

# Libraries as Gateways to the Outdoors

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Let's Move in  
Libraries



**UNC GREENSBORO**  
School of Education

# Let us know in the chat:

- 1. Who are you?**
- 2. Why are you here?**

# Prologue

The gardens are a cooperative project between the American Indian Community Housing Organization and the Duluth Public Library.

**Jun. 2, 2021**



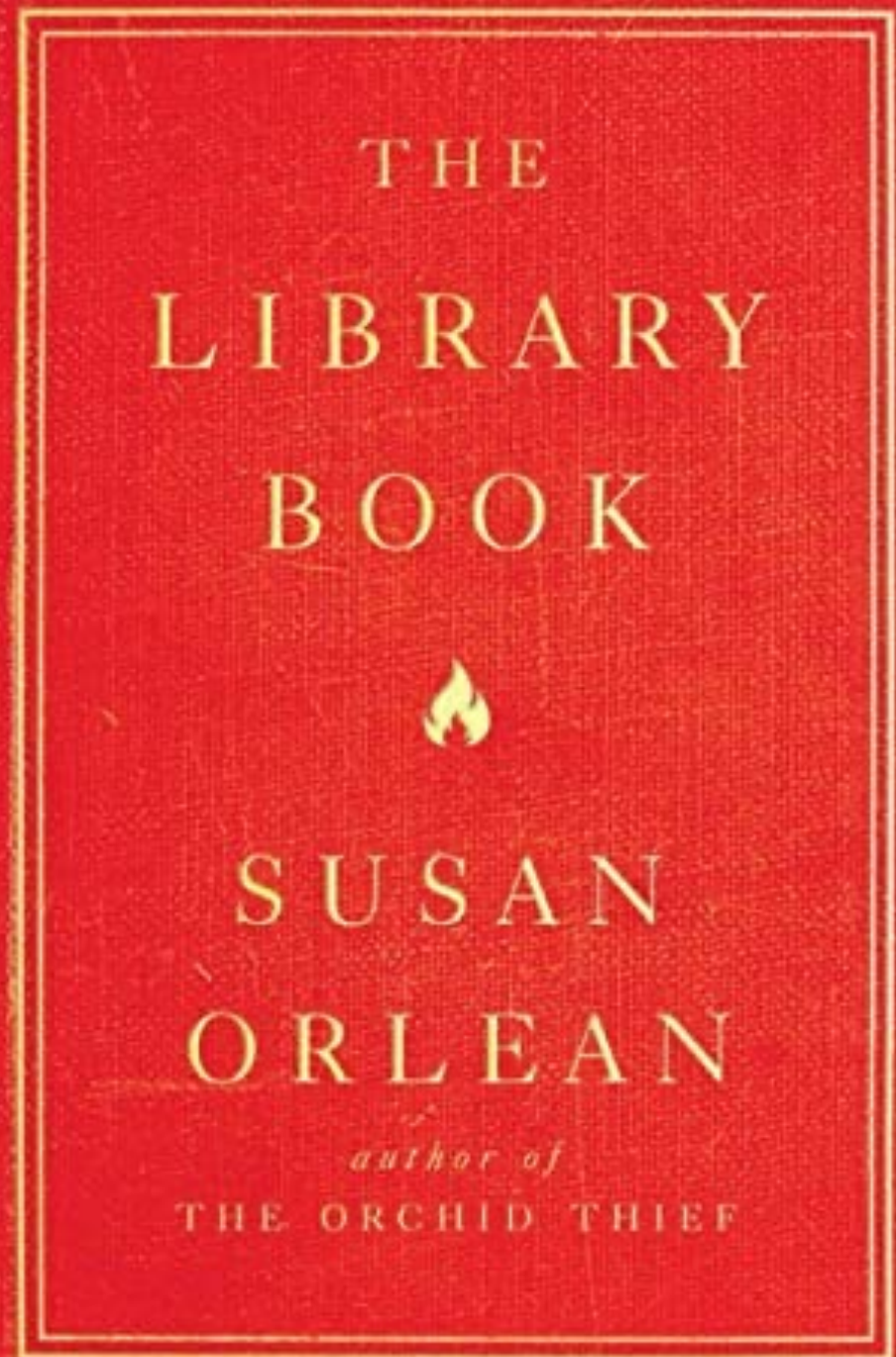
Durowaa Agyeman-Mensah (left) and Ann Perrin, both of Duluth, place bamboo poles in a garden on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, at the Duluth Public Library downtown branch. The gardens are a cooperative project between the American Indian Community Housing Organization and the Duluth Public Library. AICHO plans to make signs describing each plant in English and Ojibwe, which will later be put up this summer. (Clint Austin / [caustin@duluthnews.com](mailto:caustin@duluthnews.com))



