My library is a:

- Safe haven for kids & teens
- Second home for seniors
- Gateway for immigrants
- Career service center
- Neighborhood hub
- Champion of literacy & culture
- Shelter from the storm
- Smart community investment
New York City’s public libraries consist of three distinct systems: the Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library (which includes the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island), and Queens Library. Together, they served over 40.5 million visitors in 2011, more than were received by all of the city’s professional sports teams and major cultural institutions combined.

In 2011, NYC libraries collectively ranked in the nation’s top ten in terms of program sessions, circulation, and program attendance, but ranked below the top ten in terms of local government funding and hours open per week.

The shaded circles on the map at right indicate a half-mile radius. Most New Yorkers live within walking distance of a public library branch. There are over 200 branches throughout the five boroughs.
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Located in every neighborhood and open to all, New York City’s public libraries are priceless community assets. They help to acculturate new immigrants, educate and entertain children beyond the school day, prepare job-seekers for the 21st century knowledge economy, provide computers and internet access to the millions of residents without it at home, and make the world’s cultural and literary treasures available to everyone—regardless of age, income, or nationality.

Universally beloved and highly utilized, neighborhood libraries embody our most essential democratic values, doing more to level the playing field for all New Yorkers than any other city institution, public or private.

In the summer of 2013, the Charles H. Revson Foundation and WNYC’s Brian Lehrer Show sponsored the first NYC Neighborhood Library Awards. Over 4,300 residents from every borough nominated their local branches by responding to four questions: What are the main reasons you visit your local library? What does your library do to serve people in the community? How does your library create a welcoming environment? And why should your library win an award? Five winning libraries and five finalists were each awarded cash prizes, which were used for everything from toddler furniture, a projector, and a live jazz series, to cooking classes, a microphone for talent shows, and hundreds of books.

The thousands of nominations submitted for virtually every library in the city are testaments to the fact that all of NYC’s libraries are doing vital work for their communities and deserve to be recognized. The stories you’ll read in the following pages come from these nominations, written by children, seniors, immigrants, adult learners, artists, entrepreneurs, parents, and students representing the city’s many diverse neighborhoods. Together, they illuminate the myriad ways that local libraries enrich the lives of millions of New Yorkers and strengthen the social fabric of the city.

Julie Sandorf
President, Charles H. Revson Foundation
May 5th, 2014
SAFE HAVEN FOR KIDS & TEENS
Libraries are an invaluable resource for children, teens, and parents, providing a safe haven and wealth of activities for young people in communities where other after-school programs are nonexistent or prohibitively expensive.

Ronnie, a teenager in Alphabet City, Manhattan:
I visit this library mostly for advanced reading materials on the sciences and classic literature. I also like to involve myself in African-American history. I enjoy the work space where I can do my homework and chill out in a cool, quiet environment. The library is in a mostly poor neighborhood, so if people want to stay out of trouble they mostly come to the library, which is a pretty smart idea. But it’s not like the library is a stranger to the community. I mean it’s like a hotspot for people who need to get things done or who just want to relax.
Daniella, a student in Brooklyn: The Sheepshead Bay Library is one of my favorite places to go to. I call it: My Second Home. I always feel welcome here and everybody respects everyone, especially us children. There are so many fun programs, so forget about getting bored here. I am 11 now and am participating in library book discussions, poetry workshops, arts and crafts, talent shows, and sidewalk chalk art competitions. The library made me love reading and art.

A student at P.S. 235 in Brooklyn: Without the Canarsie Library, I would be lost in school since I use the computer there, I get school books and I study there. I am a straight "A" student and the library helped me with my path to success.

Jasmin, a student in the Bronx: I come from school and do my homework in the Belmont Library because it’s peaceful and I’m less likely to get distracted. This is where I go to look for books and where I get my research for papers for school. Everyone is so welcoming, and it feels safe to be in this library and it’s clean. To me basically it’s a safe heaven, a place where I just can catch a breather and read a good book because that’s what I like to do.

