



UNC
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How to Think about Public Libraries in Active Living

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Slides and Handout available online at: <https://www.LetsMoveLibraries.org/ALC2020>

Background and Purpose. According to the American Library Association (2018) “significantly more voters today describe the library as a place that ‘offers activities and entertainment you can’t find anywhere else in the community’ than did in 2008, and more believe this is an important role.”

These new “activities” taking place in public libraries include physical activities. The American Library Association (2014) shows that over 23% of the 16,568 public libraries in the United States have offered fitness classes. This talk illustrates how to think about public libraries in active living through the local story of the **Orange County Library System** in Orlando, Florida, and the national story of **Let’s Move in Libraries**.

Description. Since 2016, **Let’s Move in Libraries** (LetsMoveInLibraries.org) has grown to include over 2,000 librarians and library supporters. Data collected and analyzed as part of this work include: 1) a survey of 1,157 public libraries in the U.S. and Canada, and 2) a collection of over 2,000 online publications that describe libraries offering everything from StoryWalk in the park programs to bike shares. This broad picture of public libraries supporting active living receives local detail in the story of the Orange County Library System, which since its origins in the 1920s has existed to improve the quality of life in the greater Orlando area.

With sixteen branch locations, OCLS is easily available to the majority of Orange County’s 1.3 million residents. Today the library is established within the community as a place to engage in amazing experiences and opportunities to learn, explore, create, and be physically active, from babies to seniors!

Specific active living offerings at OCLS include weekly or monthly yoga and zumba classes for children and families, movement-based programs for Pre-K, Tai Chi and walking programs for older adults, and a Nature Walk Book Club. Partnerships with many groups and institutions enable the library to offer these programs.

Lessons Learned. The **public library adds value to local efforts to increase active living**. Promoting active living is not the primary mission of the library, but, like faith-based institutions, it is an ancillary role facilitated by the deep embeddedness of libraries and librarians in their communities.

Conclusions, Implications, and Next Steps. The next steps are up to you. What partnerships will you start with your local librarians to increase physical activity? We will continue to promote active living at the Orange County Public Library System, and across North America. Will you join us?

References. American Library Association. 2018. From Awareness to Funding: Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018. <https://www.oclc.org/research/awareness-to-funding-2018.html>

American Library Association. 2013. Public libraries play vital role in advancing health literacy.

<http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2017/04/public-libraries-play-vital-role-advancing-health-literacy>

Stay involved and connected at **LetsMoveInLibraries.org!**

Bibliography of Research & Policy Literature on Active Living in Public Libraries

Part 1 – Studies of Active Living Interventions

Bedard, C., Bremer, E., & Cairney, J. (2020). Evaluation of the Move 2 Learn program, a community-based movement and pre-literacy intervention for young children. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 25(1), 101-117.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2019.1690645>

Description: In this study, four public librarians in **Southwestern Ontario** trained to lead Move 2 Learn program. Libraries were selected because they had space. **Findings:** “The results of this study demonstrated the feasibility of teaching staff without specialized training in physical education to implement Move 2 Learn.”

Ryder, H. H., Faloon, K. J., Lévesque, L., & McDonald, D. (2009). Partnering with libraries to promote walking among community-dwelling adults: a Kingston Gets Active Pilot Pedometer-Lending Project. *Health promotion practice*, 10(4), 588-596. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839907311049>

Description: In five **Canadian public libraries**, 90 pedometers were made available. 41 library patrons completed a survey about their walking patterns and pedometer use. More than 330 loans were made. **Findings:** Chi-square analysis found significant associations between walking and motivation to walk more ($p < .05$), walking and goal setting ($p < .05$), and motivation to walk more and setting a walking goal ($p < .001$).

McGladrey, M., et al. (2019). Extension as a Backbone Support Organization for Physical Activity Promotion: A Collective Impact Case Study From Rural Kentucky. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2018-0552>

Description: “Multisectoral approach” to development of rural physical activity promotion coalition in **Clinton County, Kentucky**, includes public libraries as key stakeholders.

Part 2 – Studies of Natural Practices of Librarians

Celano, D. C., Knapczyk, J. J., & Neuman, S. B. (2018). Public libraries harness the power of play. *YC Young Children*, 73(3). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/jul2018/public-libraries-harness-play/>

Description: From 2013–2016, researchers visited 36 library systems and 57 different branch libraries **throughout the U.S.** **Findings:** Observations of library storytime programs showed that librarians trained in Every Child Ready to Read were “much more likely to include music and large- and small-motor movement—all contributing to a fun atmosphere that encourages parents and children to play together.”

Whiteman, E. D., Dupuis, R., Morgan, A. U., D’Alonzo, B., Epstein, C., Klusaritz, H., & Cannuscio, C. C. (2018). Peer reviewed: Public libraries as partners for health. *Preventing chronic disease*, 15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd15.170392>

Description: Survey of **Pennsylvania** public libraries (n=262). **Findings:** Librarians frequently interact “with patrons around health and social concerns” including help with “nutrition (70%), exercise (66%).” Survey also finds a little under 50% of libraries said they offered physical activity programming, including Tai Chi and outdoor recreation programs.

Appalachian Regional Commission, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2018). *Exploring Bright Spots in Appalachian Health: Case Studies*. https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=145.

Section on **McCreary County** focuses on Kay Morrow, library director: “Always eager to make a better life for residents here, Morrow is spearheading efforts to rebuild the crumbling sidewalks downtown, secure more lighting at night, and organize a downtown walking club to boost physical activity.”

Part 3 – Public Libraries in Active Living Policy

Philbin, M. M., Parker, C. M., Flaherty, M. G., & Hirsch, J. S. (2019). Public libraries: A community-level resource to advance population health. *Journal of community health*, 44(1), 192-199. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-018-0547-4> States public libraries are “an opportune space for the coordination and delivery of health-promoting services,” including “physical activities such as yoga and Tai Chi.”

Matz-Costa, C., et al. (2019). Peer-based strategies to support physical activity interventions for older adults: A typology, conceptual framework, and practice guidelines. *The Gerontologist*, 59(6). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gny092> States “Peer-based strategies can be implemented in a variety of different settings, [including] a community location like a Council on Aging or **public library**.”

Wahowiak, L. (2018). Libraries, public health work together on community health. *The Nation’s Health*. <http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/48/8/1.2>. The fourth most read story in this newsletter during 2018 highlights public health and public librarians working together on yoga classes, bike shares, exercise classes for seniors, etc.

Miller, C. E., & Chandra, A. (2018). Measuring progress toward a culture of health... at the library. *Health Affairs*, 20. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20181119.551788/full/> Article by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and RAND corporation staff highlights innovative approaches to health promotion in public libraries, including bike shares.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2017). *Achieving Health Equity: Fun and Fitness in a library parking lot*. <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/features/achieving-health-equity.html>. Video #6 in series highlights efforts of public library in Monterey Park, California to promote health equity by opening library parking lot to community exercise group. Direct link to video: <https://youtu.be/ES5tQCRCyeI>

Children & Nature Network and the National League of Cities. (2019). *Libraries as Nature Connectors*. https://www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/CCCN_NatureLibraries.pdf

States public libraries can facilitate nature connections through StoryWalk® programs, lending nature backpacks, and youth-led nature experiences, among other programs.

More articles at LetsMoveLibraries.org/ALC2020