## Prologue

“It will not be a toy garden with terracotta teacup flowers, but a real garden,”

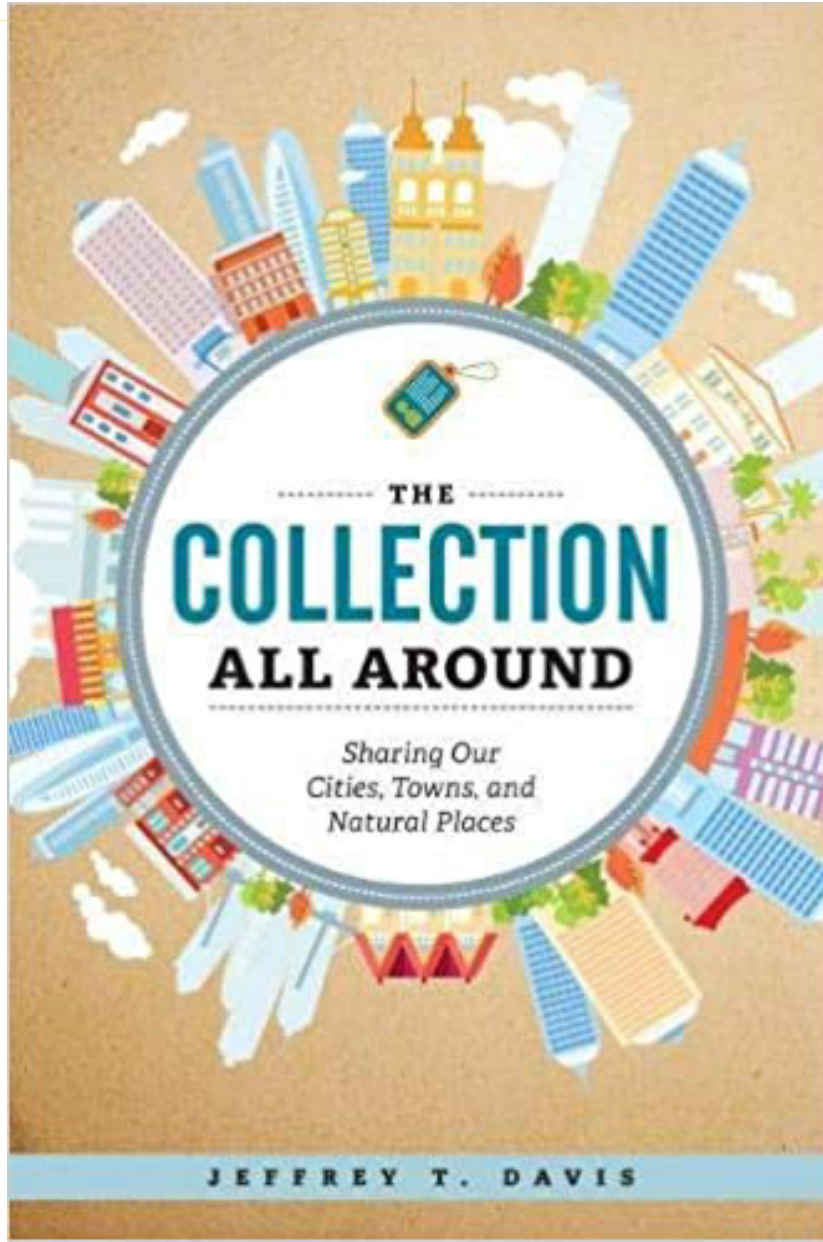
Los Angeles City Librarian Charles Fletcher Lummis in 1906 about plans for a rooftop garden, quoted on page 147





