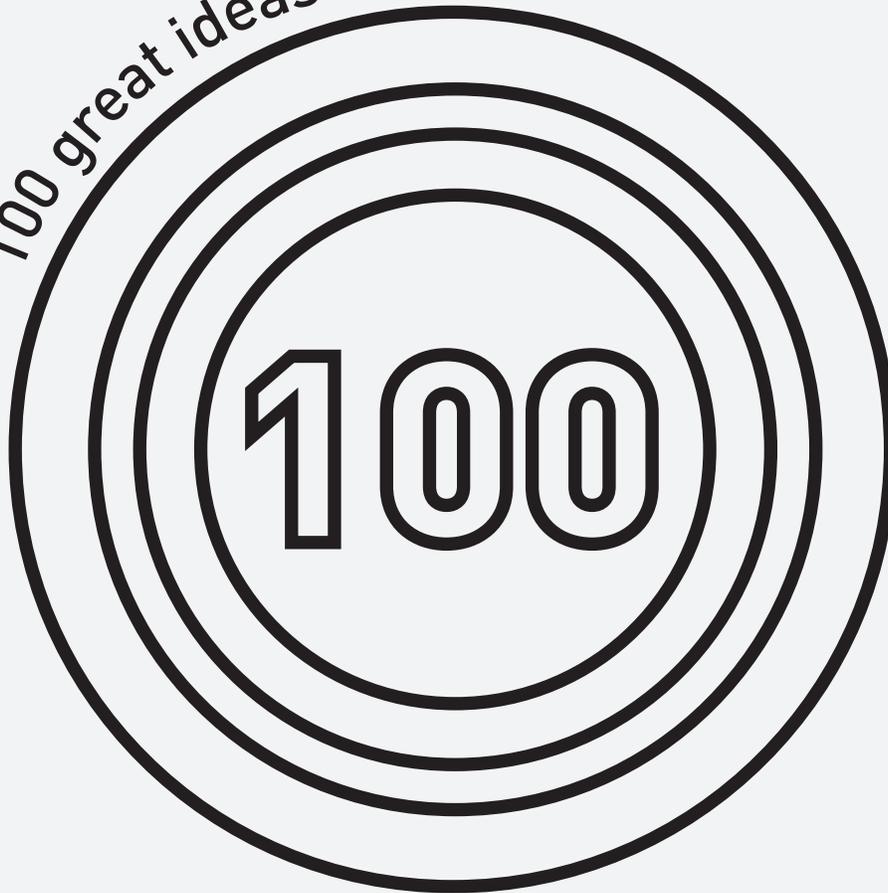


100 great ideas



The Future of Libraries

RADICAL PARTNERS
Social Change Accelerator

 M A D E R A
STRATEGIES + RESEARCH

WE WERE CURIOUS

What does it take to **democratize discussions** about community change?

What if changes were built upon a foundation of **community voices and solutions**?

What if people were invited to **solve critical community issues together**? Not just decision makers, elected leaders, and grant seekers, but all people.

What if we **lowered the barrier to entry for community engagement** so that people constrained by time and access could contribute? What if instead of narrow timeframes and structured mechanisms for feedback, people were invited to an open, solution-oriented dialogue?

WE EXPERIMENTED

100 Great Ideas is an experiment in open community dialogue and engagement around a critical community issue. We intuited that if given the opportunity, without obligation, hundreds of members of our community would care enough to actively participate through group discussion, idea-sharing and actual user-experience feedback.

Our first open discussion was about
THE FUTURE OF MIAMI-DADE LIBRARIES.

When the funding for our libraries were threatened, community members advocated to "save" them. But even with restored funding, our libraries are still not pushing the needle.

It got us thinking, "what would it take to quantum-leap our libraries forward? What ideas are living in the minds of our neighbors? How do those who actually use our library facilities think we can do better to grow?"

So we put together a group discussion, and asked...

