

# **Successful Community Outreach:**

**A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians®**

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**HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUALS®**

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# Preface

*Successful Community Outreach: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* is intended to provide public library managers, leaders, and administrators with a set of tools and a process for developing effective community outreach plans. These plans will enable libraries to develop partnerships for addressing issues and resolving problems in the community, thereby embedding the library in the community, demonstrating its value, and strengthening the library as an essential part of community life.

This how-to manual covers the full range of a community outreach process, from identifying and defining the community frame of reference and articulating the role of the library in the community, to assessing the needs and assets in the community, to identifying potential programs and partners, through developing full-scale action plans and assessing their effectiveness. By following the process outlined in this manual, librarians will be able to develop a community outreach plan tailored to the specific characteristics, needs, and interests of their own community.

The tools and worksheets provided in the manual and on the accompanying CD-ROM support a step-by-step process that has been used successfully in many libraries. Examples of real problems, programs, and partners are provided.

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to community outreach and the planning process. Chapter 2 details how to begin the process by defining and describing the library and the community it serves. Chapter 3 will help planners determine the community's outreach needs and how to assess and approach potential programs and partners. Chapter 4 covers writing the plan itself. Throughout all four chapters, "IN & OUT" sidebars highlight tips for doing outreach projects held "in" and "out" of the library. These tell how to do the outreach program in the library if that is the best location for it because the library has the necessary resources (meeting room, computer lab, etc.) or out of the library if an off-site location is better. Most show how to do it both ways to help librarians think of ways to take things they have traditionally done in the library out into the community. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 also include a total of 24 worksheets that accompany each stage of plan development. The companion CD-ROM includes all 24 of these in Microsoft Word format so that individual libraries can easily complete them as is or adapt them to meet their own needs.

# Successful Community Outreach

Two appendixes are included to facilitate easier plan development. Appendix 1 lists Internet sources of community and demographic data that will inform library planning; live links to each source are also replicated on the CD-ROM for quicker access. Appendix 2 lists the seven completed outreach plans. The full text of all seven is available on the companion CD-ROM so readers can see what finished plans look like.

The book concludes with an extensive bibliography on community outreach that provides sources of further information.

This manual had its origins in a project developed by and carried out at the University of North Texas College of Information. The Promoting and Enhancing the Advancement of Rural Libraries (PEARL) project was initiated in the fall of 2010 with support from the Robert and Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust of Wichita Falls, Texas. When it is completed, the three-year PEARL project will have assisted approximately 105 targeted rural libraries to create a Community Outreach Plan and train library staff in the use of the plan. In carrying out the work of the project, a training manual on developing community outreach plans was drafted by the staff of the project. Although the manual was focused on libraries in a rural setting, it was readily apparent that the tools, forms, and process provided by the manual could easily be implemented by public libraries in any community setting. This book is the result.

Although *Successful Community Outreach: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* was principally designed for public libraries, the tools and processes it provides are easily adapted to other settings. School and academic libraries could utilize the community outreach process developed here to enhance their relations with and service to the communities they serve.

# Acknowledgments

The authors wish to convey their gratitude to the Robert and Ruby Priddy Trust for its generous support of the PEARL project and for its interest in strengthening rural public libraries. Without the Trust there would have been no PEARL project, and consequently no community outreach planning manual. We are confident that both the project and this resulting manual will justify the faith that the Trust has placed in us.

The authors also wish to thank Dr. Herman L. Totten, Dean of the University of North Texas College of Information, for his leadership and support of the PEARL project. Without Dr. Totten's persistence at the outset, there probably would not have been a PEARL project. His vision and leadership have been indispensable in developing and carrying out this good work.

Finally, the authors would like to thank the participants in the first cohort of the PEARL project. These dedicated librarians from small and rural libraries in west Texas have invested their time and energy, often in the face of great obstacles, to make their libraries more effective agencies in advancing community life. The feedback that they have provided has enhanced the utility of this manual and will therefore serve as aid to countless other librarians in communities across the country.