Lindsey, a student in Staten Island: I have six other people in my house hogging the internet so I spend a lot of time in this library for internet access. I try to come to the library as often as I can to do my homework. Whenever I need help with reports I know that the friendly staff will help me. I love visiting the library to find new books, just this week I read three. When you walk into this library you feel the troubles of the day melting away. It is truly a second home to me.

Malvina, a teacher in the Bronx: In the cultural desert that is this part of the Bronx, this library is a true beacon and sanctuary. It is particularly important for high school students who use it, long after their school is closed for the day. It is a godsend that the Baychester Library is so close.

Claudia, a parent in the Bronx: There are free music classes for kids at the Mott Haven Library on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. There were so many kids playing the cello, violin, clarinet and working with music teachers. I thought this was inspiring: in the south Bronx, kids are learning music.
LIBRARIAN STORIES

Kim in Brooklyn:
There was a young teen, about 14 or 15, and she wanted to run away from home. There wasn’t a script for dealing with patrons with such inquiries, but I know she came to the safest place she knew, her neighborhood library. We talked about resources the library offers, books and websites for dealing with traumatic experiences, and why she felt the need to run away. She still felt like she needed to leave home, and ultimately I called the police. I used my best judgment, as they are better trained in dealing with situations like this.

Camille, a high school student in Brooklyn:
I am a teenager whose life was totally transformed thanks to the library. As an intern for three years, I’ve been able to go from a shy, not very social girl with low self esteem, to a confident person and assertive worker. I am very grateful to this branch for aiding and supporting me, exploring and highlighting my hidden talents, and learning how to be confident in myself.

An artist in Brooklyn:
I use the Leonard Library primarily for its children’s groups that it provides. I am unemployed and a stay-at-home dad, and those groups are one of the only things my son and I can afford to do. I don’t know what I would do without it.

Johanna, a student in Ozone Park, Queens:
I visit this library because of the free tutoring. It really helped me with my grades in math. I also come for the Boost program because of its activities. The internet access is wonderful because sometimes my computer at home crashes and is useless.

Regina, an immigrant in Brooklyn:
I took my sister to this library when she was four. She protested the whole time—until she attended their arts and crafts group. She is now nine, and begs me to take her to the arts and crafts group that she stopped going to once she started school. She asks to visit the library to read, which for a child with dyslexia is an enormous accomplishment.
SECOND HOME FOR SENIORS

New York City’s seniors need places near their homes where they can easily access cultural resources, participate in intellectually engaging activities, and spend time with people of all ages—which is why so many treasure their neighborhood libraries.

Claire, a senior in Flushing, Queens:

As a senior who wants to stay active, the library is my anchor and go-to place. I go there for so many reasons—to pick up local papers and keep on top of issues and happenings in my community, attend concerts and events, do research for online college courses at CUNY, as well as pick up the latest Star Trek novels for relaxing reading. I took a beginning Mandarin class so that I can now sing karaoke in my largely Asian senior center by using romanized pinyin.
Bonnie Sue, a senior in Queens:
I am homebound and enrolled in the Mail-a-Book program in Queens Village. I am an avid reader and I always have multiple books that they have mailed to me. Not only do they send me books, but they have teleconferencing calls several times a week and Skype programs. The calls allow me to meet new people, socialize and listen to lectures.

Whenever you speak to anyone at Mail-a-Book, the conversation is warm and pleasant. I can call them for any problem and they are willing to find programs that would help me. Because of Mail-a-Book I am not sitting there looking at the four walls and TV. The isolation of the homebound is no longer a problem for me. Instead I am busy, busy, busy!

Selma, a senior in Windsor Park, Queens:
Having access to reading materials is very important to this 94-year-old. Traveling into Manhattan has its difficulties for me, so the special cultural events at my branch are greatly appreciated (music, art, book readings, etc.).

