Beyond Books and Media
Building Community Through Non-Traditional Collections in Public Libraries
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“Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities.”
– R. David Lankes

Building Community, One Tool at a Time: The Berkeley Public Library’s Tool Branch

- Established in 1979 with a $30,000 federal Community Development Block Grant
- Started with 500 tools, a portable trailer, and one full-time employee
- The Library held focus groups to determine what tools, services, and support the community wanted
- Originally, most patrons paid a small fee to borrow tools
- In 1988, voters passed a property-based library tax, and now the Tool Lending Library is included in the public library’s budget, and free to all city residents

Lending Garden Plots: The St. Louis County Library’s Experience

“Community gardens and libraries are a natural fit,” says Kristen Sorth, St. Louis County Library’s director. “Both provide safe spaces for learning and community building...It has been a thrill to watch how popular these spaces have become with our patrons.”

- First garden was established in March 2013
- Proved so popular that two more branches have since added gardens
- Created as a partnership with Gateway Gardens, a nonprofit, and financially supported by a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health
- The gardens host around 40 programs annually for all age groups

More Inspirational Collections:
- Telescopes and air quality meters – Ann Arbor District Library
- Guitars and sewing machines – Sacramento Public “Library of Things”
- Cake pans – 8 Public Libraries in Iowa

What Else Can We Lend?
- Seeds
- iPads
- Book Club Kits
- Ukuleles
- Toys
- People
- Art Tools
- Video Games
- Board Games
- Art Prints
- Microscopes
- The possibilities are endless!

LIS 650: Management of Libraries and Information Centers, Dr. Rich Gazan
Based on the “Evolving the Library” Project by Chezlan Casar, Alison Costanzo, Jennifer Fuchikami, Erin Tagomori, and Mark Tokuuke

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