45 minutes/ 5700 words

**SLIDE 1: INTRO**

I love public libraries.

Why? I have many reasons.

But mostly, because I believe that in a complex and disruptive environment, public libraries are ideally positioned to help people create the world they want to live in – one community at a time.

But that doesn’t just happen by accident. It requires a commitment to changing the way we think about ourselves and our communities, shifting our focus from collections to connections, and from providing information to empowering people to become active participants in our democracy.

**SLIDE 2: CLIFFORD**

As a bonus, when we make time to engage our communities, the payoffs are big.

Today I’ll be talking about community engagement, and how it changed an institution, a community, and myself.

Community engagement changes how the community sees itself, how it sees – and supports the library. If we want to create sustainable and resilient libraries that have the funding they need, community engagement is the work we need to do.

**SLIDE 3: BECAUSE TRANSFORMATION**

Because our future is not transactional, but relational.

Yes, we share material and information and yes, that’s awesome – but those are just the tools we use toward our larger purpose, which is **TRANSFORMING SOCIETY**. The American Library Association is in its third year of the Libraries Transform campaign, and if we’re saying we transform lives, by gum we’ve got to do it.

Which means we need to shift our focus from collections to connections.

As a bonus, it’s also the most meaningful work we can do, and reconnects us to what’s really important about being public librarians – working with people, and helping them make the changes they want to see in their lives, and the world.

I’ll return to this idea later, but first, I want to talk a bit about the disruptive landscape we inhabit.

As librarians, we’ve been told by the news, our neighbors and sometimes even loved ones that we have no future. We all know the reasons – everything is available online, it’s just a building with dusty books etc.

**SLIDE 4: TECHNOLOGY**

When we think of the future, we often think of technology. This is my favorite technology – a thing of beauty which is simple and easy to use – it’s the perfect tool.

A couple of years ago, e-books were the new big thing – and we were told to reallocate funds and invest heavily in them. Now the future is digital and streaming – we need to sign up with Hoopla, Freegal or Kanopy so patrons can get the content they want directly.

All of these are interesting ideas, but none are game changers. E-books and streaming services are exciting – especially for small libraries with limited physical space. But it’s still about delivering content, albeit in a new format. This is not the future of libraries, it’s a continuation of what we already do.

If we’re serious about transformation, we need to rethink not only what we do, but how we do it and how we position ourselves in the communities we serve. The key to that type of deep, abiding transformation is community engagement.

**SLIDE 5: SHARING ECONOMY (I DON’T NEED A DRILL)**

I know it can be hard to hear that our future isn’t something that requires a power cord. It’s not super sexy to find out that what I’m proposing is an old idea, taken from English Common Law in 1891. Put simply, it’s a way for people to come together, determine and implement a collective vision which benefits a community.

But it is our reality. We’re in the midst of a historic shift, from a post-industrial to a sharing economy. This economic model shifts the focus from ownership to access.

This is the world of the Millennials. Think Zipcars, Airbnb, Uber, etc. It’s the not about stuff, and as an aspiring hoarder, I know exactly how difficult that can be to let go of. When I was young, there was a saying, “He who dies with the most stuff wins.” That’s now a horrifying reality show.

Millennials have different priorities. It’s about: I don’t need a drill. I need a hole in the wall.

In this economy, sharing – and ideas -- are valued over possessions and things.

Which is awesome for us! We are experts in sharing resources and ideas, which means we are ideally positioned to rock this economy. Our future isn’t dim, it’s never been brighter.

**SLIDE 6: SALS & INLET**

I’m now going take you on a Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride version of the journey I’ve been on for the past seven years. Today, I’m going to talk mainly about my six and a half years as the director of Red Hook Public Library, which is located in the Hudson Valley of New York. I am now working as the Outreach & Engagement Consultant for the Southern Adirondack Library System, which, as the name implies, is in the Southern Adirondacks. As part of my job, I work with 34 member libraries in four counties – both small, rural libraries and a couple of larger libraries with healthy budgets and professional staffs of more than 30 FTEs, but the majority of the libraries I work with have budgets of less than $100,000K per year, and most have a part-time director, with some part-time staff or volunteers.

The work I’m going to talk about is scalable to all of them.