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED

1 online community challenge

10 day campaign

600 group members

150+ ideas generated

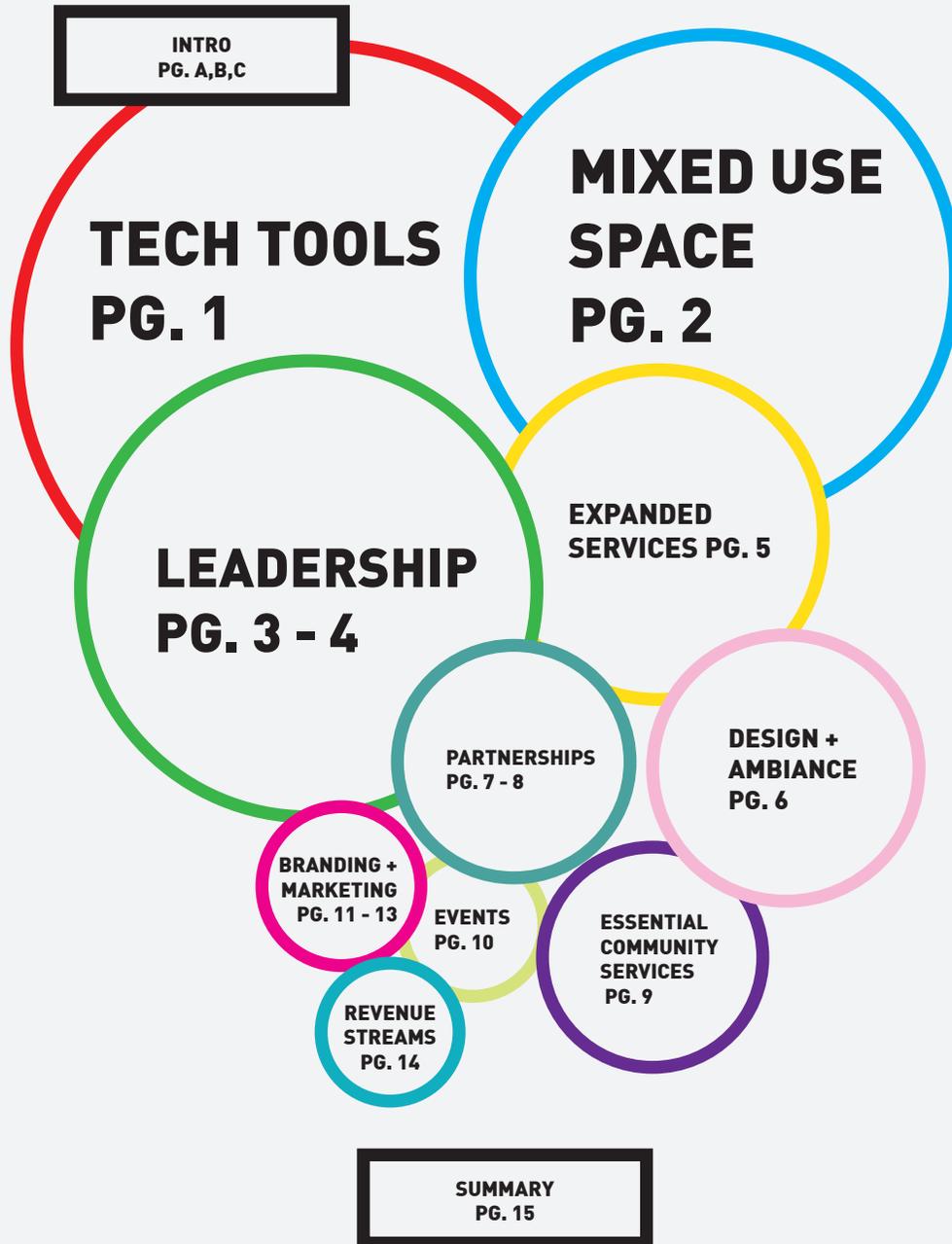
10 themes developed

**Ideas. Advice. Articles. Opinions. Images.
All contributions were welcome.**

Here's what emerged...

