When you step into a library your world just got bigger. Whatever you need to know or understand the Public Library can get you started. Libraries remain a place to turn to for unbiased guidance and direction. Whether you want to learn a subject, advance your career, or ensure your child’s success, libraries are the place to start.
Why did we create this story map?

“The library connects us with the insight and knowledge... of the greatest minds that ever were, with the best teachers, drawn from the entire planet and from all our history, to instruct us without tiring, and to inspire us to make our own contribution to the collective knowledge of the human species.

I think the health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries.”

- Carl Sagan, Cosmos

This document celebrates the compelling ways libraries are adapting in the 21st century. Unfold this Story Map and discover a range of innovations across California Public Libraries. Just as in the world around us, libraries are in the midst of transformation. We face abundant opportunities.

Some people wonder if Public Libraries still matter – in a world beyond books. If judged by our usage, libraries are more relevant than ever. Libraries have always evolved to meet the needs of society. This is why libraries are embracing new technology while staying true to who they’ve always been: institutions of learning, advancement, and community revitalization. This document is designed to inspire dialogue, collaboration, and re-investment.

This Story Map reflects a range of innovations already taking place. Our goal is to help frame the conversation to increase funding, collaboration, and the collective imagination.

Starting in 2011, key leaders from California’s libraries gathered to tell the emerging story.
The Changing Landscape

We are living in transformational times. Public Libraries have a chance to fulfill their promise in new and exciting ways.

Society is reorganizing at a rapid pace. Technology is fundamentally changing our lives. What we read, how we learn, and how we find our way is very different. The rise of Google, Wikipedia, and e-books have led to an information revolution.

We need to reframe the story -- from deficit to opportunity. Some might think libraries don’t matter too much. In reality, libraries are more important and remarkable than ever. Public Libraries across California are innovating and adapting in creative ways. The future of libraries is an exciting story to share and engage people with.

7 Reasons why Libraries Matter

Libraries are more relevant than ever. Did you know usage of public libraries is at an all-time high in California? It’s because libraries are a rare welcoming place and resource for all.

1. There’s just no other public institution like a library:
   - Starting place for whatever you want to be next
   - Economic incubator for job search and small business acceleration

2. Where people often go for help during life transitions and personal reinvention
   - Valued source of free computers and internet access
   - Trusted institution for the preservation of local and cultural history

3. Helps people find information in an increasingly complex world
   - Gathering place and hub for the community (when few if any alternatives exist)

“You dropped $150,000 on an education you could have got for a $1.50 in late charges at the public library!”

- Matt Damon, Good Will Hunting
Understanding the Role of Librarians

Just as Gutenberg reinvented the book, technology is reinventing libraries once again. The information revolution has raised the public’s expectations. This means libraries have to digitize their collections, provide e-books, and embrace new technology to stay relevant. Libraries serve the culture they belong to. When the needs of the culture change, libraries must evolve to reflect the context.

People feel overwhelmed by the new dynamics and rules of life. Personal reinvention is on the rise. Whether you’re trying to find a new job, learn new technology, or ensure your kids succeed; you’re feeling under pressure. In a world of infinite knowledge, people don’t know who to trust or what to believe. Moving forward doesn’t happen in a straight line. Librarians have always helped people navigate the world. Information wants to be free, yet making sense of it is another story. That’s why the future of libraries goes beyond just digital technology. What happens before and after information is delivered? That’s always been the role and value of librarians. Let’s promote this bigger story.

“Libraries: The medicine chest of the soul.”
- Library at Thebes, inscription over the door

Libraries have always evolved alongside society and advances in technology.

With infinite sources to choose from, libraries must help people search, filter, and curate information for greatest relevance. Where do you look to find what you’re looking for?

With rising expectations for 24/7 connectivity, libraries must deliver information in the channels and formats the public demands most. How do you receive and consume information?

With so many perspectives available on any subject, libraries must help people choose which sources matter most. How do you know what information to trust and pay attention to?

Libraries have always done more than just deliver information. The real story is what happens before and after information gets in people’s hands. Librarians help to make sense and meaning of the world.

Harry Potter books first published since sold 450 million copies

Kindle e-reader released by Amazon

First interactive full length book on Ipad

Gates Library Foundation provides public computers for public libraries

Internet Popularized

Sputnik

Apple II computer developed in Silicon Valley

First of 2,500+ Carnegie Libraries

Dewey Decimal System

Library of Congress is founded

Ben Franklin, Library Company of Philadelphia

Women’s Clubs found 75-80% of public libraries

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Fahrenheit 451 is published

Google

Wikipedia

First Public Library on wheels

Library of Congress is founded

California State Library is founded

Gutenberg Printing press

Monks Manuscripts

Alexandria Library

Harvard University Library is founded

3rd Century BC

1381-14th Century

1440

1538

1731

1800

1850

1870-1930

1876

1883

1905

1909

1916

1953

1957

1971

1995

1999

2001

2011

1996

2007

2011

2015

2019

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HERE ARE SOME OF THE KEY ROLES THAT LIBRARIES PLAY WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY

**ACCESS**
Public libraries are dedicated to democracy and a belief that informed citizens create successful individuals and communities. Libraries ensure access to the material and digital world.

