



San Mateo  
County  
Libraries

Open for Growth  
Open for Access  
Open for Learning  
Open for Transformation  
Open for Exploration™

2015–2016 Annual Report



"Our county library is leading America into a new era of library services and is an example of America's engine of enlightenment thriving in a diverse and challenging environment."

Congresswoman Jackie Speier

## Director's Message

San Mateo County Libraries have been a cornerstone of the community for over 100 years. And while we continue to pursue the highest level of services and programs, we are never content to stay where we are. True to this spirit, this year saw some of our most impactful and noteworthy changes—and, concurrently, many of our greatest successes.

For the eighth consecutive year, San Mateo County Libraries were given four stars by *Library Journal*, ranking second in the State and 18th nationwide among similar peer public libraries. We were also named one of 15 library finalists for the 2016 National Medal for Museum and Library Service—the nation's highest honor given to museums and libraries for service to the community.

This year, we considered the input of more than 7,500 community members as we created an ambitious 5-year Strategic Plan. The resulting goals represent our vision for the best of what libraries can be and do. As you'll see throughout this report, we're already working to fulfill the promise of the Strategic Plan by transforming our spaces, offering diverse and innovative opportunities for learning, and promoting library services as meaningful solutions.

We also embarked on a fresh rebranding effort in order to better tell our story of impact. Our vision for igniting growth through transformative experiences is the foundation of who we are, and the new brand captures this simply and with a welcoming personality. It communicates our energy, expertise, and commitment. You will see examples of our new visual identity throughout this report.

We have many locations, but we're all part of one unified vision. In order to fully capture this, we've updated our name to San Mateo County Libraries. This change makes it clear that each of our libraries is part of a larger family offering a world of opportunities, all accessible through a single card. Our corresponding tagline, *Open for Exploration™*, ties into the spirit of open access to information, a celebration of open-mindedness, and the welcoming atmosphere our patrons have always loved.



Anne-Marie Despain  
Director of Library Services

## JPA Governing Board Members

Rick DeGolia, *Atherton*

Charles Stone, *Belmont*

Lori Liu, *Brisbane*

Donna Rutherford, *East Palo Alto*

Gary Pollard, *Foster City*

Marina Fraser, *Half Moon Bay*

Reuben Holober, *Millbrae*

Mike O'Neill, *Pacifica*

Maryann Derwin, *Portola Valley*

Cameron Johnson, *San Carlos*

Carole Groom, *San Mateo County*

Anne Kasten, *Woodside*





# Open for Growth

Our diverse communities are perpetually growing and evolving. With this spirit in mind, San Mateo County Libraries began 2015 with an eye on the future. Influenced by public feedback, our new Strategic Plan grew from a commitment to shaping our libraries into the most inclusive and beneficial destinations possible.

► **94%** of patrons and **91%** of residents consider checking out books as the most important library activity

**80%** of patrons and **89%** of residents consider supplying access to technology to be an important library activity

**59%** of our service population are library card holders

**90%** of patrons are satisfied with our libraries

**90%** of employees feel engaged at work

“The county library system is really a great investment in our communities. Thank You.”

**Belmont patron**

“Thanks for all you do for us. I still love the feel of a book in my hand so having libraries so accessible is essential!”

**Portola Valley patron**

“The library is an excellent source of educational tools and experiences for kids and grown-ups alike. Staff is very friendly and helpful. Thank you!!!”

**Foster City patron**

## Making a Plan Together

We dedicated considerable efforts to obtaining information from a broad cross-section of the community and developing a new strategic plan that would guide the organization for the next five years. More than 7,500 community members, volunteers, and staff contributed feedback. By understanding what the public and our partners value, we are able to focus the libraries' priorities, desired outcomes, and best actions to make these a reality for our future.

### Our New Vision

San Mateo County Libraries ignite growth through transformative experiences.

### Our New Mission

San Mateo County Libraries strengthen our community by creating an inclusive sense of place and environment for learning.

### Our New Goals

We cultivate an active presence and create spaces that support discovery, enrich lives, and uplift the community.