**SLIDE 7: RED HOOK PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Red Hook Public Library is chartered to serve the Village of Red Hook, population of 1,961, but in fact serves the entire town and the neighboring town of Milan, which altogether has about 13,000 people. Bard College is the main employer; the primary industry is agriculture – small, family-owned farms and orchards. When I began in August 2010, I was the first full-time employee the library had ever had. I had a budget of $165,000 a year, and a $600,000 building project being financed out of that budget. Once the building project was complete, $36,000 a year would be coming out of my operating budget in order to cover the cost of construction, which meant that as soon as the project ended, we would have to reduce our hours in order to pay our bills. The building project included creating a children’s library on the garden level – which meant we needed additional staffing.

In addition, the library had a reputation for being a place so unfriendly and inhospitable, it was best to avoid altogether, especially if you had kids under the age of 18.

**SLIDE 8: GIFT OF LIMITATIONS**

So to recap:

* I didn’t know what I was doing.
* I didn’t have enough staff.
* I didn’t have enough money.
* And most people avoided the library like the plague.

Which was a tremendous gift.

As Ed Catmull reminds us in Creativity Inc, limitations are a tremendous gift – it forces us to think differently and more creatively about how to accomplish our goals.

**SLIDE 9: PUSH**

In the beginning, I tried traditional ways to spread – or push – our message out to the public. We did outreach, telling people all about our fabulous services, sent out hundreds of press releases (because, truth be told I am a media whore) and begun aggressively marketing the library. But why would anyone take our word for how wonderful we were, when their experience had been otherwise?

**SLIDE 10: PULL**

Since pushing information out into the community wasn’t doing the trick, I figured I’d try to pull information from the community. We held focus groups and sent out surveys to find out what people wanted from the library. We got the results, and learned that people wanted more of everything. Unfortunately, we were not in the position to provide it. We were put in the position for asking people for input about what we should do, and then had to say, thanks, but we can’t do that. It was not a good look.

**SLIDE 11: OUTREACH - ENGAGEMENT**

I had learned from watching our Friends group organize and host a successful Big Read that the library was an integral part of a larger socio-ecosystem – the village and town it served. This sounds like a simple idea, but it’s one that’s easy to forget: Libraries don’t exist in vacuums.

The only way we would survive and eventually thrive was to demonstrate our value by being a part of something much larger than ourselves. If the Village and Town didn’t flourish, neither would we. We had to stop **COMMUNICATING OUR VALUE** and focus on **BEING VALUABLE**.

**SLIDE 12: GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY**

So I took my mother’s advice: I got my nose out of my book and went outside to play.

I began at a Chamber of Commerce meeting. While there, I heard about Red Hook Together, a meeting of Bard College, Red Hook Central School District, the Village and Town, Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and a bunch of other stakeholders.

I knew I had to go.

And I didn’t wait to be invited. I think too often we wait for an invitation or assume that we are being deliberately excluded – when really people don’t know who we are or didn’t think we would be interested.

So, I just showed up.

About 50 people were there. Everyone in the room introduced themselves, and told a bit about their organization.

Fairly quickly a theme emerged. Everyone talked about how the community needed a space where anyone could go, and be welcomed. This place would have a wide range of activities and programs, where people met to discuss important civic matters. People wanted a central place in the community where anyone could gather. What a great idea!

When it was my turn, I said, “We have that. We have a public library in the center of town.”

And no one believed me.

They had no reason to believe me, because that hadn’t been their experience with the library.

**SLIDE 13: COLLABORATION**

My challenge was to raise the profile of the library in a couple of months before we went out for a budget referendum asking for a 55% budget increase in the first year of a 2% tax cap, which meant that the press was having a field day.

I had a vision of what the library could be, and knew we didn’t have the resources to do it on our own. We collaborated with everyone from Bard College, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Historic Red Hook, Red Hook Central School District and anyone else we could find. I describe myself as a promiscuous collaborator for a reason.

We began by approaching partners strategically, depending on what we needed. We wanted to hold a program on robotics, but didn’t have the expertise to so, so we got in touch with Bard College’s Computer Department. We needed help providing one-on-one tech support for our patrons, so we asked the high school to help identify teens to provide volunteer tech support.

Everyone was eager and willing to help, and it was a beautiful thing. We were getting the community to help make **OUR** dream a reality.

**SLIDE 14: LTC SLIDE**

In 2014, we were one of 10 libraries chosen to take part in the American Library Association’s Libraries Transforming Communities initiative. At the first meeting, we felt quite smug – we were already collaborating with everyone in town, and our team included our deputy mayor, the Deputy Director of Bard College’s Center for Civic Engagement and a retired regional head of Parks and Rec.

We thought were winning.

We were wrong.