Lorraine, a senior in Manhattan:
This library and its librarians have been a personal support to me since the loss of my partner of 42 years. We both visited St. Agnes for all of those years. The current staff has been particularly attentive and supporting since my loss with their sympathy and friendship. This has provided me with the energy to continue my life in an atmosphere of welcome and belonging.

Three generations of knitters in Rockaway Beach meet at the library every weekend.

Libraries offer a variety of exercise classes designed for seniors, such as zumba, chair yoga, and ballet.

Lorraine, a senior in Manhattan:
I must tell you about my Kareem, the computer guru at the Mill Basin Library. What would I do without Kareem? Kareem has (in my opinion) a CBB Degree (Can’t Be Beat) in Computer Operations. I needed to do some research on cars at the beginning of the year. Who showed me how to access car websites, download data pertaining to cars and take tours of the interiors of various models of cars? Kareem did! I now own a 2013 vehicle as a result of Kareem taking the time to show me how to do research on the models of interest.

998,000
Number of seniors living in New York City

↑35%
Expected growth rate of the city’s senior population over the next 20 years
Betsy, a retired social worker in Manhattan: During the first two years of my retirement, the Yorkville Library has served multiple purposes for me. Primary among them was using the library’s computers to complete an online Medicare D form and to evaluate medical resources for my parents, who are in their nineties. Weekly computer classes have enabled me to fulfill volunteer responsibilities for non-profit organizations. I participate in the weekly book discussion group and attend lectures on health, financial and other issues. These experiences and resources have been integral to increasing my sense of self worth, and perhaps have, in part, staved off or delayed the onset of dementia.

Seniors are well-represented in the computer and technology classes offered at virtually all library branches.

Zelda, a senior in Manhattan: The library makes me feel welcome and assists me, a senior with multiple handicaps (sight, hearing, balance). They help me feel like a wanted individual.

Jennifer, a library volunteer in Manhattan: I teach a unique ballet class to older adults, which has become unexpectedly popular. The class started with a handful of students, and now we overflow the large community room with our 67th Street ballerinas, ages 50 to 87, from places as diverse as Thailand, Inner Mongolia, India, France and New York City.

The Mail-A-Book program is a lifeline for the homebound.

2 in 3 Immigrant seniors have limited English proficiency

95% Seniors living in NYCHA housing who lack broadband internet access at home

Angel, a senior in the Bronx, uses Career and Education Information Services (CEIS) at the library.

Susan, a senior in Queens: At the Friday knitting and crocheting class I get instruction as well as mingling with one of the best groups of ladies in Queens. I find this meeting to be very beneficial emotionally. I lost my husband two years ago and this group was right there for me.

Linda in the Bronx: An elderly Hispanic lady approached me at the information desk inquiring about computer classes in Spanish. At the time we only offered classes in English, but I told her I would do a one-on-one class with her on a Saturday morning if she was willing to try despite the language barrier. Bright and early Saturday morning, she appeared at the branch with her laptop in hand, ready to go. To my amazement, she grasped everything I taught her. The following week she returned with six other Spanish-speaking seniors, all eager to learn how to use the computer. Every time she comes to the library now she asks, “Do you remember me? I’m the lady who didn’t know how to use the computer.”
GATEWAY FOR IMMIGRANTS
The public library is the largest provider of services to immigrants in New York City. With free English classes, citizenship preparation, job search assistance, and a vast array of foreign language materials, it’s no wonder that the first thing many do upon arrival in the city is go straight to their local library.

Maiela, an immigrant in Staten Island:
When we came to this country, Anaeli, my elder daughter, was 4 years old. It was a bit difficult for her to adapt to this new culture and to communicate in another language. During her first years of school, her reading level was very low. Now she is in fourth grade, her reading level has increased hugely. This year she was the super-reader of the school. This award has increased her love of reading even more. If we didn’t have the library perhaps my daughter’s progress would not be the same.
Jing, an immigrant in Manhattan:
For new immigrants, English classes provided by the library are extremely helpful for them to get information, make new friends and improve English. Many of my classmates from the library’s English classes have found better jobs, got citizenship or entered colleges. My father reads Chinese newspaper everyday there. The rich collection in Chinese literacy helped him a lot when he first arrived in New York from Beijing.