*This means we will:*

- Build and update facilities to create inviting and flexible spaces
- Spot opportunities to deliver services beyond buildings
- Deliver an easily accessible and rich online experience

We are leaders in establishing a foundation for early literacy and supporting exploration and growth at every stage of life.

*This means we will:*

- Engage children and families in high-quality, research-based learning experiences
- Bridge the digital divide by building skills and providing access to technology
- Develop creative programs and services that have measurable results
- Grow a culture of learning and participation

We understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

*This means we will:*

- Understand and align with community goals
- Communicate an inspiring vision and the library's story of impact
- Cultivate library champions who reflect the dynamic environment
- Employ resources in new ways to ensure equitable access

## Our New Brand

Knowing that our services, collections, and spaces are constantly evolving to meet the needs of our community, we've updated our look to reflect where we are today and where we hope to go in the future. In tandem with our newly developed Strategic Plan, the San Mateo County Libraries unveiled a fresh new brand—the first rebranding in more than a decade.

Our new logo consists of a simple and imaginative "Burst of Knowledge" symbol representing the spread of information, our family of libraries, and the radiating excitement that comes from experiencing something new. It also alludes to a central hub where shared ideas converge to ignite growth through transformative experiences.



Our corresponding brand tagline, *Open for Exploration™*, extends this spirit by conveying the essence of who we are, our mission, and our vision. With the adoption of these elements, we are excited to share our story with everyone who steps into our spaces or enjoys our services.

## Our Champions

Our library champions empower San Mateo County Libraries to realize our vision and mission and to accomplish our goals. With their enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication, we work together to positively serve and uplift our community.

Great service starts with great staff. Welcoming and knowledgeable staff make it easy to find the resources and experiences that can transform an everyday visit into something meaningful and memorable. Staff host thousands of events each year, creating and curating programming that enriches and connects our community. Through their hard work and resourcefulness, we offer endless free opportunities to have fun and learn at any of our libraries.

Our Friends of the Library groups and volunteers help make us an amazing resource through their enthusiasm and support. All of our volunteers value their communities and their libraries, and want to give something back. Their commitment helps support and promote the mission of the library in the community through fundraising and advocating for our libraries. San Mateo County Libraries are fortunate to have strong support in all of our communities.

- ▶ **3,379,055** total circulation
- 2,281,657** library visitors
- 317,625** program attendees
- 34,321** total volunteer hours