**SLIDE 15: COLLABORATION - ENGAGEMENT**

Because collaboration and partnership are not community engagement. Those are the starting points. Having meetings with and working across institutional boundaries is important, but until we make time to have conversations with our communities about their aspirations – and then empower them to make the changes they want to see – we’re only scratching the surface. Previously, when we were collaborating with community groups, we were asking for **WHAT THE LIBRARY NEEDED** – **AND GIVING THEM WHAT WE THOUGHT THEY NEEDED**. Thinking about it now, I see how incredibly arrogant it was to assume that we knew what the community wanted or needed.

We weren’t asking the **COMMUNITY WHAT VISION IT HAD FOR ITSELF**. We were talking a lot, but having the wrong conversation.

**SLIDE 16: EXPERT VS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE**

We have to shift our conversations and our thinking from expert knowledge: What we know about libraries, how they’re run, and what we’re capable of, to public knowledge: the stuff everyone else is talking about, and what matters to them and their community. Guess which one people really care about?

We can ignore this at our own peril.

As librarians, we have lots of expert knowledge – we’re really great at collecting, sorting and distributing information. But we’re not great at knowing what people really want, and we spend a lot of time giving them what we think they want – or worse yet, what we think they should want.

Has anyone ever had a program and no one came? I know I have.

Too often, our solution is to look for the next new, bright shiny thing to attract interest – a mobile app or cake pan or whatever the new trend is. Not that those things aren’t cool, they are. But we spend a lot of time trying desperately to remain relevant, grabbing onto every passing shiny thing. Instead, we need to be a part of a different conversation, about what we as a community value, and how we’ll create what we want to see happen.

**SLIDE 17: ASK EXERCISE**

At Red Hook Public Library, we spent eight months collecting public knowledge. We talked to hundreds of people, going door-to-door, at local festivals, in grocery stores – wherever people are willing to talk for a couple of minutes. This allowed us to get a better sense of what people really think about and talk to their neighbors about.

When we talk to people, we ask them this series of four questions, taken from the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation toolbox located at ala.org/ltc – there are tons of free resources for libraries to use.

**HAS ANYONE USED THE HARWOOD TOOLS?**

**DO YOU NOTICE ANYTHING ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS?**

**We do not ask anything about the library. Because it’s not about us, IT’S ABOUT THE COMMUNITY.**

**SLIDE 18: THE TOOLS**

I do want to give one caveat about using the tools at ala.org/ltc. They are designed to be used with specific audiences. The Ask exercise, which we saw before, is for one-on-one conversations, and should take no more than 10 minutes. Because we were going to people’s homes and being invited in, it took much longer. The Aspirations Exercise is used with groups of people who currently work together who will continue to work together (Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Town Board etc.) which take about 45 minutes to an hour. The Aspirations Tool is also the perfect tool to use with your team and your Board to show them what you’re doing, and to get them to support your community engagement efforts – because let’s face it, if you just tell your Board, “I’ll be spending the next six months out of the library,” they’re going to think you’ve lost your mind. If you can demonstrate what it is you’re doing, and explain why and how the process works, you’ll have a better chance of getting buy-in.

This was the first thing I did when we returned from our initial training, and I did it with my team and my board. It allowed people not only to get a feel for what we were going to be doing, but it gave them a chance to ask a lot of questions before we unrolled it to the public – and this is important, because the last thing you want to do is surprise your Board, or have them hear about it from someone else. So please, make the time to get everyone to experience the tools – and hopefully recruit more people – including your Board, to play an active role in collecting public knowledge. It also gave them a chance to get excited, and to begin thinking about how best to unroll this, and who to approach.

And finally, Community Conversations, are much more in-depth discussions that are held with the public and take about 1.5- 2 hours. We used the ASK exercise as our gateway drug – if people were willing to talk to us, and for the most part people got really excited about sharing their thinking, we would then invite them to be part of a Community Conversation.

All of these tools are meant to be used as part of in-person discussions and should **NOT** take place in the library. I know libraries that have posted them on their websites to be completed as a survey – please don’t do that – you’re not going to get good information, and that’s not how you do this work.

These are powerful tools to help you turn outward, toward the community, putting their aspirations at the heart of what you do. But you have to talk to people to do it. This is high-touch work, and there are no shortcuts.

**SLIDE 19: BUILDING CAPACITY**

I know some of you are thinking, “I can barely get done what I need to, never mind chase people down to ask them their aspirations.”

**I HEAR YOU.**

This work is not easy, and it requires building capacity.