THEMES

The following themes emerged as we synthesized through ideas and comments, finding similarities and correlations between what was being discussed. The size of the ten circles below are representative of the popularity of each theme.



DISCLAIMER

*Some quotes have been trimmed or combined for clarity and length.

**Featured quotes are just a small sampling of the 150 unique contributions received.

To read them all, visit the public Facebook Group: **100 Great Ideas**

TECH TOOLS

What We Learned

If libraries' essential intent is to give people access to information and facilitate learning, we must update and upgrade to the new systems for accessing, interpreting, and engaging with ideas. Wi-Fi and computers are just the start of it. Rentals of high-tech devices, digital printers and maker-labs, mobile tech vans and music editing tools...the possibilities evolve every day and libraries must stay at the cutting edge.

Turn libraries into multimedia community centers. We have a huge digital divide across lines of race and socio-economic status and it would be great to have spaces with free and reliable Wi-Fi and up-to-date technology.

-Maxeme Tuchman

Libraries should provide resources for making high-tech programs accessible to students or people who can't afford the cost of Adobe software like Photoshop or Final Cut Pro, for example.

-Galena Mosovich

Create mobile virtual libraries with IT infrastructure that could access online research material.

-Jaret Davis

Offer university-grade research facilities and hands-on, collaborative, project-based spaces to explore STEAM subjects. : Computer literacy courses for Seniors. Relatable education about climate change. Holistic Nutrition. Farming practices and a community garden. Coding classes. Robotics and Computer Engineering classes.

-Yida Hernandez

MIXED USE SPACE

What We Learned

Libraries have the potential to be an epicenter of community engagement and collaboration...if they open their facilities to more purposes than just quiet reading and researching. By serving more than one function they maximize resources, draw people in, and create hubs of community activity. Serving multiple functions also enables expanded hours to cater to the true needs of the community.

Offer workshops, host events, feature works of art, have rooms for quiet and for activity. Serve multiple functions all at once.

Contributors:
Melissa Dynan, Victoria Fear + others

Libraries should serve as community co-working spaces. All that's needed is Wi-Fi, coffee, and a few spaces where noise is welcome.

Contributors:
Brian Breslin, Chris Adamo, Marika Lynch + others

Build up. Share facilities with post-offices or schools. Have offices or housing above to maximize space and generate revenue. Combine with YMCAs or other community facilities to create centers for activity.

Contributors:
Kamalah Fletcher, Leslie Miller Saiontz,
Ralph Rosado + others

LEADERSHIP

What We Learned

What do we want our libraries to be? And who is going to drive that vision? We are ready for hired, appointed, and elected leaders who approach libraries with aspirational, savvy, human-centered design and visionary community-centered eyes. We need leadership at every level to champion our libraries, and doers who are willing to do the difficult work of managing change through layers. Our leadership must also establish mechanisms for soliciting genuine input from the community, methods for observing and understanding their needs, and systems for benchmarking progress.

A not-so-novel idea: Keep libraries public; elect government officials who have the vision and courage to build a world-class library system accessible to the entire community; hire and adequately compensate passionate, hard-working staff to manage and operate said system; spend money informing and engaging the community.

-Ana J. Colls

How does the community decide? There's no mechanism for a vote. And some of the ideas, while great on paper, could end up being neutered into temporary stop gaps, or just be poorly executed and crap. This is why whoever the new director is, is probably one of the most important decisions Miami has to make.

-Nathaniel Sandler

LEADERSHIP

It may not be a sexy topic, but we as a community need to decide how much we're willing to pay for the building, operation, and maintenance of our public resources, their physical location, and the funding structure for ensuring that everyone (even those who can't afford it) have access to quality public facilities. As we saw in the recent budget debates, physical spaces such as libraries (and parks for that matter) are worthless if no one is willing to pay for their maintenance and operation.