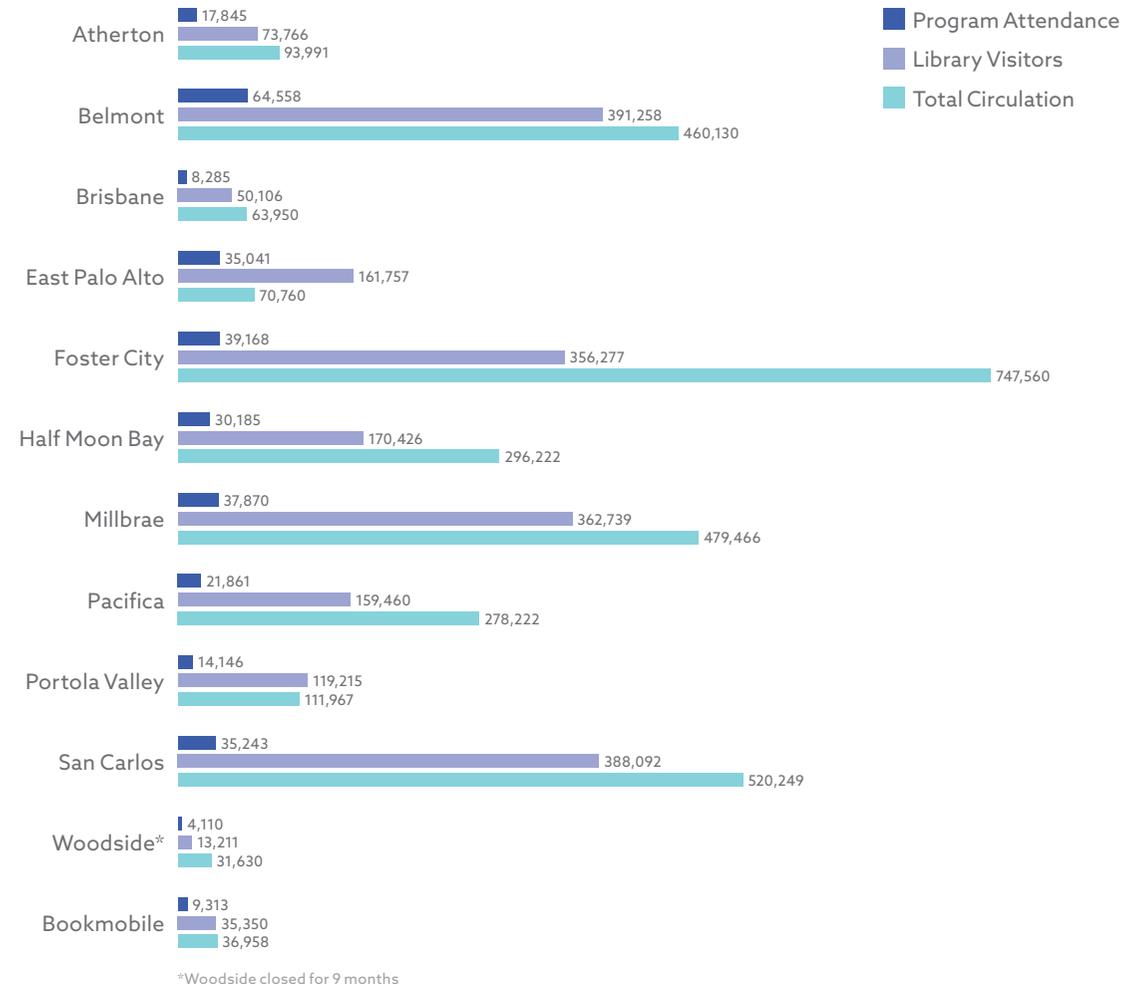
"The staff here are incredibly friendly and helpful. The story and music times for kids are wonderful, and the staff is so engaged. Love it!"

**Brisbane patron**

"I really like volunteering because my daughters get the opportunity to spend time with other children, and I with other parents. I got to experience and learn new things I hadn't known before with programs about nutrition, education, computers, amongst others. It helps me to get out of the house and the staff motivate me."