# Prologue

**ALA** Editions  
Neal-Schuman



CARRIE SCOTT BANKS | CINDY MEDIAVILLA



# LIBRARIES & GARDENS

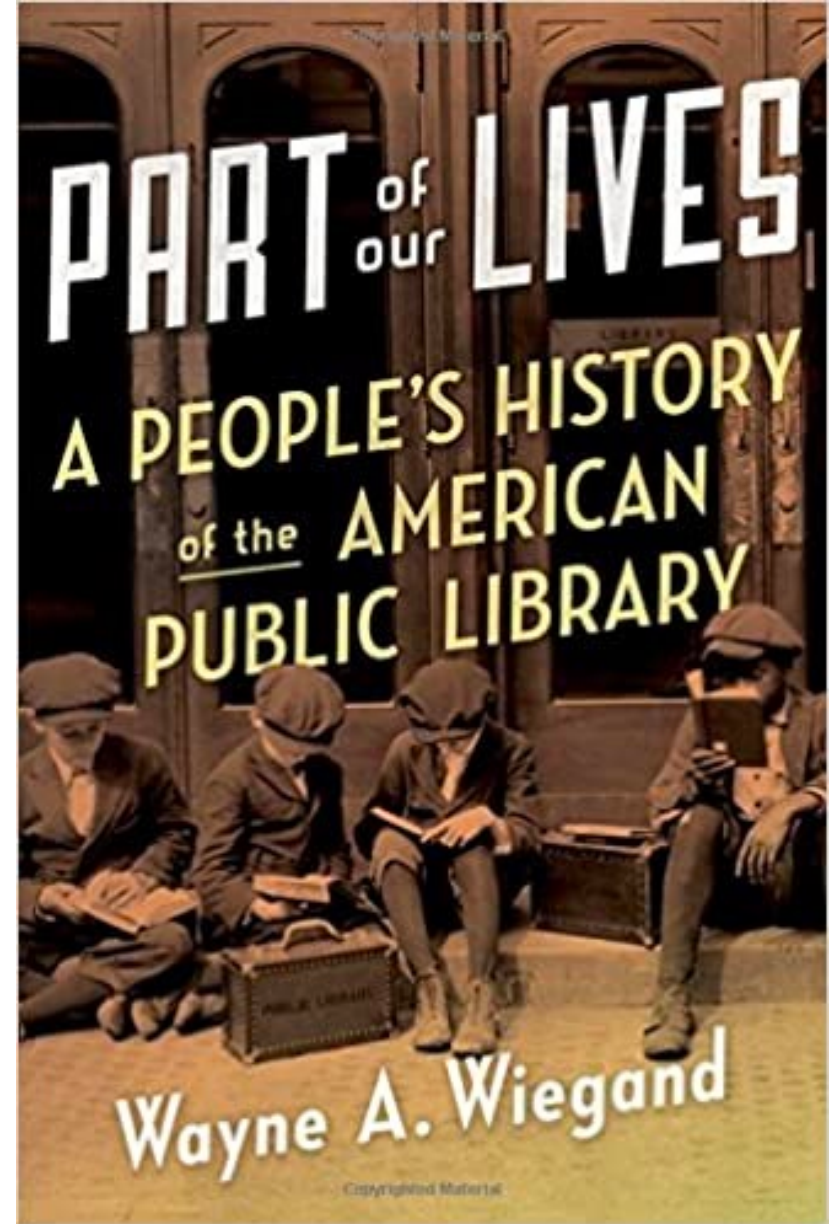
\* GROWING TOGETHER \*



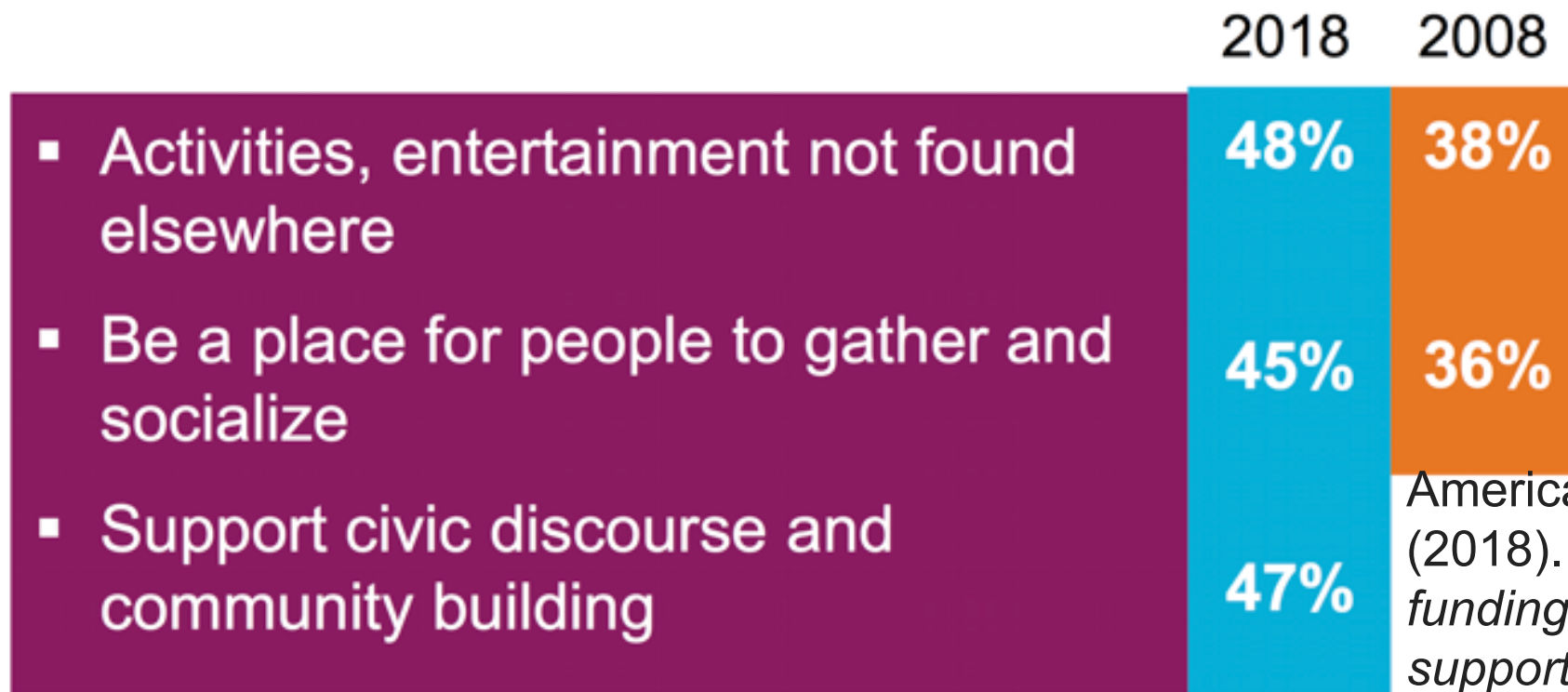


Americans love (and fund)  
libraries for three reasons:

1. Transformative potential  
of reading
2. Useful nature of  
information
3. **Community building  
capacity of public space**



# More voters today say it's important for the library to be a community hub.



American Library Association. (2018). *From awareness to funding: Voter perceptions and support of public libraries in 2018*. <https://bit.ly/2RKJSU4>



Let's  
G.O.!!  
(Get Outside)



Photo © Gail Borden Library District

### Ladybug Release party

Rakow Branch of the Gail Borden Library District

The Library and the Elgin Community Garden Network hosted three ladybug release parties at the Rakow Branch. Families were invited to learn more about these insects and learn how ladybugs can improve a garden.





# Shaping forces



**Cities  
Connecting  
Children to  
Nature**

**LIBRARIES AS NATURE CONNECTORS**





# Shaping forces



# April 2021 newsletter



## WATCH | Dia de Los Niños / Dia de Los Libros

This year's virtual celebration of kids, books, and nature was a huge success! If you missed it, you can still tune-in and be inspired to read, explore, dance, and connect with nature.