Jurate, an immigrant in Queens:
I learned English reading books from the Woodhaven Library, now my sons borrow books from this library. My mother-in-law took English classes for beginners and jewelry making classes. She had hard time when she first came from the foreign country, but this library made her feel that she belongs.

An immigrant in Manhattan:
I never thought when I first came to this country that I will find people that wanted to help me without asking me for anything. Since the moment I had my first class (ESOL) I felt very welcome. I think helping the community to be integrated is amazing. I just have been here for four months and my English is getting better and better.

Yunona, an immigrant in Brooklyn:
Library help all of us who immigrate from different countries to survive and to come through the process of adaptation to new circumstances in new environment. I start to learn English and basic computer skills here. I became a register nurse and continue my education on Family Nurse Practitioner Program. When my daughter was a little girl, she attended all activities offered by the library, where she improve her skills in art. She graduated from LaGuardia High School for the Arts with the award in her major and got admitted to Pratt Institute to learn architecture. My father made a lot of friends participating in the chess class, and my mom learn knitting skills in the knitting class, making really nice clothes for family, friends, kids in the community shelter.

Vaughn, a student in Hollis, Queens:
Since the first day I landed in JFK as a 10-year-old immigrant to this very point in time as a relatively new U.S. citizen registering to vote for the very first time, the Queens Library system has been there for me and my family and many others like me.

Maggie, a student in Queens:
Before I enter community college, the Adult Learning Center in Flushing Library helped me a lot. I attend this program for around one and half year. I was not sure about my ability to study in college. The classes there helped me to build my basic English.

Rulx, an immigrant in New Lots, Brooklyn:
I been one year and six months in America. I learn English in this library. I take my advantage of opportunities. The main reasons I come are pre-GED class, use Wi-Fi, computer, take a book to read. I feel welcome when I coming in this library.
Branch libraries provide a lifeline to New Yorkers looking for jobs. Patrons can access the internet, hone relevant skills, polish their resumes, and receive personalized assistance with the search process.

James, a volunteer in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn:

I’m a Resume Troubadour. I help people create a resume and cover letter for immediate use, usually within one hour. I also provide the best job-seeking advice that I can. I love working with people and contributing my talents to the community, and I’m grateful for this library for giving me the opportunity to do so.
Shonda, a resident in the Bronx: The Woodstock Branch is a really amazing resource. Without this place I would have had nowhere to write my resume, and thus never would have gotten the job I now have, and would likely still be living on the street. I know there are countless others in the neighborhood that could echo this statement!

Anthony, a job-seeker in Brooklyn: The Macon Library has been a home to me since I was 15 years old. I come here to study for the GED, or just chill out. I also meet with James. Since he helped me put together my resume, I’ve received two calls about jobs.

Jackie, an immigrant in Staten Island: I have learned so much from the St. George Library, especially how to write a business proposal and get free advice from SCORE.

Judi, a library volunteer in Queens: As a paraprofessional, I monitor two special education students who volunteer weekly at the library for vocational experience. They organize books, magazines and DVDs and have begun to take on additional duties. The library has afforded these diligent and dedicated special ed students of mine a worksite that enables them to acquire valuable skills.

John, a job-seeker in the Bronx: The Grand Concourse Library is very helpful to the neighborhood. Everyone I know uses it. We’d be poorer without it. People I know found work because of this library.

Vreni, a teacher in Brooklyn: I visit the Cypress Hills Library to look for part-time jobs, to search for information on the internet, and to check out a good book. It’s helping me be an entrepreneur.