-Ana J. Colls

I wish the library invested in investigating people's needs and wants across stakeholder segments. Why do people go to the library? Why do non-goers stay away? How might we design for what users really need and want? #HumanCenteredDesign

-Ezequiel Williams

Create ambassador and advocate programs to engage local community leaders.

Contributors: James Echols and Francine Madera

POINT OF INTEREST

Who are the key decision makers? What pressures must they navigate? What dates and timelines matter? Where are there windows for impact? Out of 600 people, not more than a couple knew at least one of these answers.

EXPANDED SERVICES

What We Learned

Libraries serve diverse constituents, with a vast array of needs and wants. Instead of scaling back in the face of changing times, libraries should consider the opportunity to become more relevant, and to expand their offerings in response to the changing needs of their constituents. .

Lend digital versions of movies, music, and audio books. Programs like "Hoopla" are especially important for people with disabilities.

-Allison Hertog

Check out a human. Have knowledgeable people at the library that anyone can reserve time to talk to. Scientists, knitting teachers, storytellers, and visiting artists with PAMM and Arsht.

-Marika Lynch

Libraries should be open every day, with regular hours. Different groups need access at different days and times

Contributors: Lisa Rhein + others.

Incorporate the success of open learning programs: offer space for groups/individuals to teach and/or take online courses and to use a variety of internet-based learning tools from Coursera to Skillshare and MIT to Harvard .

Contributors:

Marta Vicedo, Stephen Eichenbaum + others

Offer Maker-Spaces and rentals of things other than books. 3D Printers, laser cutters, power tools, multi-media equipment such as video projectors, video cameras, GoPro cameras.

Contributors:

Daniel Applewhite, Dara Schoenwald

DESIGN + AMBIANCE

What We Learned

Libraries have become a caricature of silent learning. Rows of aging books and lists of rules, noise-free, food-free, well-ordered spaces that are thirsty for life and vitality. In this digital and entrepreneurial new world, libraries are begging for a holistic facelift. While still maintaining some areas for silence, research, and independent work, libraries must open themselves as places for dynamic learning and engagement, communication, and collaboration.

Why not bring life to the library instead of trying to protect the space around it to the point of non-use? Remove the skate stops from the benches and invite life to thrive around the library. Encourage youth to come and express themselves. Create green space with benches and shade for those benches. Open cafes around or within the library and hold community book club meetings...poetry readings. Art exhibition spaces, technology centers, programming around the art of the book. The library should be a vibrant place for resources, reading, thinking, communication, and the creative process. #100greatideas

-Jayme Gershen

Librarians no longer need to be sound police and can turn their effort to being community builders.

-Bridget Dadd

Libraries need an internal makeover. -Blanca Mesa

Design in ways that draw people. Add lots of bike racks and make libraries the car sharing go-to locations.

#100GreatIdeas

-Carol Coletta

PARTNERSHIPS

What We Learned

Our libraries should foster partnerships with like-minded institutions to increase their impact and achieve larger community goals. From increased transportation to marketing of essential services, libraries should break down silos and leverage the offerings of others in order to draw more people in and serve the greater community good.

The Underline has an idea to adopt the South Miami library. The expanded trail will run right next to the library. We want the library to feel like part of the trail with an added outdoor living room, WiFi, bike repair station and rest stop, cafe kiosk, etc. #100GreatIdeas

-Meg Daly

Help out low-income communities by providing free trolleys that take folks to and from the library. Also, provide summer programs and incentives for parents in low income communities to visit the library with their kids.

-Raiza Lisboa

One thing that we find effective is to partner with other organizations or businesses to co-promote. Not only does this cross-promote to both organizations' fans, but the media seems to kind of like this stuff.

