaborations and partnerships in pursuit of the community’s self-identified priorities and goals. The following are key issues and opportunities identified by leadership roundtable participants.

A source for information on human capital in the community.

Developing partnerships and connecting people stood out as themes in helping to move the library and the community forward. The library’s ability to tap opportunities for partnerships and connections flow from capital—economic capital (funding for programs and new initiatives) as well

Work Plan for the city that tackles these problems by increasing entrepreneurship, education, and economic growth. One of the goals of the Commission is to change the public perception of the city by empowering residents to think of their city in more positive ways.
as human capital. If the library is going to connect people and knowledge throughout the community, it is important to know what community assets, including people, are available. Participants discussed the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the human capital that resides in Sutter County. At best, the information was incomplete and anecdotal. This pointed to an opportunity suggested by one participant to “create a map of the human capital in the community to try to connect folks [and build] community relationships in a way that will pay dividends over many years.” This kind of information was highlighted as a way to take advantage of the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by individuals as valuable resources for the community. For example, getting older populations, including those near retirement, to volunteer their services to the community was identified as one outcome of creating this kind of map. Connecting individuals who are aging out of the workforce to the emerging youth population in Sutter County was seen as an opportunity to disrupt community challenges by developing relationships that allow older populations to share their expertise. The library can be a place and platform where this information is curated, digitized and stored for the community to manage.

**A partner with schools and parents in education.**

Even with positive data on high school completion in the county, participants identified many ways in which the library could be leveraged as a valuable partner in education. There is an opportunity for the library to go beyond its current efforts to support the work of teachers and parents in helping children to learn, especially with the installation of high-speed internet access at the library’s four branches in Sutter County. Multiple school systems in the county must support large numbers of students and parents for whom English is a second language, and contend with pressures on school budgets that keep teacher salaries low and educational resources constrained. The library’s language and citizenship classes can help students and parents who must navigate the school system and educational experience. Schools and the library can explore how the library’s free and accessible resources can be more fully utilized to support student learning and success.

Early education and preschool for all children in the county is a priority, but one that is challenging to achieve. Parents and children need to be connected to institutions outside of schools that offer resources and information on ways to enhance early education. The library provides a wealth of learning resources and programs for young children at the library that include learning opportunities for parents and caregivers who attend with their children. The library can also be a place of social connection for parents. Such expertise could be used to connect with other programs in the community aimed at strengthening families. For example, the Sutter County Children & Families Commission employs a framework called the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) that was developed as a prevention and treatment model for at-risk families. The program also encompasses changing how service providers interact with families to support them in building protective factors.3 Participants suggested that community partners could conduct community cafes at the library, where parents could learn about the resources available for them and their children.

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A hub for workforce development and college and career readiness.

The fact that the poverty rate has increased while unemployment has decreased suggests that there is a problem with workforce skills in Sutter County. Furthermore, participants identified a mismatch between skills and job vacancies in the County that contributes to the negative trends. One participant noted that the County has a “plethora of jobs that go unmet daily...because [the community does not] have the skills or desire to fill the jobs.” The low levels of education in the workforce population and lack of information about jobs in the area exacerbate the problem. So does the challenge of connecting the growing population of undocumented residents and those with new citizenship status to information on jobs, because many of these individuals do not want to be “found” by official institutions.

There is an opportunity for the workforce development sector in Sutter County and Yuba City, including government agencies, chambers of commerce and employers, to work with the Sutter County Library to create more opportunities for job training and career readiness. This includes the Sutter County Public Schools and its One Stop program, which already works with the library. There are many potential roles that the library could play in addressing workforce and career development challenges, but if the library is going to play any role at all it first must be invited to the table where monthly workforce development discussions are had and decisions are made. At the time of the November dialogue, this was not the case. Participants were enthusiastic about having the library join these conversations and bring its knowledge and resources to the table. The library was identified as a hub that can address workforce-related challenges by connecting people, providing information in new ways, providing technology access and training, reaching youth with role models (including Latino youth), and acting as a community center for career counseling, job placement, and training.

Access point for higher education and center for lifelong learning.