**Half Moon Bay volunteer**

## 2015–2016 Numbers



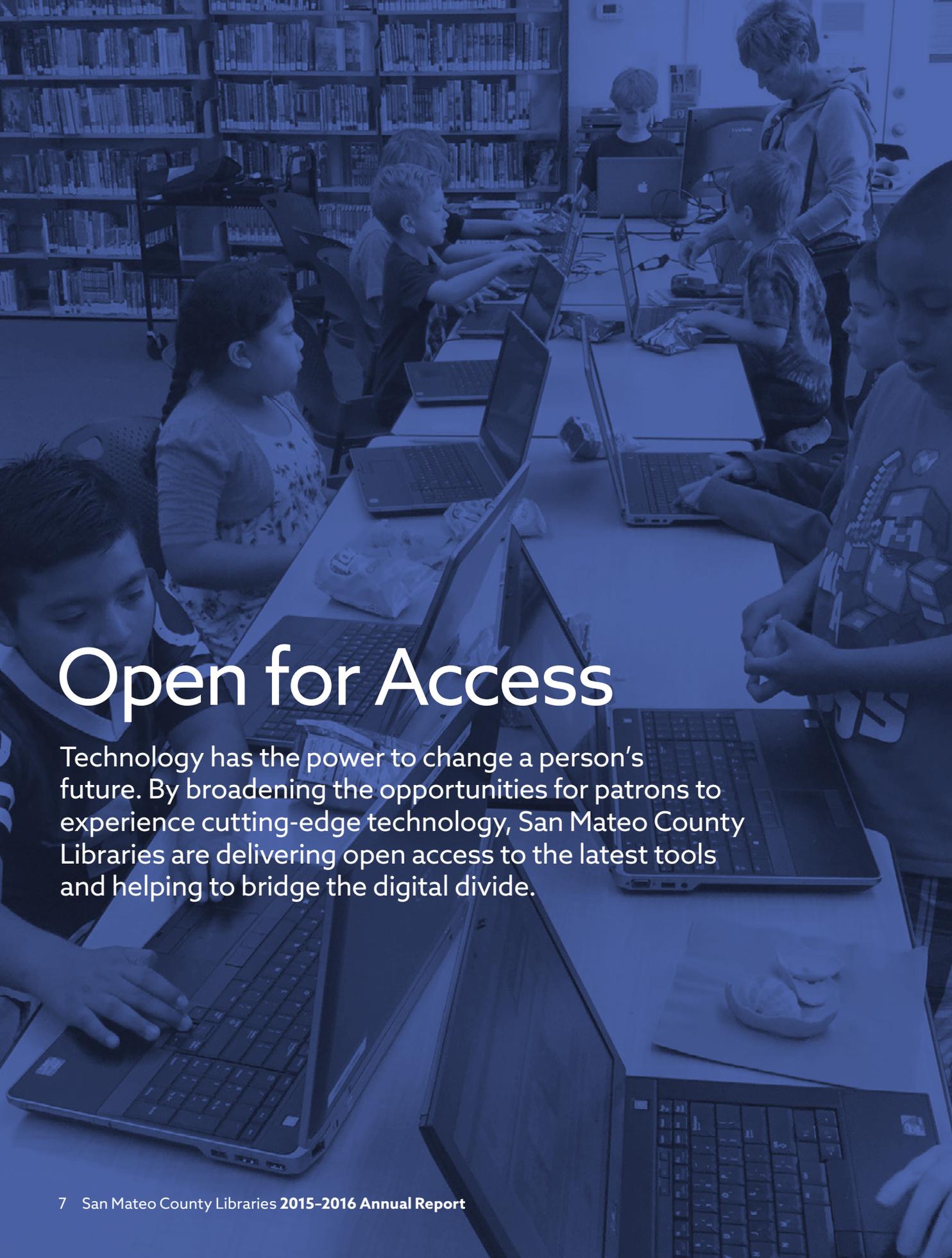
## Story of Impact

Volunteer families who participated in our Toyota Family Learning program learned from each other while engaging in enriching community service projects. Adults and children—many of them first-generation Americans—planned and led healthy living and housing fairs in Half Moon Bay and East Palo Alto in order to support their communities. Volunteer families reported increased comfort with planning

and communication, as well as with technology. One mother said, "I always tell my children—we have wings, so let's fly—that's how motivated I was during the program."

**Joanna Arteaga La Spina**  
Community Program Specialist





# Open for Access

Technology has the power to change a person's future. By broadening the opportunities for patrons to experience cutting-edge technology, San Mateo County Libraries are delivering open access to the latest tools and helping to bridge the digital divide.

## Championing Technology

- ▶ **4,432,491** eLibrary visits
- 1,438,576** wireless connections
- 206,458** public computer hours
- 13,997** WiFi hotspots checked out

Every day we take new leaps in connectivity, technology, and accessibility, setting us apart from the typical library experience. We have increased access to our blazing fast 1G connection in our libraries by expanding and simplifying laptop and iPad checkouts. The hunt for a power source in all of our libraries has gotten easier with the introduction of portable charging units, and our computers are a breeze to use with enhanced software and the addition of wireless printing.

In recognition of our commitment to innovation in closing the digital divide, San Mateo County Libraries were selected as the Connect15 honoree at the annual technology and government conference in the County. The Connect Award recognizes organizations that have used technology to be more responsive and better address community needs, and that demonstrate vision, leadership, and results.