-James Echols

PARTNERSHIPS

I think it's critical to break down any silos we have in libraries. Libraries should be linked and strategically aligned to parks and other civic assets in our community. Libraries, when done right, can be centers for vibrant engagement. But in order to do that successfully, they must be working with the school system (no brainer), economic development groups, parks, museums, and other key groups that have shared goals and outcomes. It's not easy, but we can point to cities (e.g., Chicago) that are doing this well and making libraries more relevant to the community's needs.

-Lilly Weinberg

The NYPL reached an agreement with New York City to become the lending library for the New York public schools system – eventually making each of the 1.2 million students in the public school system a library member and allowing public school libraries to get any circulating book in the NYPL's catalog within 1-2 days.

-Ellen Book

In the spirit of collaboration and strategic resource sharing, we need to consider how libraries, schools, and universities work together. Most public schools are struggling to maintain and update their libraries, and public libraries struggle in the face of budget reductions. By uniting forces, public systems could be spared from having to develop full youth services programs, and school libraries could benefit from the vast resources of the public library system.

- Elliott Jones

ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

What We Learned

Libraries are well positioned to give people access to essential community services from tax help to immigration, GEDs to job searching. Many service providers struggle to access people in need, and those in need often don't know how to access what they need. Having areas where services are offered, relevant to the specific area, would draw people in, and would enable service providers and service beneficiaries to find one another.

Think of the library as a middle man distribution point for shared resources. Any resources.

-Ellen Book

MDCPS system should launch a High School Diploma program in the Main library.

-Amy Rodriguez

Add language labs. **-Meg Daly**

LOCAL RECOGNITION

The Library Partnership is a combined library and social service agency hub on NE 16th Avenue, where 30 social service agencies unite to offer community services within a library space. The partnership received national recognition from Harvard's Bright Ideas program.

EVENTS

What We Learned

Library buildings often lay empty at night when they could be hosting small and large scale events, activities, workshops, town halls and public outreach meetings. Design libraries to function as community spaces for a diversity of experiences, from book clubs to town halls, knitting circles to celebrations, movie nights to lectures.

Thousands of infants and toddlers are cared for outside of traditional child care centers. Its difficult to reach this network with information because there's no formal line of communication. Particularly in low income areas, these caregivers don't have access to learning and skills development. Public libraries can be hubs with drop-in resources for this kind of network.

-Lauren Haim

Libraries should offer space for peer-taught skills and crafts or bring in new audiences with concepts similar to maker spaces.

-Jessica Casi-Nelli

Why do libraries not host social events like every single museum does?

-James Echols

How about a venue for town-hall type discussions? Libraries should be the space to have real-life conversations and gain ideas from engaged citizens and young leaders about how to improve our communities.

-Christine Conforti

Fun Fact

Many libraries already host book clubs and a variety of community events (See next theme: Branding + Marketing)

BRANDING + MARKETING

What We Learned

Our libraries already offer many innovative programs and services, but people are largely unaware of the existing offerings. We must effectively communicate with the public and present the library in a way that aligns with their needs and wants, shifting the perception that our libraries are outdated and old, and highlighting their offerings as a source of pride and critical resource to the community.

Libraries and other public facilities do so much good on a daily basis but they have little to no funding/staff/resources to tell those compelling stories. They also lack a culture of bragging about all the great work they do. Don't think I've ever met an arrogant librarian.

-Ana J. Colls

So many great ideas seem to already be in place at our public libraries but many of us don't know.

- Francine Madera

MDPLS has been offering free music downloads from the millions in the Sony Music Database for about 2 years now. WHO KNEW?

-Ricci Yuhico

Increase interest [in libraries] and actively encourage library visits through local advertising such as newsletters and hosting membership drives.

-Bridgette Love

BRANDING + MARKETING

What about focusing on why libraries were originally created? As a center for scholarship and literacy...to showcase the prestige of a society to promote education and knowledge. I realize "times they are a changin," but technologies can be integrated into our libraries to provide us with modern interfaces and hardware that will assist to continue fulfilling the raw and basic purpose of libraries – to promote education and knowledge. I work with children and adults who crave a safe, quiet environment to breathe, to think, to read, to daydream, to create. Libraries will incubate our next Plato and Confucius; lets not forget this.