There are few opportunities for adult education in the county outside of the community college, the higher education institutions in surrounding areas (e.g., Chico State, Sacramento State, UC Davis), and the local cultural institutions like the museum and the library. There is an opportunity to develop new programs and partnerships to address the need for “cradle to grave” learning opportunities for any purpose, from jobs and entrepreneurship to entertainment and personal enjoyment. Jacknis’ presentation on key trends in technology pointed to ways in which libraries are making use of online platforms and systems to provide access to free education. Beyond the early years, the library can be a place to help youth and adults receive an education, which can ultimately increase economic development.

The library’s gigabit connectivity should allow for more people to take advantage of online opportunities to earn a degree or certificate. The library can provide staff or counselors to assist students who need more information and knowledge about how to search for and apply to online educational resources. Participants were interested in how the library and underutilized spaces (such as vacant offices) in the community might be used to expand these learning opportunities for residents, incorporating some of the new technologies described by Jacknis and the library’s gigabit connectivity. One participant suggested that a new business model could arise from having virtual (online) access to multiple colleges and universities and college counselors.
Filling technology gaps in the community.
Families living in poverty have a very difficult time keeping up with technology trends. The Sutter County Library helps to address these gaps with its offerings of computers and digital information and communication services. The library’s technology resources are important for children who may not have computers or internet access at home to complete their school work. They also are important for youth and adults of any age to help people get career ready at a time when jobs increasingly rely on digital skills and literacy. For many people, the library is the only place they have access to the internet and can apply to jobs online. Sutter County’s libraries could host career centers that connect people to job resources, skills training and local employers in the community. While the library’s computers are a great asset, they do not take the place of digital access in the home. In addition to technology offerings in place at the library’s branches, participants suggested that the library could help to fill the technology gap by loaning e-readers (such as Kindles) and tablets. There are libraries across the country that have piloted successful initiatives to loan Wi-Fi hotspots as well.

A safe and trusted “third place” for youth.
Youth in Sutter County have few places to go outside of home or school where they can find engaging activities that meet their needs and interests. As mentioned above, some youth in the county use the library’s computers because they do not have computers or Internet access at home. There is an opportunity to develop new programs and services for younger people at the public library, around technology and other activities of interest to them, so that the library becomes a “third place” for youth in the county, apart from home or school, where they can socialize, become involved in community life, develop hobbies, interests, and new skills with creative tools and mentors at little or no cost.

One participant noted that people who grow up in poverty have a different way of viewing the world than those who do not know the sting of poverty. Expanding the worldview of children and youth from impoverished homes and providing exposure to other ways of living and working are important to breaking the cycle of poverty. The Sutter County Library is well situated to provide such exposure – through its books and many programs geared toward exploration and discovery, and through the networks of individuals who engage with the library as patrons, volunteers, and partners.

Connecting people to resources to live healthier lives.
The library is on the front lines of dealing in a compassionate and effective way with the human needs and broader social challenges of the county’s neediest residents. Many people who come to the library bring a host of social service needs to the library’s door, including those who are experiencing mental health problems and homelessness. Their presence at the library can create a deterrent to library use by other members of the community. Unsurprisingly, groups who participated in the community workshops identified safety as a concern as well, including the youth group. In partnership with the county’s Department of Health and Human Services, the library can play a role in connecting people to other service providers to get the services they need. It was also noted that Sutter County is a food desert with regard to statistics on how many county residents do not have access to fresh food or the knowledge of how to prepare healthy food options. The library can partner with organizations focused on food,
nutrition and healthy eating to offer classes and programs that boost health literacy, including food and nutrition literacy.

Equity in access.
The library is one of the most democratic public institutions in American society. Libraries provide knowledge, ideas, and information freely to all citizens. A library may be one of the only places where an individual can receive shelter and free access to community resources. In a society where equity in access to education, jobs, and housing is still an issue, the library remains a place that can help to bridge these gaps. Roundtable participants emphasized the goal of providing equal opportunities for all residents of the Sutter County community. The library can be a place that provides resources to disadvantaged groups by bringing the library into the community. This includes creating spaces to learn by providing culturally relevant events and information in specific areas.