[Watch the virtual celebration >>](#)

MUCHAS GRACIAS to the [San Francisco Public Library](#) and the SF Early Literacy Network for putting on a celebration of #bookjoy that will outlast the pandemic, and to all of the partners that shared their love for learning from parks and natural spaces across the city: Alemany Farm, City College of San Francisco Early Education Department, First 5 SF/SF Family Resource Center Initiative, Friends of the SF Public Library, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, Jumpstart, National Park Service, Mission Promise Neighborhood, San Francisco Children & Nature, SF Botanical Garden, SF Recreation and Parks Department, SFUSD Early Education Department, Tandem Partners in Early Learning, the EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park, and The Presidio Trust.



# Shaping forces



# Shaping forces

**Learn more:** D'Arpa, C., Lenstra, N., & Rubenstein, E. (2020). Growing Food at and through the Local Library: An Exploratory Study of an Emerging Role. In *Roles and Responsibilities of Libraries in Increasing Consumer Health Literacy and Reducing Health Disparities*. Emerald Publishing Limited.



**FC Public Library**  
@FCPublicLibrary



What a great day for gardening! Jessica and her son Patrick came to the Walkertown Branch library today to harvest sweet potatoes from their plot and to plant collards for the Fall. They enjoy being part of the Library Community Garden. Library is for growing!



2:13 PM · Oct 7, 2020 · Twitter Web App

# Shaping forces



**ALA News**  
@alanews



ALA adding sustainability as a core value of librarianship  
[bit.ly/30nLy9g](https://bit.ly/30nLy9g)

5:57 PM · May 14, 2019 · IFTTT



"If I don't walk, it's really not a great day" - Seattle Public Library's Nancy Pearl

"Last year, Pearl started combining her two greatest pleasures — reading and walking."



HERALDNET.COM  
America's action figure librarian walks a good book for exercise | HeraldNet.com

CONNOLLY BRANCH LIBRARY  
October 30 · 🌐

Snow can't stop the Story Walk! The Story Walk will stay up until Wednesday, November 4. Stop by the branch during BPL to Go hours for an activity kit.  
¡La nieve no puede detener el Story Walk! El Story Walk permanecerá activo hasta el miércoles 4 de noviembre. Pase por la biblioteca durante las horas de BPL to Go para obtener un kit de actividades.

See Translation



**America's 17,000+ public libraries employ nearly 145,000 individuals.  
ALL OF THEM ARE POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

# Research



Grant # RE-246336-OLS-20

|                     | # Interviews |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Library front-lines | 44           |
| Library leadership  | 25           |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>69</b>    |

| Sector                | #         |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Non-profit            | 15        |
| Hospital              | 6         |
| Parks and Recreation  | 5         |
| Health Department     | 5         |
| Cooperative Extension | 4         |
| Individual Volunteer  | 4         |
| Business              | 4         |
| SNAP-Ed               | 3         |
| K-12 School           | 2         |
| United Way            | 2         |
| City Government       | 2         |
| Senior Agency         | 1         |
| Boys and Girls Club   | 1         |
| Community coalition   | 1         |
| YMCA                  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>59</b> |

Semi-Structured interviews with individuals from organizations that have worked with public librarians on community-based **Healthy Eating and Active Living** initiatives

Up to now, what have been your experiences working with public libraries or librarians around nature or outdoor-related initiatives, of any sort?

Or, if you're a librarian, how have you worked with partners on nature or outdoor-related initiatives?



## Trends: Trusted Models

“[When] the book bike comes, people are reminded that we have a bike trail system that allows the library to come see us using their bike.

Having a librarian ride their book bikes: They're wearing their bicycling gear - really helps remind the public that everybody can be healthy”

Head of Main Street Organization





# Come help the Friends of the Library beautify the grounds

By Shelby Harrell [sharrell@themountaineer.com](mailto:sharrell@themountaineer.com) Sep 16, 2020  0

Re-imagining our libraries as places made *by* our communities!!