-Marissa Joy Leichter

Library promo in Vegas airport. **"The Library. It's a Classic. Books, Movies, Music, Downloads, Online Resources, Computers, Homework Help, Programs for All Ages, Author Visits, Book Clubs, Free WiFi."** (We need to position and market our libraries like this!)

-Ezequiel Williams

FUN FACT

Many libraries agree that a lack of effective communications and marketing is one of the biggest pain-points. It is also one of the lowest hanging fruit that could lead to increased utilization of libraries, without even creating new programming. (One local librarian submitted a related idea to the Knight Foundation's Library Challenge for a possible grant.)

BRANDING + MARKETING

It was noteworthy that many ideas requested already actually exist in our current library system. This led many people to see the value of strategically marketing existing services so that innovations are appreciated, used, and leveraged for further growth. The surprising assets our libraries already have that are largely unknown, and seemingly underutilized.

FREE Internet

Reading Ready

Free online tutoring

Talking Books

Free MAGAZINES

Connections - Service for the homebound

Mobile Printing

Assistive Services and Technologies

eBooks

Easy access to eGovernment information

Free MUSIC DOWNLOADS

Museum Passes

Numerous databases of various subjects

The Vasari Project: Art History Preservation

Specialized Research Librarians

Bookmobile

Patents and TMs

Jump Start Early Literacy Kits

Genealogy (MDC obits, tracking family lines, and more)

Project LEAD

REVENUE STREAMS

What We Learned

Libraries need to become fiscally sustainable, and self-generating revenue streams could offset the cost of increased programming and reduce dependency on outside funding resources. What does this look like? Selling food/coffee, offering highly sought after services at a nominal fee, fundraising campaigns, renting conference rooms, selling books and magazines, building gardens for engagement and profit.

Charge for additional services like conference space, occasional workshops/classes, photocopies, rentals of high-tech equipment like digital printers

**Contributors:
Allison Hertog, Emily Eisenhauer, Galena Mosovich,
Stephen Eichenbaum + others**

Turn libraries into aesthetically pleasing, comfortable community spaces where people want to meet. Offer local fare and fresh brews for a nominal fee.

-David Jessup, Jr.

Start a new tradition of having children make holiday cards that are sold to benefit the library.

-Mari Chael

FUN FACT

The most popular idea in the entire campaign was to sell coffee. A no-brainer in our humble opinion.

Coffee +
Reading

Happiness!

SUMMARY

The results of this initial discussion far exceeded our expectation. We reached #100GreatIdeas in just three days and the momentum kept going for the duration of the campaign. With the variety of voices, ideas, and themes presented, our key take away was that YES, the public is thirsty to engage and share ideas that affect decisions and change in their community when the barriers to entry are very low.

We are now taking the synthesis of this open discussion and sharing it with elected and appointed leaders and other influencers who play a major role in the shaping of Miami's libraries, so that the voices of the hundreds of participants can be heard at the decision making tables.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

OUR ASK is that you, as a key community influencer and/or decision-maker take the contents of this report and the following summary points into consideration moving forward as you are involved in strategies, processes and decision-making for our community:

Understand that the public DOES want to be involved in decision affecting its community, and that engaged communities are worth building.

Empathize with the need for low-barriers to entry in order to get the community involved.

Be willing to making changes to institutionalized systems in order to provide community needs and wants.

Observe people engaging with their libraries to unearth barriers and opportunities for improvement.

Leverage human centered design principles as well as feedback from the community in order to push beyond the obvious.

THANK YOU

Many thanks to the **hundreds of people who engaged** at some level in this dialogue. We are **exploring future topics** for **100 Great Ideas** community conversations and look forward to future collaborations, brainstorming sessions and solutions built from great minds **coming together in the spirit of community improvement.**

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