Keramesha, a job-seeker in the Bronx: I don’t have internet access at home. I visit the Parkchester Library for access to the job related laptops, which gives you extra time to complete applications online. I don’t know what I would do if my library wasn’t accessible.

Isidra, a resident of Brooklyn: I remember needing help with my resume and two of the employees, Leah and Sharon, went out and beyond to help me have the best resume I needed for employment. Well, the following week I was hired at St. Lukes Hospital for an L.P.N. position thanks to Leah and Sharon ensuring my resume was a good one.

Jacqueline, a resident in the Bronx: I came to the Career and Education Information Services Office at the Bronx Library Center for resume assistance and found so much more—encouragement, support and guidance. The staff helped me to believe in my skills and abilities once again. I know the right career opportunity is just around the corner.

Matt in Queens: A lot of employment requires online application. One man was very frustrated trying to fill out an online form for a shipping/receiving position, similar to a job that he had for years. We were able to fill out the form, and I called to verify they got it. I learned from that experience that a lot of these skills people perceive everyone has, it’s not true. Job information/tech services is a huge role for libraries.

Regina, a job-seeker in Staten Island: The library provides me with knowledge and information. I use the internet for work and job search. There are job fairs for the unemployed and financial seminars for everyone. It is probably the most important local community center that we have on the North Shore of Staten Island.

Rita, a blogger in Brooklyn: I visit the Cypress Hills Library to look for part-time jobs, to search for information on the internet, and to check out a good book. It’s helping me be an entrepreneur.

321,000
Number of New Yorkers who are unemployed

2,900,000
City residents who lack broadband internet access at home

9,300,000
Computer sessions logged by patrons in New York City libraries in 2011

62%
Increase in computer sessions logged by patrons of New York City libraries between 2007 and 2011

Photo credit: Opposite, Jonathan Blanc @ NYPL.
NEIGHBORHOOD HUB
As rare “third spaces” that allow community members to interact with each other outside of their workplaces and homes, branch libraries help to make neighbors out of New Yorkers of every stripe.

Anindita, a social worker in the Bronx:
I provide domestic violence services mostly to South Asian women. We chose the library because it’s a welcoming and safe environment. It has books in Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu, which makes everyone in the neighborhood feel like their existence is acknowledged. They see the library as a place for resources, a stepping stone to learn to navigate the larger system—help with domestic violence, but also careers and public benefits—a path toward independence and safety.
**Dereck, a resident of the Bronx:**
The Eastchester Library offers more than just an array of resources, it offers a portal of valuable interactions between the people of the community. It provides a gateway for individuals of different culture, ethnicity, and beliefs to come together and bring the community as a whole.

**José, a resident of Brooklyn:**
By helping deaf people like me by calling someone for my next appointment time and day. I am very appreciative with the librarians, their services are wonderful to me. I couldn't hear on the phone and struggle with IP Relays and on 711.com for deaf services. The librarians helped me to call my workers.

**Fournier, a parent in the Bronx:**
When I was and still is homeless they let me and my daughter sit down and relax until the library closes.

**Joy, a senior in Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn:**
Quite frankly, the Jerome Park Library is the heart of the neighborhood. It acts as a meeting place of sorts for the community it so excellently serves. It is where one meets people one otherwise would not encounter.

**Irma, a retired teacher in Queens:**
Staten Island has become home to a multiplicity of ethnic cultures. Library announcements and other fliers are available in several languages. There are summer reading programs, book discussions groups in both English and Spanish, knitting, English as a Second Language, a mah jongg group, as well as a program for tots. The library truly embodies community spirit with something for everyone.

**Phillipe, an immigrant in Brooklyn:**
Library events are wonderful and help to create community in a city where that is sometimes missing. This library, like many others, serves as a modern-day town square in our neighborhood.