At the time we got the grant, we had to look beyond our walls to fulfill our initial commitment. When we went to the first training, we realized that we had a TON of work ahead of us, which we would not be able to do on our own. So we asked for help. We had volunteers from the community and Bard College students offer to partner with our team and go door-to-door. The more conversations we had, the more people wanted to get involved. Which was fantastic, but also meant relinquishing control – which for me is really, really difficult. But in order to help our community move forward, we had to be able to build relationships and empower people to be a part of a larger conversation. Our role was to facilitate and convene. When we didn’t have enough people-power, we recruited.

We did use our expert knowledge – how to collect, organize, and distribute information, to identify the common themes that mattered to people, and then to share that information out widely with the community – we reported back to all of the groups that we involved in Aspirations Exercises, let the mayor and town supervisor know what we heard, and wrote a press release keeping the public in the loop. Identifying and naming the issues allowed different groups and individuals to come forward and work toward solutions.

It wasn’t our job as the library to fix things, it was to alert people to what issues were out there, and to bring people together to find solutions.

**SLIDE 20: WHAT WE HEARD**

What did we hear? In Red Hook, the narrative was that the town was divided. We have the old guard, new folk up from the city, and Bard College students. Historically, there has been a lot of tension between the groups.

Yet as we talked to people, common themes emerged. Because guess what -- everyone wants the same things.

We heard: People are really happy to live in Red Hook, but there’s room for improvement.

They want to live in a safe community that:

* Embraces diversity,
* Has a walkable, vibrant village with thriving businesses retaining its historical character,
* Hosts ample social gatherings so neighbors can continue to get to know each other and keep the small-town relationships they value,
* Provide more leadership and volunteer opportunities for teens & 20-somethings

When the issue of safety came up, I was perplexed. No one in Red Hook locks their doors, so I couldn’t understand why they were worried. As we dug deeper, it turned out the problem was our traffic light.

**SLIDE 21: TRAFFIC LIGHT**

There is one traffic light in the center of the village. About 20 years ago, the timing loop on the light broke. The mayor at the time had a falling out with the guy at the Department of Transportation. Twenty years later, the mayor has changed but the dude at the DOT is still mad about whatever happened two decades ago.

Due to the broken timing loop, traffic backs up, and people have unreasonably long delays – this is the intersection of two major County Routes, with semis and other trucks passing through regularly. In order to avoid the traffic light, people cut through side streets, which do not have sidewalks. As people were speeding through, kids and seniors were put at risk – and some got hit by cars. So when people in Red Hook talk about safety, what they meant was the traffic light needed to be fixed.

We let the Mayor know, and he called the guy at the DOT, who did nothing. After a couple of weeks went by, we posted the DOT contact information on Facebook, and let people know, you’ve mentioned this is a problem. Here’s who you need to call to get it fixed.

And then the magic happened.

The same man who wouldn’t fix the light when the mayor asked began getting calls from concerned citizens. As the calls continued, a crew was dispatched to Red Hook to fix the timing loop. And just like that, the stoplight was fixed.

**SLIDE 22: DEMOCRACY**

I share this story to demonstrate not that the library got this done, but we provided the necessary information to the community so that they could make the change they wanted, and be the hero of their own story. It changed the way people began to think about things – we’re no longer waiting for someone else to solve our problems. We can take action to create the community we want to see. And that’s powerful stuff.

It made me think about what the purpose is of public libraries. We say public libraries are the cornerstone of democracy, but what does that mean? For me, it means that we’re not here to create the best possible consumers we can. **WE’RE HERE TO EMPOWER AND EDUCATE, AND TO CREATE ENGAGED CITIZENS READY TO TAKE ACTION ON THE MATTERS THAT MEAN THE MOST TO THEM.** It’s important and energizing work, and we are in a unique position to do it. So let’s use our powers for good.

**SLIDE 23: ALA AD – PROGRAMS TO GO**

Red Hook Public Library is located in the northwest corner of the county, and services for Dutchess County are based in Poughkeepsie, which is 45 minutes away by car. It’s inconvenient if you have a car, and if you don’t, it’s a major obstacle. People who have one car per family or no car are often unable to reach needed services.

When people told us they were feeling isolated due to limited transportation, we decided to stop waiting for people to find us, and instead take our programs to people wherever they are. Rather than waiting for teens to come to the library, we held after-school programs at the high school, where they have a 3D printer.

We partner with non-profits to provide services to our community. We do the legwork so our neighbors don’t have to.

**SLIDE 24: EDIFICE COMPLEX**

We were happy to be out and about in the community for several reasons.