An innovation center in the community.
Super-fast connectivity is an important ingredient for innovation in the 21st century. As county information technology managers work with the library to address barriers to having full use of such a high-speed connection, the opportunity for rethinking the Sutter County Library as a library of the future begins to emerge. Community members, including entrepreneurs and small businesses, can practice innovation in the “library as innovation center.” While the creation of an innovation center requires significant planning and resources, several participants thought that this could take shape with funding that has been set aside from new development in Yuba City to be dedicated to the library for capital infrastructure. The focus would be on creating a library of the future in Sutter County. It is a recognition that, even though the library today is highly valuable to and valued by the community, the community needs to lay the foundation for where it needs to be in the future—in other words, to play the puck where it is going to be further into the 21st century.

Creating Successful Partnerships

As a prelude to working on specific recommendations for action, the roundtable participants explored the factors that lead to successful collaborations in Sutter County. As participants reflected and reported on strong partnerships in which their organizations participate, they identified the following key elements to the creation of such partnerships.

Shared vision - Successful collaborations require a shared vision, a common objective with which to align the missions and resources of each partner.

Resource sharing – Partners bring a diverse set of complementary resources to the collaboration in accordance with their unique expertise, networks, skills, and capacity to contribute.

Respect – Respect for each participating partner organization and a respectful understanding that contributions to the collaboration will help each partner to achieve its mission.

Project specific – Defining a specific project enables partners to define what contributions they can make and for how long.

Measureable outcomes – Successful collaborations should have a quantifiable effect on the community. Partners need to be able to measure the results and determine the value realized.
Trusted relationships – Sutter County has a community of people who have lived, worked, and played alongside one another for many years. The trust that comes from relationships that have built up over many years is a valuable asset in collaborations and partnerships.

Diversity - Too much like-mindedness and a culture of going along can be a barrier to success; strong partnerships include diversity of thought, opinion, and experience.

Knowing who you are trying to serve - Creating successful partnerships entails knowing the community that you are trying to serve. Participants recognized that partners may be trying to reach similar populations in a variety of ways. By combining resources, these collaborations can lead to greater access to assets for the community and direct impact on specialized groups. Partnering with the library to reach specific communities – parents, teens, students, job seekers, and immigrants – is a strategic way to deliver services.

Following the exploration of existing partnerships in Sutter County, participants explored specific ways in which they and other stakeholders in the community could engage and collaborate with the library to transform the library and strengthen the community.

Recommendations

With a grounding in trends, opportunities and aspirations, participants focused on identifying specific recommendations and action steps with an orientation toward partnerships across different sectors of the community. They considered near-term goals and actions that would produce sustainable change. Dialogue participants recommended the following action steps for library, county stakeholders, and the community to take together.

Recommendation #1: Maximize space in the library.
Recommendation #2: Create new library spaces in the community.

While the library works with community leaders to develop a vision and plan for a new innovation center in the future, participants recommended re-imagining the library’s current space to accommodate more of the activities envisioned by roundtable participants. These recommendations address two trends identified by participants: a trend in reprioritizing space as needs change and the trend in “pop-up” extensions of programs and services appearing in new places. This includes carving out space for new technology-based programs for creative learning and hands-on innovation at the library, and space for teen activities as the library develops its service offerings in that area. It also includes redesigning library space to encourage lifelong learning through use of the Wi-Fi connection.

The library can partner with civic groups and patrons to design creative uses for library spaces. These could include pop-up teaching opportunities where outside organizations or individuals could partner with the library to host meetings or offer skills and services in the library – taking advantage of the library’s strength as a convener. The library could host an art show, microbrewery, or winery event in the library to attract different populations from the community.

Building on the idea of pop-ups, the Sutter County Library should create pop-up library
spaces out in the community where the library can have a visible presence around the county and during community events. The pop-up could involve the use of interesting library resources as a hook (examples given included using library photographs and artifacts to exhibit at a retail location, microbrewery or winery), or engage interesting community partners (e.g., Beale Air Force Base pilots) and tie the pop-ups to education programs that reach targeted populations (e.g. kids and parents through school or PTA events). With pop-up spaces in the community, the library has an opportunity to promote its services and resources, survey residents to determine future needs of the community and identify human capital that can be tapped for new library initiatives or community needs.