**LIBRARIAN STORIES**

**Christian in Queens:**
I got to know this guy in Jamaica, Queens who was just back in the neighborhood after doing some time in jail. He LOVED the respect and service that we gave him at the library. It meant a lot for him to be treated as a man with dignity. He even told me once, “You and my momma are the only two people keeping me out of trouble right now.”
Kids and families enjoy the children’s reading room at Hamilton Fish Library in the Lower East Side.

94% Americans who say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community.
Libraries have brilliantly adapted to our wired age, providing patrons with internet access, computer courses, and an array of activities not traditionally associated with libraries. But the classic role of libraries as places where anyone can explore humanity’s cultural and intellectual achievements remains as important and appreciated as ever.

Shiuli, a Literacy Leaders program associate in the Lower East Side, Manhattan:

In the Literacy Leaders program at the library, high school students are trained to help first and second graders improve their reading and vocabulary by working together two or three afternoons a week. We build literacy skills through guided reading, discussions, and interactive programs on iPads. The kids especially love it when we send them out to the stacks to choose the books that they are most excited about.
Amber, a teacher in the Bronx: Adults in the South Bronx need access to information, work spaces, and services. We don’t have many book stores, coffee shops, or other similar types of multi-use study and meeting spaces. The library is so powerful because it is open to all ages, cultures and incomes. Middle school kids shouldn’t need to get on a train to Harlem, midtown or Parkchester to have a good selection of books and media on interesting topics.

Natasia, a resident of Jamaica, Queens: I have no room in my budget to watch all the movies and read all the books and study all the things I’m interested in. But the library makes it possible for me.

Raisy, a student in the Bronx: Since I love to read, I check out books about almost every topic, but I mostly like YA-fiction books. If the library wasn’t there for me, I wouldn’t be able to satisfy my hunger for books.

A parent in East Harlem, Manhattan: My son Diego and I visit this library to borrow books to read right before bed time. Diego loves borrowing chapter books and exploring their science and non-fiction sections. It’s our weekly tradition to stop by and spend time browsing through the different titles. We can’t afford to buy books at Barnes & Noble or other book stores, my husband is unemployed so this branch has become a wonderful destination and resource for our family!

Suzanne, a parent in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn: The children’s collection is excellent. Whatever we are studying at home, we can always find source material. The librarians are so friendly and helpful, sometimes even suggesting other books that might help in our studies. The easy access to a huge variety of children’s books has played a large part in my son taking to reading early, and has encouraged his very real love of reading.

Andrew, a former Brooklyn resident: Once a week, my mother and I would walk to the Stone Avenue branch to borrow Babar, Madeline, and other assorted children’s books. Those visits made me become addicted to the smell of the library, to books, and to amassing information in general. I am currently a professor in the CUNY system. I owe it all to these beginnings.

Bernard, an artist in Harlem, Manhattan: This library has been a sanctuary for many Harlem residents. I belong to a book club: the Harlem Literary Society. I also enjoy the programming of artists and playwrights. The art displayed in the main reading area is gorgeous.

1,500,000
Number of low-literacy adults living in New York City
SUPERSTORM FROM THE STORM

Superstorm Sandy was the deadliest hurricane of 2012; a storm surge topping nine feet hit New York City on October 29th. In its aftermath, libraries in heavily affected neighborhoods provided services and support to residents who had no other place to turn.

Catherine, a resident of Rockaway Beach, Queens:

What does the library do when a hurricane devastates the entire peninsula? Why you send in the Little Yellow School Bus! You wear your scarves and mittens in the cold and still do the job. At Christmas you bring stuffed animals, a balloon man, and books to keep the children reading. You set up a clothing table and direct people to hot food services, start children’s programs, put out games, and help with forms for FEMA. And you do this six days a week for months while the community begins to recover.
Angela, an artist in Brooklyn:
The Far Rockaway Branch was the center for a huge number of people in the Rockaways who were living without electricity, phone service and resources in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Not only did it function as a shelter and meeting point, but it was a food distribution center with more organization than any other center I found. There were lines around the block each day, and the library staff made sure all the food and supplies were divided into individual-sized portions and that the line moved in an orderly fashion. They not only knew what to do at the library, but they did it immediately and they did it right.