## WiFi Hotspots

We transformed how we provide Internet access by lending WiFi hotspots, the first program of its kind in California. Rather than limiting patrons to using the Internet at a physical library, this service is providing 24/7 access, allowing hundreds of households to engage in education, exploration, and the many practical tasks of daily life that require Internet access.



## New eLibrary

We unveiled our new eLibrary to overwhelmingly positive response. The new smcl.org website provides a seamless, updated online experience for library users with responsive web design, an improved events calendar, better integration with our catalog, and multiple pathways to discovery.

Our digital collections are constantly expanding and evolving, making our eLibrary our 5th busiest “branch” with the largest single collection. The eLibrary also provides important services such as online homework help, free museum passes, dozens of databases not freely available, in-depth technology courses, and a high school diploma program. From eBooks to online courses, streaming video to downloadable music, our eLibrary is always on the cutting edge and always open.



“Wow, wow, and more wow! I’m blown away by the look and feel, plus the snazzy new features, e.g. when I place a hold on a book, it gives me recommendations for stuff I might like—awesome. Thank you for doing such an impressive and efficient job with the website.”

**eLibrary patron**

## Story of Impact

Leandra has been coming to the library since she was a little girl. Her life has not been easy, she was not able to complete high school and she has been homeless for a long time. The library is a safe place for her, and she likes to spend the day playing computer games or watching videos. One day, staff hosted a 3D printer open house, and Leandra participated in the program and printed her first object. It took her a while to get comfortable with the process, but now she is the resident 3D

print expert at our library. She has shown countless kids and adults how to use 3D printers. Leandra has learned very valuable people and technical skills. Recently she told me, “Coming to the library and helping people with the 3D printer is one way I can give back, and I like doing it.”

**Francisco Vargas**  
*Community Library Manager*



## Teaching Technology

In addition to the ongoing computer classes we offer, we expanded technology programs for kids including web design, filmmaking, and robotics. A unique pilot program engaged students who have limited access to technology in hands-on technology education and enriched out-of-school time. These programs strive to bridge the economic divide and diversify the technology workforce by offering all students access to quality STEM education.

## Maker Movement

As the Maker Movement grows, we continue to expand our lineup of innovative programs aimed at tinkerers of all ages. We’ve introduced our communities to the boundless opportunities available through learning to use everything from sewing machines and turntables to robotics, cooking, and 3D printing technology. Residents have been invited to library 3D printing programs, our first mass Print-a-Thon, and a new personal appointment service to connect patrons with a trained staff member for assistance with using this technology. This was also our third year participating in the Maker Faire, where we connected with over 6,000 makers of all ages.

“Thank you for providing the laptop computers to borrow from the library. It allows us more time to search, write and play games. Thank you again, and compliments to your dedicated and courteous staff.”

**Pacifica patron**





# Open for Learning

Our steadfast commitment to enriching our communities remained a major focus of this year as we expanded the scope of our services. We successfully began a variety of valuable new outreach initiatives and continued ongoing work through a number of existing programs.

## Summer Learning Challenge

► **88%** of summer participants are now more confident readers and learners

**100%** of library campers either increased or retained existing literacy skills over the summer

**43%** of library campers improved their instructional reading level by at least one full grade

**55,747** free books distributed to youth

**24,991** healthy meals provided to youth

Tackling the “summer slide” that comes from a decline in active learning is integral to addressing the achievement gap for low-income kids. During the summer months, children can lose an average of two months of instruction or roughly 22% of what they learned during the school year. Summer learning loss slows progress toward third-grade reading proficiency. This is a significant issue for our County—50% of our children are not reading proficiently by third grade, a critical milestone for long-term success.

Our popular Summer Learning Challenge offers a fun opportunity for kids to keep discovering and growing—even when school is out. Through the support of Measure A funds from the County of San Mateo, 57% of our youth service population participated in summer learning, a more than 400% increase from four years ago.

## Summer Learning Camps

Now in our third year, Summer Learning Camps increase access to high-quality learning experiences and advance literacy by engaging youth and families in reading and enrichment activities. In 2015, we expanded camps from five locations to seven and successfully obtained funding for a free lunch program offered not only to youth participants, but to adults as well. As a result, families spent quality lunchtime together at different locations throughout the County.