First, it got us to where the people are.

Second, it solved one of our major problems, which is space. The library is a mid-19th century octagonal building, about 4,700 square feet divided over three floors. Our programs drew a lot of people, and we didn’t have room for them.

We had to get over what Nancy Kranich calls the “edifice complex” and realize that the library isn’t a building. **LIKE SOYLENT GREEN, IT’S PEOPLE!**

Once we embraced that, we realized we didn’t have 4,700 square feet, but 40 square miles of potential library space. (Did I mention my super power is delusion?)

Which means nothing is off the table. Stuff can happen everywhere, and we can play an active role in creative place making.

**SLIDE 25: POP-UP LIBRARY**

We can hit the streets and still be the library, far from our building.

Which led us to ask different questions, like what happens to the kids who can’t get to the library to take part in our Summer Reading Programs? Do they fall victim to summer slide?

For the past three summers, we partnered with our school district and Bard College on a mobile Pop-up library that brought books and programs throughout the school district, which spans two counties.

Bard College provides the van and driver. The school librarians bring books, and we lead programs.

Each Friday, we began at the Rec Park, then travel north to Maple Lane, a trailer park tucked away on a back road, visiting a community that doesn’t have a culture of using the library. There, because folk are wary of getting a library card, we give books away, because we want to have books in every home.

We’ll finish our loop at Holy Cow, the most popular place in town – an ice cream shop. We’re connecting with our community where they are. They don’t need to find us – we’ll find them.

**SLIDE 26: WALKABLE THRIVING VILLAGE**

In the heart of the Village lies the municipal parking lot, where each Saturday, a Farmer’s Market takes place. Despite their prime location, they didn’t get a lot of foot traffic, and our mayor asked if we could help out. We said yes.

Because I was the easiest girl in the village. I say yes to everything.

We launched Hispanic Heritage Month at the Farmer’s Market. We partnered with La Voz, a Spanish-language newspaper. We had Oaxacan dancers, La Clinica Mobile Medical Van, and a whole bunch of other stuff.

More than 100 people turned out, giving the farmers the best day of their season. We had a highly visible event in the middle of the village, we helped local farmers, and we drove foot traffic through the village.

**SLIDE 27: BRAIN DRAIN**

I mentioned earlier that there were tensions in our community between the people who had been in Red Hook for hundreds of years, and newcomers or weekenders from New York City. This tension was created because as people moved to, or bought weekend property in Red Hook, prices increased. And Red Hook has a really great school district, which requires money to support, which is funded by property taxes in New York, so holding on to large swaths of land, like family farms, was becoming impossible. Young people who grew up in Red Hook didn’t have a lot of opportunity for lucrative employment in the area, and the jobs that do exist don’t allow for them to remain. Which meant families couldn’t stay, and grandparents couldn’t live on the same street as their grandchildren.

People said, “We need more volunteer and leadership opportunities for young people. Young people who want to stay in the area should be able to do so.” And we were happy to help.

**SLIDE 28: LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE VOLUNTEER HIRE**

We didn’t have enough staff, so we asked teens to teach seniors how to use technology. The teens get to be experts, and the seniors get techy.

We also use teens to lead summer programs, like our Film, Science, and Zombie Camps.

It’s been a great way to provide leadership experiences for the teens, and shows our community that the library is not just a bunch of old ladies.

We now have a core of teens we can recruit to join our team when we have job openings. And it allows teens to be recognized for their skills and talents while giving them a solid line on their resume. And it strengthens the social fabric, so when a senior sees a teen hanging out in town, chances are they’ve helped them book a trip, schedule a doctor’s appointment, or set up a Facebook account.

**SLIDE 29: DIWALI**

We heard: People wanted a more diverse community.

The Village of Red Hook is 87% white.

It’s easy, as Chimamanda Adichie tells us, to have one group’s story be the only one told or celebrated. But having a single story is also dangerous.

Each winter, we have Holiday in the Village, which is non-denominational but involves lighting a large tree, and an oversized menorah.

Our story needs to change.

We work closely with Bard College, which has a number of international students. I’ve gotten particularly close with a group of Nepali and Indian students, and one of our library team is from Gujarat, so I figured we had enough expertise to put together a Diwali celebration.

We brought together volunteers from the local Indian community, Bard students, and Arts Mid-Hudson for Diwali. More than 170 people of all ages came out to celebrate – including some guys in camouflage.