An immigrant in Brooklyn:
People who were affected so badly by the hurricane as we were, came to the Sheepshead Bay Library to restore themselves, attending programs and workshops: art of writing for stress relief, express your emotions through writing, art of positive thinking, some of those programs for our children and not only in English, but Russian and Chinese languages as well.

$19 billion
Cost of damages in New York City caused by Superstorm Sandy

2,000,000
Number of New Yorkers without power immediately following the storm

30,000
City residents left homeless after the storm

A parent in Brooklyn:
When Hurricane Sandy occurred, the Kings Bay Library passed out vouchers for FEMA trying to be of assistance to those who lost homes and other valuable properties. They were trying to be of any assistance they could be.

A resident of Staten Island:
In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the New Dorp Library staff sorted clothes and helped distribute food to community victims at a local relief center and also organized a financial relief workshop in the library itself.

A resident of Queens:
Arverne Library was hit hard by Sandy, however this did not stop them from being there for the community with coat drives, internet access, and free Wi-Fi.

Tracy, a GED instructor in Queens:
Arverne Library, though devastated by Hurricane Sandy, provides not just traditional library services to residents but also computers and internet access, training on a wide variety of subjects, help on resume writing and finding a job, GED test preparation, and Microsoft certification. Perhaps [more funding] could help expedite the restoration of the building so that the staff and community can reestablish much-needed programing to a community still crippled by Sandy.

A resident of Brooklyn:
Gerritsen Beach Library does more than lend books and provide free newspapers and internet access. It is an anchor in a neighborhood that was destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. Without this library there is no community, there is no place for residents to gather, talk about the community, and borrow books to take them to far away places.

Paul, a community group representative:
The Red Hook Library was inundated with 18 inches of water during Hurricane Sandy, and was closed for several months following the storm. In spite of its condition, the library was opened up as a warming center during the cold spell that followed the storm, as many Red Hook residents were without heat or electricity, and many more were rendered homeless by the flood.

Alice, a resident of Queens:
Peninsula Library is a tremendous resource to a very damaged community. The staff worked out of an unheated trailer for several weeks. They provided an island of sanity on a peninsula in chaos.

Shelter from the Storm
SMART COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Despite budget cuts and perennially uncertain funding, libraries go above and beyond to serve their patrons. Additional resources would allow them to do even more.

Taneya, a librarian in Brooklyn:

I started my career as a journalist, but never lost my childhood desire to be a teacher, dancer, and an artist. Growing up, I envisioned a space where I could combine these loves with transformative social services—and I do that as a librarian. Malcolm X said the library was his alma mater, and that still resonates today. It’s truly the “People’s University.” We offer hundreds of free resources, and see the tangible results in the community. For example, a winner of our business competition now partners with a local farmer’s market to bring affordable healthy food to the neighborhood.
An artist in Sunnyside, Queens: This library is an important resource. The past couple of years the hours that the library is open has been decreasing, and I believe that this is a detriment to our community. Students, seniors, and the general populace should be able to count on the library to be open seven days a week, and this is just not possible with the current state of library funding.

A resident of Harlem, Manhattan: While this library does what it can, it is very over used, and very under serviced. Many people in the community use this library, and they need new services, more books, and to get a bit more up to date. Many people rely on that library for vital resources, so additional help is absolutely needed.

Clare, a parent in the Bronx: My children go to the library every day after school to do their homework with classmates. Whenever it rains a lot, the library gets flooded, especially in the children’s section. When this happens, arriving families are turned away and this always makes them frustrated and sad. It would be so nice to have funds to make the necessary upgrades for flood prevention.