In Summer 2016, we were thrilled to be selected by the Big Lift to scale up our summer camps and serve more than 800 children throughout the County. Working with our partners BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) and the Bay Area Discovery Museum, we focused on providing the kinds of experiences and quality enrichments that all children should have access to, including project-based, hands-on learning experiences, healthy meals, exciting field trips, and high-interest, high-quality books for the home.

Our Summer Learning Camps were honored with a San Mateo County STARS Award and a National Association of Counties Achievement Award.

"Reading is a gift. To go to the library and pick a book off a shelf is a doorway to a whole new world. San Mateo County Libraries ensure that every student has their best chance at success. Literacy is so important, and I am so proud of our County, our libraries, our staff, and our partners for working together in promoting literacy."

**Supervisor Carole Groom,  
Library JPA Governing Board Chair**



## Summer Youth Employment Program

To assist in closing the summer opportunity gap for children and families, we initiated a youth development internship program. The program hired, trained, and mentored 40 high school and college students in summer 2015 and nearly 200 interns in summer 2016 to support our summer learning programs. Through this meaningful program, the interns gained valuable experience working with youth, while making a positive impact in their communities.

*"I know that test scores and reading levels are typically lower in this area, so I wanted to do something positive to help change that. Working at the camps, you really get to see how excited the kids are to learn and read."*

**Summer intern**

## Talk Read Sing

- ▶ **70%** of families saw gains in adult words spoken to the child
- 65%** of families saw gains in conversational turns
- 7,614** hours of support provided by interns
- 11,480** programs and events offered

Parents' talking habits powerfully influence the critical language development that occurs in the first three years of a child's life. Children with low-income parents hear roughly 30 million fewer words than more affluent children by the time they turn three. In partnership with the LENA Research Foundation, we began the Talk Read Sing program in English and Spanish and expanded the program's offerings in partnership with the San Mateo County Housing Authority. Using patented LENA technology, "talk pedometers" track the number of words spoken throughout the day. The analyzed data helps families easily see how they are meeting their goals.

*"I wanted to read books from my old country, and my wish came true with books in Mandarin at the library. The staff deserve a big hug and thank you for a fantastic job. Looking forward to reading all the great books to come."*

**Millbrae patron**



## Story of Impact

The best thing about the last session of Talk Read Sing was a conversation I had with a parent whose daughter was the subject of an intervention alert earlier in the program. She told me that she was so happy to see the progress her daughter had made, and that she had been worried because she was behind in the beginning, but now her daughter is doing better and even ahead. She was taking the time to talk with her daughter

more, read with her more, and think about their time together in a thoughtful, deep way.

When you work with families on a regular basis like this, you watch the kids grow up, and you remember them at this young, rapidly changing age and you think about the influence you had on their lives.

**Karen Choy**  
Librarian





# Open for Transformation

We believe that the spaces where discoveries take place are as critical to learning as the programs we offer. This year, we continued to revamp and rebuild our spaces, ensuring that they remain incomparable destinations for exploration and growth for generations to come.

## Transforming Our Spaces

Shaped by our communities, San Mateo County Libraries have become incomparable destinations for learning and growth. We've opened a world of discovery and provided unmatched technological opportunities.

This year has been unprecedented in terms of efforts to build and improve library facilities. Working in partnership with our member cities, we assisted in the planning of four new libraries and two renovation projects in efforts to transform our libraries into welcoming spaces that enable inspiring experiences. As we continue to grow, our commitment remains the same—but what we offer will only become more extraordinary.

### Defining Needs

**East Palo Alto Library Improvement Project** A library space needs assessment of East Palo Alto is underway. Fog Studio Architects are working with community stakeholders to complete and present the study in 2016.

### In Design

**New Brisbane Library Project** The Brisbane City Council selected architects Siegel & Strain to begin design activities for a new 7,000 square foot library. The new library will include a teen area, a Makerspace, and community room, and will be located across the street from the current location on Visitacion Avenue.