Recommendation #3: Use technology to expand the library’s assets and the reach of educational programs on a broad spectrum of topics.

The recommendation is for the library to fully leverage the technology and free learning resources now available to build a library-driven platform for continuous learning in Sutter County. It recognizes the library as a leader in encouraging space for innovative conversations to happen and the library as an essential partner with the entrepreneurial community. This platform would include the implementation of some type of virtual classroom that would allow for a GED or high school diploma program in the community as well as the implementation of industry and skill-based educational programs. Some of these things are already underway in the community with the Yuba-Sutter Chamber’s incubator, accelerator and co-working facility in Marysville, but the scope of this recommendation envisions that collaborations and partnerships would be explored to build a stronger, more comprehensive learning and innovation platform in the county. To address funding concerns, participants recommended looking at existing funding and asking whether it could be used in more effective ways.

Empty buildings in the county should be examined for their potential to house library programs when existing library spaces are not available. The county and city (Yuba City) should work with the library to take advantage of opportunities for funding through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), a federal program that provides funding to communities to address community development needs and includes allowances for taking advantage of unused community spaces. The library should be seen as an integral partner in future grant applications that focus on community development and seek to reach underserved populations. In addition to CDBG grants, participants cited the Chamber’s participation in a Slingshot grant application, general fund revenue and TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax) funds collected in Sonoma County as potential revenue models.

Recommendation #4: Developing partnerships with the workforce development sector.

Dialogue participants emphasized the importance of improving workforce development and career readiness to enhance the stability and prosperity of the community. Specifically, there is a need for more information, coordination, and opportunities on job training and education. Sutter County Library can help to meet these needs. Sutter County and Yuba City workforce and economic development stakeholders should include the library in its regular meetings and strategic planning so that sustainable collaborations can be developed. Participants highlighted the importance of the business community as a partner with the library to reach
specific demographics that needs workforce training and skills. The library should be a key partner in working to address these issues. Representatives from Sutter County Government, Health and Human Services (HHS) for Sutter County, One Stop, and the Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce, along with other social service organizations, should come together with the library to form a workforce development committee. The purpose of this committee is to develop ways in which the library can be a hub for information gathering and exchange on workforce and career development.

**Recommendation #5: Partner with social service organizations to improve community outreach to target populations and embed service providers in the library.**

Social service agencies and other service providers should develop partnerships with the Sutter County library to reach specific populations, help to make them aware of what services are available to them in the community, and facilitate the access and uptake of these services. A successful collaboration already taking place that reaches specific populations includes the Sutter County One Stop and the Health and Human Services for Sutter County, who work together to provide employment resources for the community. One Stop serves as a hub for providing education and workforce development opportunities for youth, veterans, and the community at large. Sutter County One Stop has already begun to extend services into the library. The library, Sutter County Health & Human Services and One Stop should collaborate to provide more workforce and economic development opportunities both inside and outside of the library doors.

Libraries are service outlets. Service-oriented organizations should work with libraries to embed their information, people and resources in the library. As mentioned previously, Sutter County Library deals with a number of people experiencing homelessness who seek shelter in and outside of the library doors. Health & Human Services can embed trained staff at the library, even if on a limited basis at first, to meet needs where they are present out in the community. These kinds of collaborations cost little to nothing for libraries that can provide space, time, and staff training. The result is a successful partnership that helps achieve organizational missions and community goals. If the funding exists to support embedding staff, then the pilot can be extended, but a trial can be made by deploying existing HHS staff or contractors already committed to this work to do it part time at the library.

**Recommendation #6: Use the Sutter County Library 100th anniversary year to launch new community engagement initiatives and plan for the future.**

The Sutter County Library is 100 years old in 2017. Participants thought it would be advantageous to use this year as an opportunity to improve social and civil engagement with the library and across the community. The anniversary should be used as a marketing tool to capitalize on the celebratory moment. It also could be used as a way to get individuals in the community committed to achieving specific goals. Participants recommended the anniversary also be used as a tool to measure how the community values the library by conducting surveys and focus groups, and using that feedback to enhance and develop services for the future. As part of 100th anniversary celebrations, each month the library should invite a different group from Sutter County to decorate the library and share its culture and contributions to community identity.
at the library. This could be coordinated with the museum.

