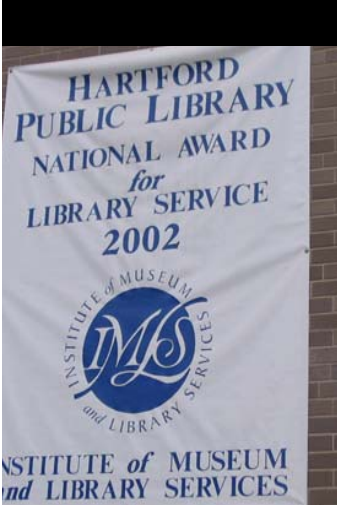


Anticipating Community Needs: A Model from Practice

IBEC Research Team: Maria Souden, Dana Walker, Joan C. Durrance, Karen E. Fisher (UW)

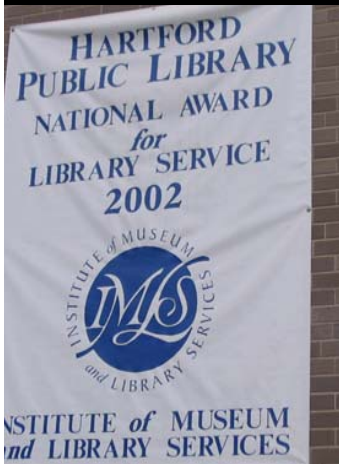
The Setting: Hartford, CT

Community Challenges



- Second-largest city in the wealthiest state in the U.S, but also the poorest city in that state.
- Median income is one-sixth that of Connecticut's most affluent municipality.
- As with many cities afflicted by high poverty rates, Hartford also suffers from:
 - a poor school system (ranked one of the worst in the nation);
 - urban blight (the downtown has been described as an “urban desert”);
 - crime; to name a few.

Community Problem-Solving



- A long history of community-based organizations and committees
- Groups range from neighborhood-specific problem solving organizations to statewide, issue-based advocacy groups
- Stronghold of neighborhood-based problem-solving committees and revitalization zones

Hartford Public Library



- Made up of nine branches
- Annual budget of more than \$6 million
- Nationally recognized for its innovative community-focused services
- Neighborhood Team Initiative
 - staff members assigned to a neighborhood-based team whose focus is to know the neighborhood – its concerns, issues, organizations and people.

The Study

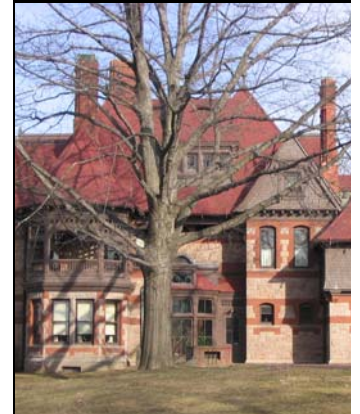
Research Questions

- How do community groups use information in the course of problem solving?
- How do public libraries anticipate and respond to community information needs?
- How do public libraries become engaged with their communities?



Methodology

- Case study approach
- Two data collection rounds
 - Round 1: identified and determined the information behavior of community groups themselves
 - Round 2: focused specifically on explicating the library's approaches to interacting with the community and anticipating and responding to its needs.

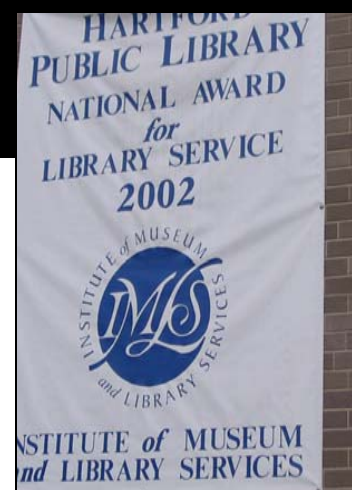


Data Collection

Method	Community Groups ¹	Hartford Public Library Staff ²
Interviews (phone & f2f)	8	10
Focus Groups	---	2
Observation	2	---

¹ E.g., neighborhood revitalization zones, problem-solving committees, advocacy groups, meta-organizing groups

² E.g., neighborhood team members, management, community-support and outreach positions



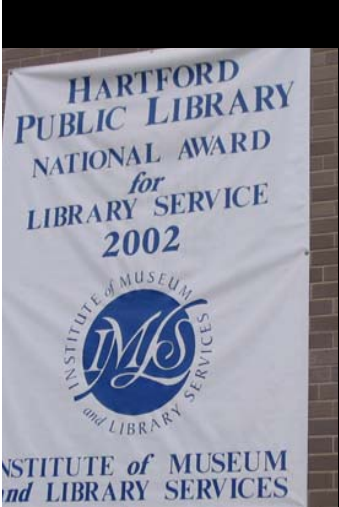
Findings: A Model for Community Engagement

A MODEL FOR ANTICIPATING COMMUNITY NEEDS

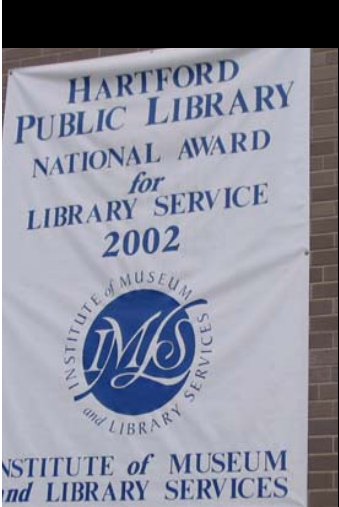


Anticipation Strategies

- Complementary and innovative approaches to anticipate community needs
 - Strategies and tactics used by library staff
 - Institutional mechanisms support activities of individual librarians



Anticipation Strategies



- Strategies work *together* to strengthen HPL's ability to anticipate real needs in the community
- Synergistic effect transcends the separate strategies

- Strategies work *together* to strengthen HPL's ability to anticipate real needs in the community
- Synergistic effect transcends the separate strategies

"Today's challenge is to reinvent the library to respond to community needs and aspirations, and yet to retain the core values of intellectual freedom, free and equitable access, and trust and mutual respect. The social change we are experiencing is as powerful as the technological change, and equally a driving force in the need to reinvent ourselves. How do we do that? By getting as close to the community as we can, paying attention to what they say, and participating in community organizations: listening, learning, linking"

Louise Blalock, director
Hartford Public Library