**New Pacifica Library Project** Group 4 Architects were selected by the Pacifica City Council to design a new single library at the corner of Palmetto and Montecito. To support funding for the project, a bond measure was approved for the November 2016 ballot.

### Expected Groundbreaking

**New Atherton Library Project** A new 9,000 square foot library is being designed by architects WRNS as part of the Atherton Civic Center. The project includes renovation of the historic Town Hall building, which increases the total library space to just under 11,000 square feet. Groundbreaking is expected in Fall 2017.

### Expected Grand Opening

**New Half Moon Bay Library Project** A new 22,000 square foot library, designed by architects Noll & Tam, will be built on the current library site. The temporary library has opened at Shoreline Station and a wonderful community groundbreaking event was held in July 2016. The new library is expected to open in 2018.

### Open for Exploration

**Woodside Library Improvement Project** Over 750 community members celebrated the grand re-opening of the newly refurbished space with a day-long program of special events in April 2016. The remodel included seismic retrofitting; ADA accessible features and new bathrooms; dedicated spaces for children and teens; the addition of a meeting and learning space, new furniture, shelving and equipment; increased power and data for additional technology; and an enhanced layout for a more flexible space. The \$3 million renovation took nine months to complete, and has created a space that invites visitors to find inspiration from independent and shared learning and build community and personal connections.



## Going Beyond Our Facilities

Libraries are more relevant than ever before with the programs and services we provide both inside and outside of our buildings. The Bookmobile is one example of our efforts to expand our reach and impact throughout the County. To promote equitable access to English and Spanish library materials, services, and programs, the Bookmobile visits schools and other convenient stops for residents in unincorporated communities inland and along the coast.

We also made efforts to reach out to our community to get people thinking and talking about our libraries in a completely new way by participating in a bold national library campaign known as Outside the Lines. Staff engaged people out in the community in fun and unexpected ways to show how we've changed. Library staff hosted Pop-Up Libraries, spontaneous programs, and free book giveaways in unexpected places—ranging from the Senior Center and a Coastal Cleanup beach event to grocery stores, coffee shops, and bus stops.

*"You have so many friendly staff and great programs."*

**Atherton patron**

*"You all are deserving of our gratitude for what you do for us individually and for the community."*

