Four Branches: Renewed

One Goal: Achieved!

The Neighborhood Libraries Campaign

Celebrating Our Community’s Success
Berkeley asked, and Berkeley delivered.

Four years ago, local voters made it clear they wanted our neighborhood libraries renovated and rebuilt. Today, the Claremont, North, South, and West branches are shining examples of what is possible when we come together as a community. Four beautiful buildings are now open for business, welcoming record numbers of visitors and providing vibrant programming that connects you and your neighbors to each other and our world.

The Berkeley Public Library Foundation launched the Neighborhood Libraries Campaign to raise funds for essential interior items not covered by the bond measure passed by voters. This $3 million campaign set a common goal for our four branches: to ensure each was fully furnished, equipped with state of the art technology, and accessible to all.

Your response was truly inspiring. People from every walk of life gave what they could, from significant lead gifts, to small checks or online donations, to countless volunteer hours at every stage of the Campaign.

It’s time to celebrate, take stock, and renew our commitment to make Berkeley’s great libraries extraordinary.
Giving a Boost to Learners of All Ages

Learning is a lifelong process. Our branch libraries are set up to meet the needs of users of all ages. Areas for early childhood learning are now filled with imaginative furniture, like alphabet play-blocks or pinewood chairs carved with the images of native Bay Area wildlife. Grownup learners also have the tools they need: comfy chairs, computers, and redesigned community rooms for classes and meetings.

The Neighborhood Libraries Campaign outfitted new teen rooms with whiteboards for group projects and communal tables for homework. These closed-door spaces give teens autonomy — and give other library patrons a buffer from energetic young voices.

Your Campaign donations put comfy chairs in the North Branch teen room. Encouraging young people to read for pleasure transforms them into readers for life.
Taking Steps in the Right Direction

When it comes to economic mobility, many Berkeley residents — job seekers, small business owners, college applicants and more — turn to the library for financial instruction, assistance at tax time, and other essential help. Thanks to the Campaign, our branches have the facilities and equipment to help people take the next steps.

Some of us need a different kind of step up to improve our lives. Ladders, tools, and an array of gear for home and property repairs are available at the Tool Lending Library at the South Branch. Campaign contributions have helped this Berkeley resource extend a welcome to droves of eager users.

Connecting to a Universe of Possibility

In our breakneck digital age, anyone without computer skills and access to the internet can be left behind. The Campaign equipped each branch with new workstations and laptops and seamlessly integrated high-tech features into the historic branches.

Today, a growing number of library patrons use computers for email and social networking, to search for jobs and housing, and to stay informed. New equipment means that branches can offer computer training classes to help users keep their skills up to date and give everyone a place to plug in.

Computer use in the branches has tripled — a sign that your donations are making a big impact.

Your Campaign gift placed chairs, computers, and floor mats in the Tool Lending Library, where 45,000 tools are checked out each year.
Unlocking a World of Words

The new, spacious, and brightly lit West Branch is inspiring in so many ways, not least because it’s home to Berkeley READS, our life-changing literacy program for adults who struggle with reading and writing.

Once jammed into a closet-sized space, Berkeley READS now has a space of its own, with a dedicated entrance, reception area, common room with kitchenette, and teaching spaces — a warm environment for the courageous adults who walk through our doors to master literacy skills and transform their lives.

From the moment they enter and are welcomed at the new reception area, Berkeley READS patrons benefit from your generosity.

Counting Your Impact

85,257 Number of visitors to Berkeley’s Branch libraries in March 2014
39 Percent increase in people coming to new South and West branches compared to the old facilities
673,922 Items checked out at four branch libraries in 2013, a 38% increase
7 Number of laptops circulating at each branch in 2013 — before the Campaign there were none
52 Number of Berkeley non-profits and groups meeting in branch facilities during March 2014
1,016 Number of times patrons checked out laptops in 2013
87 Seats available at South Branch, up from 21 in the old building
45 Percent increase in public-access computers at North Branch since reopening
15 Chairs in the new children’s area for reading and programs at Claremont Branch
4 Number of state-of-the-art automated sorting machines — one at each neighborhood library
100 Percent of branches that are ADA compliant and accessible for patrons with disabilities, up from none before the Campaign

All statistical information comes from Berkeley Public Library data. We’ll continue to learn and share more about the impact of the Campaign, especially on the recently opened South and West branches.
Thanks to your generosity, and outstanding fiscal management by the Berkeley Public Library, the Neighborhood Libraries Campaign outfitted all four branches at significant savings, and completed the project under budget. With this savings and ongoing support from our community of donors, we can launch important new projects for the Library, and set aside funds for its future.

Thanks to you, our neighborhood libraries are stunning, 21st century facilities. Building on the Campaign’s success, and with your support, the Library is now exploring the use of space in the historic Central Library, visited by half a million people every year. Community meetings and a Foundation-funded study will inform improvements for the future.

The impact of our donors spilled over the Library walls this year, as the Foundation partnered with the Library on Branch Out! — an original month-long outreach campaign that led thousands of Berkeleyans to (re)discover their public library. You funded the creation of a bicycle book-mobile that will bring books, library staff, and services to farmers markets, parks, and street festivals. And you made possible special training opportunities to empower library staff to tap into the power of new technology and social media to reach future library patrons where many live — online.

As we celebrate great accomplishments, we look ahead with excitement to all we can do together.
Thank You for Making a Difference!

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