# Shaler Scout hopes to make Eagle with food pantry for hometown library



MICHAEL DIVITTORIO | Wednesday, September 2, 2020 11:22 p.m.

Join the conversation ( 0 )



COURTESY OF THE HILL FAMILY

Eagle Scout hopeful Xander Hill, 16, works on the food pantry project with his great uncle, Eddie Idzakovich. Xander said the pantry cost about \$300 to complete. Family and friends donated \$500 to the Shaler North Hills Library to keep it stocked.



My research has found:

## Partner evolution in thinking about public libraries

- Stage 1: Library => Book Repository
- Stage 2: Library => Resource / Space to Use  
(Always there, people turn to it, stable, trusted)
- Stage 3: **Librarian** => **Partner**  
(We work **together** to figure out what to do = Collective Impact)

My question to you:

**HOW CAN WE GET TO STAGE 3, FASTER!?!?!?**

**If you want to do something with public librarians**

**They *need* to be at the table from DAY 1**

**If you're trying to connect with them on DAY 70,  
you're too late...**

## Pandemic -> Outside

| Outdoor program                      | Count | %  |
|--------------------------------------|-------|----|
| StoryWalk                            | 55    | 74 |
| Scavenger hunt (including geocaches) | 16    | 22 |
| Obstacle course                      | 10    | 14 |
| Other                                | 11    | 15 |

Outdoor library programs offered by rural public libraries during COVID-19 Pandemic in Summer 2020. Learn more in:

Lenstra, N. & D'Arpa, C. (2021). Reimagining public library programming during a pandemic. *IFLA Journal*. DOI: [10.1177/03400352211023076](https://doi.org/10.1177/03400352211023076)



Join us!



# PAPREN

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY RESEARCH  
AND EVALUATION NETWORK



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- Rural Active Living Work Group focusing on “public libraries as physical activity promotion partners”
- Monthly meetings – all welcome to join – [lenstra@uncg.edu](mailto:lenstra@uncg.edu)

<https://papren.org/papren-work-groups/rural-active-living-work-group/>

Learn more

NOAH LENSTRA

# HEALTHY LIVING AT THE LIBRARY



Let's Move in Libraries



HOME

ABOUT US

GET STARTED

LET'S MOVE STORIES

EVENTS

CONTACT US

SEARCH



## STORYWALK(R) AND SCAVENGER HUNT

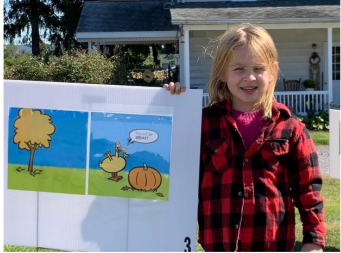
### RINGTOWN AREA LIBRARY, PENNSYLVANIA

How has this library supported healthy living? During the COVID-19 stay-at-home order in Pennsylvania, the Ringtown Area Library started monthly scavenger hunts around the community, relating to a children's story when possible (green sheep for Mem Fox's Where is the Green Sheep? and strawberries for Don Wood's The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and the Big Hungry Bear.) The library began offering StoryWalk(R) programming during summer 2020, and in September 2020 unveiled the 4th StoryWalk(R) of the year at a local farm's pumpkin patch, choosing Pumpkin Trouble by Jan Thomas.



What impacts have you seen this work have? The scavenger hunts and StoryWalk(R) both provided no-contact, fun activities that got families moving and kept them engaged with the library while it was temporarily closed and/or after reopening but with limited services and capacity. In addition to encouraging families to get out for a walk, these outreach efforts brought awareness of our library to many people who rarely or never utilize traditional library services. The library also believes that these activities led to an increase in monetary donations to the library this year.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



**Lessons learned:** Don't be afraid to think outside of the library! Lots can be done using outdoor spaces to engage communities in healthy living programming.

Combine stories and literacy with outdoor programming. Weave stories into public space and you promote the library, promote reading, and also promote fun, active engagement in the outdoors!





Thank you!

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<http://letsmovelibraries.org/>



Based on today's conversations, what would you like to do with librarians to promote access to nature, greenspaces, and the outdoors?

What would you need to make that happen?