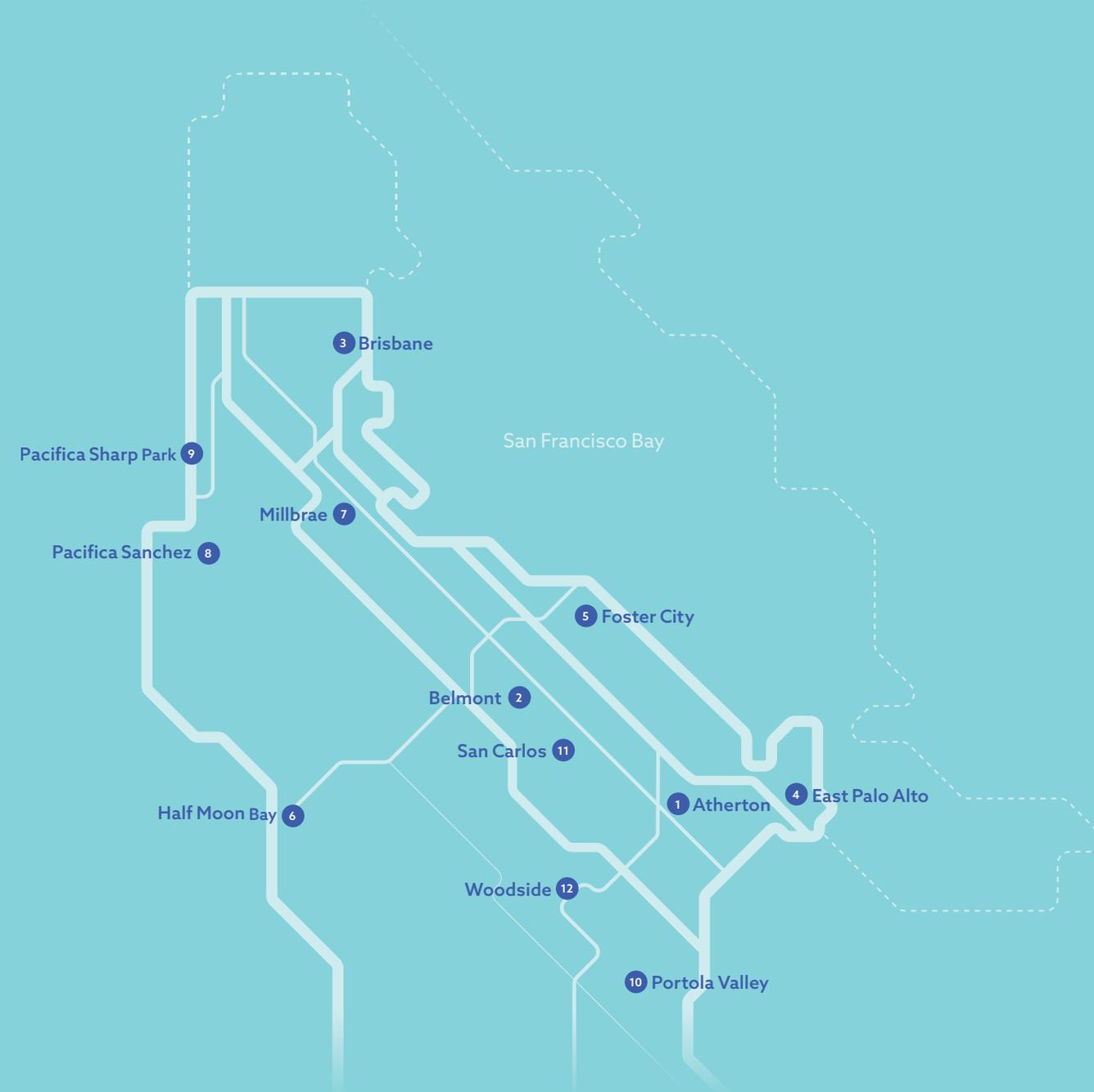
**San Carlos patron**

## Story of Impact

One Pacifica resident pleasantly discovered our Pop-Up Library during lunch at the Senior Center, and her excitement increased when she found eReaders available for checkout. This surprise encounter turned into the perfect opportunity for her to experiment with a technology she was hesitant to try on her own. With the help of our

library staff, she gained confidence using the device right there and is motivated to learn more about what enjoyment eReaders have to offer. She told me "I love the Pop-Up Library! The eReaders are so light and easy to use. I'm excited to check one out again."

**Paula Teixeira**  
Circulation Supervisor



### San Mateo County Libraries

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1 Atherton<br>2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane<br>Atherton CA 94027         | 5 Foster City<br>1000 East Hillsdale Boulevard<br>Foster City CA 94404     | 9 Pacifica Sharp Park<br>104 Hilton Way<br>Pacifica CA 94044     |
| 2 Belmont<br>1110 Alameda de las Pulgas<br>Belmont CA 94002           | 6 Half Moon Bay<br>225 S. Cabrillo Highway #104B<br>Half Moon Bay CA 94019 | 10 Portola Valley<br>765 Portola Road<br>Portola Valley CA 94028 |
| 3 Brisbane<br>250 Visitacion Avenue<br>Brisbane CA 94005              | 7 Millbrae<br>1 Library Avenue<br>Millbrae CA 94030                        | 11 San Carlos<br>610 Elm Street<br>San Carlos CA 94070           |
| 4 East Palo Alto<br>2415 University Avenue<br>East Palo Alto CA 94303 | 8 Pacifica Sanchez<br>1111 Terra Nova Boulevard<br>Pacifica CA 94044       | 12 Woodside<br>3140 Woodside Road<br>Woodside CA 94062           |

