

## About the Innovations Initiative

*"Do you know what my favorite renewable fuel is?  
An ecosystem for innovation."*

– Thomas Friedman



Today's public libraries must continuously innovate, adapt and lead to help tackle community challenges and expand opportunity for people of all ages. In its fourth year, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Innovations Initiative has become a signature program to showcase dynamic innovations that enhance community well-being.

The 2013 Urban Libraries Council Top Innovators continue to model the leadership and impact of high-performing public libraries. From a mobile App that gives parents easy access to information about early childhood literacy skills to bringing public health nurses into libraries to help patrons with behavioral challenges to supporting first responders during a massive wildfire, public libraries are continuing to broaden and deepen their roles as vital community resources.

A panel of expert judges selected this year's Top Innovators and Honorable Mentions in 10 categories based on the strength of their innovation, results achieved and capacity to be replicated. The categories are: Learning; Civic and Community Engagement; Collections; Customer Experience; Economic and Workforce Development; Health, Wellness and Safety; Operations; Organizational Change and Strategic Management; Positioning the Library; and Sustainability. In addition, for the first time, ULC is honoring three libraries for their leadership in helping their communities respond to natural and human-made crises.

In 2013, more than 140 stories of successful innovation were submitted. All will become part of ULC's innovation resource center which now includes more than 600 leading practices in diverse categories of library operations and services. ULC congratulates all of the applicants and honorees for their innovative practices that highlight the value that 21st century libraries provide to their communities.

\* Time Magazine, September 15, 2008

## Learning

**Howard County Library System, MD**  
**HiTech: The Road to a STEM Career**  
[hclibrary.org](http://hclibrary.org)



Howard County Library System's HiTech digital media lab is designed to open doors and opportunities to the region's teens. HiTech delivers cutting-edge science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education using hands-on technology projects, experiential learning and peer-to-peer communications. Envisioned as a launching point for the STEM career pipeline, HiTech focuses on producing the next generation of scientists, mathematicians and engineers to meet the needs of the region's highly-skilled job market. The curriculum includes both self-paced and structured learning opportunities divided into four modules that emphasize interaction, improvisation, invention and instruction. The HiTech Academy component focuses on teens who are interested in pursuing higher education in science, technology, engineering or math by providing instruction, site visits to STEM work environments and attendance at college-sponsored STEM sites.



Since HiTech's launch, more than 2,000 teens have participated in a wide range of classes, created a mobile game that was released in 2013 and has been downloaded 5,000 times around the world, and worked on the library's Choose Civility e-book featuring their own stories and photos.

 **URBAN  
LIBRARIES  
COUNCIL** 2013 TOP INNOVATORS



2013 Top Innovator