The 100th anniversary is a good time to reflect on the fact that the library represents better than any other institution in the community the diversity of Sutter County and its people. There is opportunity in celebrating the diversity as seen and experienced at the library. Where issues surrounding race, ethnicity and gender in society can damage the fabric of social cohesion, the library’s reflection and celebration of the rich cultural and ethnic diversity in Sutter County can have a healing effect. The library can make a statement in its anniversary year to “Expect more” and challenge the community to develop a new narrative to deliver it.
To move these recommendations forward, roundtable participants identified a series of near-term steps that the library and community can take individually and together. The path forward includes developing partnerships and planning ahead for long term goals. Participants advised that there are good existing partnerships in the community, and that the library and community stakeholders should build on these. Here are some initial steps to design a path forward.

- Begin to use the library more effectively as a convening space, but be mindful of taxing the library’s resources and staff in doing so. For example, with present staff constraints, it may be difficult for representatives of the library to attend the workforce development meetings that are already occurring in Sutter County. However, the library can be used as a space to convene these meetings, making it easier for the library to be included in the discussion.

- The library should begin to develop a marketing strategy to reintroduce itself to the community and messaging about its role and value in the community. Yuba City government has offered to provide assistance to help the library director in developing a marketing plan. A first step would be to explore how to increase the library’s presence on social media and public engagement with the library’s Facebook page.

- Form an advisory or planning committee for the library that can consult on near and long-term goals toward the creation of an innovation center and library of the future. Bring in virtual and augmented reality demonstrations for the community and its civic and business leaders to experience.

- Although Health and Human Services for Sutter County and the Sutter County Library serve similar populations within the community, there is not a lot of collaboration between the organizations. Sustaining healthy communities is not just about the physical health of residents, it is also about their mental health and social inclusion. Given that the goals of HHS and the Library are closely related, they should initiate a conversation that would lead to the development of ways to connect. In the meantime, HHS can pilot the part-time assignment of a social worker or other staff at the main library.

- Try a library pop-up in the community or at one of the branches, paying attention to the needs of more rural parts of the community where the library presence could help to strengthen community identity and cohesion.

- Pursue grant funding to map the human capital resources in the community. Map the human resources in the community (as suggested, this could be managed as a design sprint involving different populations in the community). Do the same with economic and workforce development resources. Develop strategies for working in partnerships to move from mapping resources to matching resources.

- Change mindsets and expectations by talking about a new narrative for Sutter County and the library. Work with the library, which is filled with compelling stories and expert storytellers, to craft and share the County’s new story. The planning group for the library’s 100th anniversary celebration could evolve into an advisory group or the creation of a library foundation that continues to build on the successes of the first 100 years.

Leverage the library’s reach to bring new ideas to the community.
The Sutter County Dialogue on Public Libraries brought together stakeholders from many sectors of the county to explore how to leverage the expertise and assets of the Sutter County Library in new ways to advance community priorities and goals. The engagement of county residents in the process and asking for their ideas and input provided a focal point for discussion and the recommendations ultimately made by participants in the leadership roundtable. The Dialogue is a model for demonstrating how the library’s power to convene people from all walks of life in the community can lead to creative thinking and energize people for working together to address difficult challenges in the community.

The Dialogue revealed that there are many strengths and assets in Sutter County upon which to build a bright new narrative for the county’s future. There are untapped and underutilized human resources in the community, from youth to post-workforce individuals. There are existing partnerships and collaborations, and opportunities to forge new collaborations. There is a rich history and diversity in the community that contribute to a stronger social fabric. There are jobs to be filled by people with the right skills, and a school system that is committed to success for all students. There are economic opportunities untold for entrepreneurs, creators and innovators who just need to find the right people, the right places and the right platforms to unleash their potential.

The Sutter County Library is well-positioned to work with local government, business, education and civic leaders to design and deliver new opportunities for learning, innovation and civic engagement. The library’s resources, though constrained, can be assessed for new ways to deploy them in support of the recommendations in this report. Likewise, partner organizations in the community such as those represented at the Dialogue conference need to assess the ways in which they deploy their funding and resources in light of the Dialogue’s discussions and recommendations, and determine whether some of the fresh ideas suggested at the Dialogue and in this report might become part of the transformation of their own organizations going forward.