Mary, a job-seeker in Manhattan: We have a tiny branch in terms of the physical space but a huge branch in terms of positive impact! Not only does our branch try harder, it does so much with the little it has. More money would open up so many other wonderful possibilities! I know our staff to be hard working and imaginative. More money would enable them to make more of their dreams a reality!

Yomara, a resident of Manhattan: Spanish Harlem doesn’t have the fanciest library branch but they certainly have a lot of visitors stopping by and I know these funds could improve the branch. This is a neighborhood with a high density population, we have blocks and blocks of high rise public housing units. This would be a great place to invest money because it would reach a large number of low-income and working class people and uplift those who need it most.

Susan is the assistant manager of the Peninsula Library, which has not been rebuilt since being destroyed by Sandy a year and a half ago. Despite operating out of a trailer, it’s still heavily used by neighborhood residents.

Susan, a parent in Park Slope, Brooklyn: This library is heavily used and heavily loved by every member of this vibrant neighborhood, yet it clearly does not have the resources it needs and deserves. In the summer its air conditioning system roars ineffectually, and in all seasons it is just too under-furnished for all the people who love to spend time there. Its book selection is strong and thoughtfully assembled, but nowhere near the size and scope its patrons would like and would use. And yet the staff is so generous, so happy to see you, so undaunted in the face of meager resources that they deserve recognition and additional resources!

Brynne, a student in Staten Island: Mrs. Amy and her staff at Tottenville Library are very friendly. They try their best to work with what they have but also have big plans. They decorate the library in many themes throughout the year. When you see all the little kids amazed at how it is decorated you can’t help but smile. They are able to turn paper towel rolls into a giant elephant and turn the library into a jungle.

Yomara, a resident of Manhattan: Spanish Harlem doesn’t have the fanciest library branch but they certainly have a lot of visitors stopping by and I know these funds could improve the branch. This is a neighborhood with a high density population, we have blocks and blocks of high rise public housing units. This would be a great place to invest money because it would reach a large number of low-income and working class people and uplift those who need it most.

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2013 NYC Neighborhood Library Awards

The inaugural NYC Neighborhood Library Awards recognized ten outstanding branch libraries:

Winners:
Corona Library  Corona, Queens
Macon Library  Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
New Dorp Library  New Dorp, Staten Island
Seward Park Library  Lower East Side, Manhattan
Sheepshead Bay Library  Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn

Finalists:
Aguilar Library  East Harlem, Manhattan
Kings Bay Library  Sheepshead Bay/Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn
Parkchester Library  Parkchester, the Bronx
Queens Village Library  Queens Village, Queens
Tremont Library  Claremont/Bathgate, the Bronx

The winners and finalists were selected by a panel of judges including R.L. Stine, author of the beloved Goosebumps series; Kurt Andersen, author and host of WNYC’s Studio 360; Carla Hayden, CEO of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore and former president of the American Library Association; Fatima Shama, former NYC Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs; and Don Weisberg, president of the Penguin Young Readers Group.

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More information

If you’d like to learn more about the NYC Neighborhood Library Awards and how you can participate this year, please visit nyclibraryawards.com.
For more ways to get involved in supporting New York City’s libraries, check out savencylibraries.com. To find out what’s happening at your local library, visit bklynpubliclibrary.org, nyp.org, or queenslibrary.org. For information on the Charles H. Revson Foundation, visit revsonfoundation.org.
Endnotes

6 1,100,000 children attend public schools in New York City

12 908,000 seniors live in New York City

14 2/3 of immigrant seniors have limited English proficiency

19 3,000,000 immigrants live in NYC

22 321,000 New Yorkers are unemployed
New York State Department of Labor, Labor Force and Unemployment Data, Apr. 2014.

28 94% of Americans say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community

33 1,500,000 low-literacy adults live in New York City

36 $15 billion in damage caused by Superstorm Sandy

41 From 2002-2011 NYC libraries experienced:
99% increase in circulation
40% increase in program attendance
8% decrease in city funding
New Yorkers from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island and Queens share what they love about their neighborhood libraries.