One of the volunteers brought her mother, who had just come from India a couple of days before. At the beginning of the evening, she sat in a chair by the wall with her coat on, looking a bit lost and more than a bit overwhelmed. By the end of the evening she was smiling, laughing, standing over the Mancala board like a boss, challenging all comers and telling her daughter she would send the family Mancala board from India so that they could continue to play.

Why does this matter? Our story of how we celebrate winter in our community changed – it’s no longer just about having a giant trees and menorahs. We also have Diwali. And that’s a good thing.

Yes, we had a great event, but more importantly, we strengthened our social fabric. One of the women who volunteered to make Diwali happen came up to me at the end of the event. She told me she’s lived in Red Hook for 40 years, but this was the first time she felt like she was a part of the community.

And two years ago, for our second annual Diwali, one of our volunteers gave me a check for $500 – in a year that our budget for adult programming was $9.59 – so that Diwali could continue. They have pledged it as an annual contribution to keep the celebration going, and are helping us to build capacity and community. The annual Diwali celebration isn’t a library celebration, it’s a community celebration, and our community has taken ownership of it.

**SLIDE 30: READ LOCAL RED HOOK**

Red Hook doesn’t have the appeal and foot traffic of Rhinebeck, Hudson or Kingston. The narrative was: No one wants to come to Red Hook.

We disagreed. We said libraries are economic engines.

We partnered with a local bookstore, Red Hook Community Arts Network and Bard College to hold the Read Local Red Hook Literary Festival. The festival drew hundreds of people, and businesses reported their best days ever.

It created a template of how we wanted to be in the village – in both big and small ways. We hosted movies at a local café, and story times at a local candy shop.

Why? Attendance at our programs improved, and we drove foot traffic to local businesses.

**SLIDE 31: ENGAGED PROGRAMMING**

Community engagement shifts the focus to joint decision-making and empowerment.

Why does this matter?

As I said before: The purpose of libraries is not to create the best possible consumers we can. It’s to empower citizens to be actively involved in a democratic society.

I’ll be honest: It takes a lot of time, and chances are, a significant organizational shift.

It’s hard to let go of the library being the center of the universe, and it’s even harder to let go of the stuff we love to do, like lead programs. We made the decision – encouraged by financial necessity – to rethink how we did what we did. Instead of leading programs or hiring presenters, we decided to embrace the radical idea of making our library more democratic, and offering programs by the people, for the people. We recruited friends and neighbors to share their passions and expertise. And you know what? We had a full calendar of events and were bursting at the seams.

**SLIDE 32: DEMOCRACY QUOTE**

I’m not going to lie. It’s a lot of work. And it can be terrifying, exhilarating, and sometimes a hot mess. And that’s OK.

**WE NEED TO STOP GUESSING AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, STOP ASKING PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT FROM THE LIBRARY. BECAUSE PEOPLE DON’T KNOW**.

I understand that this is hard. It’s easier and more comfortable to continue to guess, plus, you don’t have to leave your office.

But remember: **WHAT PEOPLE WANT IS NOT PRODUCT-BASED BUT RELATIONSHIP-BASED.** We can’t buy ourselves out of this, we have to do the much more difficult, high-touch, and time-intensive work of relationship building. There is no short-cut to community engagement. People want to take control of their lives and have meaningful experiences so that they have great stories to tell.

**SLIDE 33: MAKER CAMP VICTORY**

In the fall of 2016, when the Town of Red Hook and its two villages wrote a new planning law to limit drive-through and formula businesses, they cited the work the library had done in identifying community priorities as the basis of their decision. This blew me away – the work we had done will influence our town for years to come, which is amazing.

The Mayor of Red Hook calls what’s been happening in town the Red Hook Renaissance, and says that the library has been a big part of it, which made me proud.

But what we did was nothing special. It’s based on a simple premise: Find out what really matters to people, and make it happen.

Why?

I want our library – and all libraries – to go viral: to become so deeply embedded in the communities we serve that we are a part of every conversation, and sit at every table.

**SLIDE 33: EMILY BUNYAN QUOTE**

As Emily Bunyan of Knox County Public Library says, community engagement requires shifting our thinking from the library being the heart of the community, to the community being the heart of the library.

**SLIDE 34: QUESTIONS?**

**I am happy to answer all of your questions, but I also have questions for you.**

What about this resonated with you?

What is one single action – with a group, a person, a stakeholder organization – that you can take when you return home?

**SLIDE 35: FIVE THINGS**

**Here are the five things that inform what I do.**

**SLIDE 36: REFERENCES**