The success of roundtable conferences such as the Sutter County Dialogue can be measured by the number of new ideas gained that participants can act on and the development of partnerships and collaborations that grow from the shared exchange and experience. A conference of this type and this report are catalysts for creating new beginnings. It is hoped that readers of this report gain new insights upon which they can act and reach out to others in the community to become involved. The long-term sustainability of the library and its mission in Sutter County, so vital to the future that keynote presenter Norman Jacknis demonstrated and that Sutter County residents described in the community engagement workshops, depends upon it.
Since the Sutter County Library Dialogue on Public Libraries took place in November 2016, the Sutter County Library has move forward to advance some of the recommendations in this report.

- Recommendation #6 in the report was to take advantage of the library’s 100th year anniversary. The Sutter County Library in partnership with the Friends of the Sutter County Library has developed a steering committee to plan and execute the events and programs surrounding the anniversary. The celebration takes place on May 26, 2017.

- Leaders at the Sutter County Public Schools and Sutter County Library have met to discuss library support of a grant for which the school system plans to apply.

- One Stop director has met with library staff several times and the library has hosted a couple of One Stop workshops.

- A fairly new focus of the library’s Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) Title II Adult Literacy Grant is on workforce development. This has opened up opportunities to work with the local superintendent of schools adult education coordinators and the Local Workforce Development Board.

- A planning committee was formed to move along projects such as the Museum exhibit opening and a 100 year anniversary celebration planned for October 14. This committee was instrumental in developing the new logo.

- The library’s Live Oak Branch received an exterior face lift, with the interior to be worked on in the coming fiscal year.

- The Library became an outlet for the sale of Yuba Sutter Transit bus passes.

To learn more about these and other activities in Sutter County, to access resources or to get involved, please consult the library website or contact:

James Ochsner  
Director of Library Services  
Sutter County Library  
750 Forbes Ave.  
Yuba City, CA 95991  
Phone: (530) 822-7137  
Email: jochsner@co.sutter.ca.us
Participants were asked to assess the general value of the library.

When thinking about the future of the community, respondents stated that the library needs more programs for children, teens and adults. Respondents also said there needs to be more quiet spaces, community engagement, small business support, and books and other materials.
Most community members are not aware of the following services provided by the Sutter County Library: Chilton's Auto Repair online, Mango Languages online, Zinio Magazines online, and Overdrive e-books online.
Community Dialogue Workshop Responses

To engage a large number of county residents and hear directly from them about their ideas and goals for the county, the Sutter County Dialogue included a series of community planning workshops. The workshops were open to the public broadly, however each workshop targeted a different segment of the county’s population to get specific input and buy-in from these subgroups. Participants identified priorities for shaping the community and the library. The 60-90-minute workshops answered the following questions:

**Opportunities: What are our best possible future opportunities?**

- What changes do you expect to see over the next five years – in the community and in the state?
- As we look at the changes you’ve identified:
  - Which changes could have a positive impact on the Library?
  - Where could the Library make a difference?
- What are key areas of untapped potential for the library?

**Aspirations: What do We Care Deeply About?**

- What kind of community do we want? What are the most important attributes or essential components?
- If you could wave a magic wand and transform this community, what change would you most want to see?
- Thinking more globally – as you reflect on the changes happening in the world today describe one that gives you hope. How might this community respond to this one big hope?

