



Track 2: Collaboration and Innovation: How libraries are repositioning themselves as the digital nexus for their communities

A+ and C++: STEM Education Innovation – October 1, 2014, 2:45 pm

Libraries across the globe have the ability to design and deliver the extraordinary, capitalizing on creative partnerships. This presentation will focus on a game-changing vision and strategy for all types of libraries, as well as two of Howard County Library System's (HCLS) innovative partnerships: A+ Partners in Education (A+), and HiTech, a STEM Education initiative for teens. This approach has transformed HCLS into a renowned educational institution, alongside the region's schools, colleges, and universities.

A formal countywide partnership among HCLS, the county school system, and the local community college, A+ improves student academic success. Replicated in numerous jurisdictions across the country, A+ is successful due to an established communication network that brings the public library into the schools and the schools into the library.

A new A+ component, HiTech instructors and industry/academic partners teach cutting-edge science, technology, engineering, and math via project-based classes to students, ages 11-18. Subjects include 3D animation, nanotechnology, e-books, game apps, cybersecurity, green energy, and robotics. By leveraging the best technology, teaching tools, and experts to deliver a top-quality STEM education experience, HiTech incorporates an innovative methodology that blends instruction with experiential learning and peer to peer communications. These collaborations capitalize on Howard County's advantage as home to a number of major STEM-oriented employers and higher education institutions, with many providing leadership and guidance as members of the HiTech Board of Advisors.

Presenter:

Valerie J. Gross, President and CEO of Howard County (MD) Library System



Valerie J. Gross has served as President and CEO of Howard County Library System (HCLS) in Maryland since 2001. On her watch, HCLS was named the 2013 Library of the Year by Gale/Library Journal. She was honored by the *Baltimore Sun* as one of "50 Women to Watch: The most intriguing, powerful, and memorable personalities making an impact on the Baltimore region." A frequent speaker, guest lecturer, and workshop leader, Gross has authored the book *Transforming Our Image, Building Our Brand: The Education Advantage*. She received the *Public Libraries* Best Feature Article Award in 2012 and 2010, and was honored as a *Library Journal Mover and Shaker* in 2004.