**COLLECT**
Public libraries collect and gather our local, state, and national memories, stories, and information so that generations of today and tomorrow have a context for the world they live in.

**CONNECT**
Public libraries are communication hubs in the community, which connect people, places, and ideas together to build stronger places.

**DISCOVER**
Public libraries support the discovery of information and ideas that lead to learning, innovation, and growth within the community.

**CREATE**
Public libraries are places that help the community to become creators of content. They offer services for telling both fiction and non-fiction stories of the community through words, sounds, and movies.

**FUTURE INNOVATIONS**
Libraries continue to evolve and respond to the unique demands of their communities. Librarians work with local government partners to help people start their first business. Libraries also offer jobseekers the resources and skills-building programs they need to find employment.

**ECONOMIC INCUBATOR**
Public libraries are hubs for economic development in their communities. They offer materials, programs, and services that support the development of small businesses. Many libraries partner with local government programs to help people start their first business. Libraries also offer jobseekers the resources and skills-building programs they need to find employment.

**CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY**
Public libraries connect a community’s resources for the benefit of all. In some communities, the library works with social workers to assist the homeless populations in need. Others focus on helping the education community build successful literacy programs. The library is a natural hub and trusted connector for cross-sector collaboration.

**LEARNING HUB**
Public libraries support learning throughout a person’s lifetime. They offer classes and personal assistance around the library, including technology, finance, and health. People can use computers to take online courses and complete class projects and homework assistance around life literacy skills.

**THE CLOUD**
Public libraries are embracing the evolving content needs of the public, including the rise of mobile devices. These needs include access to digital collections of books, music, and movies. Libraries offer access to digital collections of documents, letters, photos, and more. Libraries continue to create and curate more of these collections to ensure patrons have access in any format to meet their needs.

**ELECTRONIC ACCESS**
Libraries continue to evolve and respond to the unique demands of their communities. Libraries offer services for telling both fiction and non-fiction stories of the community through words, sounds, and movies.

**MAKER SPACE**
Public libraries provide spaces where people can find resources on any hobby for making just about anything they can dream about. Some libraries go so far as sponsoring programs and collections of materials that inspire people to build, assemble, and channel their creative selves.

**LENDING LIBRARY**
Public libraries collate, preserve, and connect people to information and ideas. This extends beyond just collections of books, music, and movies, to resources the community would like to share with each other. Lending libraries take many forms, including those devoted to construction tools, cooking utensils, and even subject matter experts.

**FAMILY GATHERING SPACE**
Public libraries provide programs and services that meet the local needs of young and aging families. Parents and caregivers can take their children to story time programs that help build early literacy and school readiness. There are also materials and support groups available for caregivers of aging family members. Libraries offer programs and services that are tailored to the needs of the community for future generations.

**CREATING LOCAL CONTENT**
Public libraries are now collecting, preserving, and connecting people to the stories of the community. Join a LaFayette of the Douglas County Public Library says that the Public Library used to bring the world to the community, but now brings the community to the world. Through words, sounds, and movies, people are sharing their local history to document the collective memories of the community for future generations.

**FUTURE INNOVATIONS**
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**CREATE**
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Help us tell the bigger story

This document is just the beginning.
We hope this Story Map inspires more dialogue and investment in your Public Library. Please let us know how your local community and stakeholders respond when you unfold this map and tell your local story.

The story is far from over or complete.
We need your help in collecting more innovation examples and expanding our common language. Together, we must develop a strategic plan for the future of California Public Libraries. Our stakeholders need a vision to inspire the collective imagination.

Help us answer these questions:
• How can we improve the perceived relevance of Public Libraries?
• What innovations and services can make the biggest impact?
• What areas should we target and prioritize for greater investment?

WE NEED YOUR VOICE AND INPUT
Please visit our website and add your voice to the process at www.library.ca.gov/

Who’s Behind This Effort?
Commissioned by the California State Library, this effort was championed by leading practitioners across the state including:

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Linda Crowe
Executive Director, Pacific Library Partnership

Rosario Garza
Executive Director, Southern California Library Cooperative

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Get Storied
Design:
TYTHEdesign

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