**Workshop One: Library staff, friends of the library and volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural programming</td>
<td>Educated community</td>
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<tr>
<td>More $, more staff</td>
<td>Involved, cohesive multicultural community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diverse adult programming to attract more diverse audience</td>
<td>Feeling of “home”/place you want to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach/school visits</td>
<td>Everyone in our community has the opportunity for secondary education college/vocational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Only accept cash/check</td>
<td>Community support for education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnerships with local organizations</td>
<td>Shared cultural diversity (food, music, entertainment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic support/seminars</td>
<td>Good jobs that keep people here after school</td>
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<tr>
<td>More staff</td>
<td>Diverse communities in Sutter County to interact with one another (e.g., Sikh temple parade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>More new tech for library (phone, printer)</td>
<td>Residents take pride in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech innovation center planned for Sutter County; Change perceptions of library (business centers, meeting place)</td>
<td>Generous funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>All for-profit community organizations donate to the library &amp; recognize it as a good investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>More cultural activities/library as cultural center/library as community/gathering place</td>
<td>Safety</td>
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<td>STEM programming (robots)</td>
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<td>Library as catalyst for information &amp; facts</td>
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**Workshop Two**: Individuals who have deep roots and commitments in the county (e.g. museum donors and volunteers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging people in 20s and 30s</td>
<td>Jobs: a variety of opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect with diverse populations</td>
<td>Increased tolerance and support for other cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic partnerships, schools, places of worship, fraternal halls, etc.</td>
<td>Library is a community meeting space – afterschool, book club, social gathering place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach to serve outlying areas where branches used to be, bookmobile once served</td>
<td>Authentic interest in preserving local history and landmarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral histories and recordings</td>
<td>Healthy community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with diverse communities</td>
<td>Adequate social services, i.e., mental health</td>
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<tr>
<td>More w/immigrant community</td>
<td>Adequate public transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital access</td>
<td>First place kids look for after school programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing diversity</td>
<td>No gangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversified economy – shift from Agriculture</td>
<td>Everyone is aware of, can and does access community resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase ethnic, cultural, language diversity</td>
<td>Information literate community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local history/regional uniqueness</td>
<td>Culturally interactive community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books in other languages – Spanish, Punjab, Arabic, Farsi, etc.</td>
<td>Adequate digital infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>World language materials other than books (music, DVDs, etc.)</td>
<td>More support for mental health/substance addiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures, speakers, cultural programming events</td>
<td>Welcoming to small businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult programs</td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County property adjacent?</td>
<td>Sense of pride</td>
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<td>Market and share other local resources, like the museum</td>
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## Workshop Three: Youth

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<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaming tournaments</td>
<td>More places to hang out with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video gaming</td>
<td>Excellent schools to attract families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and study nooks with comfy chairs and couches</td>
<td>Larger library space and collection – skylights – new and more furniture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bigger teen space – room to make noise</td>
<td>Resources to explore passions that could become future careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth advisory council</td>
<td>More library hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 hour service to line up with school schedule (mid-terms, final exams)</td>
<td>Gaming tournaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated &amp; ergonomic facilities – newer shelves and chairs; reading and study nooks with comfy chairs and couches; more electrical outlets</td>
<td>Electronics – Fry’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple copies &amp; larger selection of materials</td>
<td>Robots and drones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of outdoor spaces and courtyard</td>
<td>Community clubs/sports/programs to keep youth out of trouble – free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting rooms available for supporting community groups</td>
<td>Safer community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer &amp; internship opportunities – including literacy ESL</td>
<td>Locally owned cafes and shops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better Wi-Fi – stronger, faster; better internet infrastructure</td>
<td>Strong community role models – representative of the existing diverse groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology – library keeps up with technology improvement</td>
<td>Cleaner – more trees, better parks, beautiful landmarks, replace eyesores</td>
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## Workshop Four: Racially and ethnically diverse group of residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase awareness of all resources and services</td>
<td>Diverse culture understanding &amp; appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross generational connections – teens teach seniors computer skills, i.e., digitize family photos</td>
<td>Good jobs that keep people here; local talent stays in Yuba City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More community programs</td>
<td>Quality recreational opportunities for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open facilities to community groups</td>
<td>Good quality schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical expansion of facility (study space, computers, etc.)</td>
<td>Annual cultural food festival (last held in 2013) cooking classes, BBQ, games &amp; music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research connectivity</td>
<td>Intergenerational idea sharing across cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect/better serve changing adult literacy needs</td>
<td>Frequent community events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More computers</td>
<td>Newspapers, magazines in other languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicer building and more parking</td>
<td>Continuing to grow Yuba City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes and discussions on various topics of interest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public access to public parks and wildlife facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community center</td>
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