



# Library Profile **SPARTANBURG COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

SPARTANBURG COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

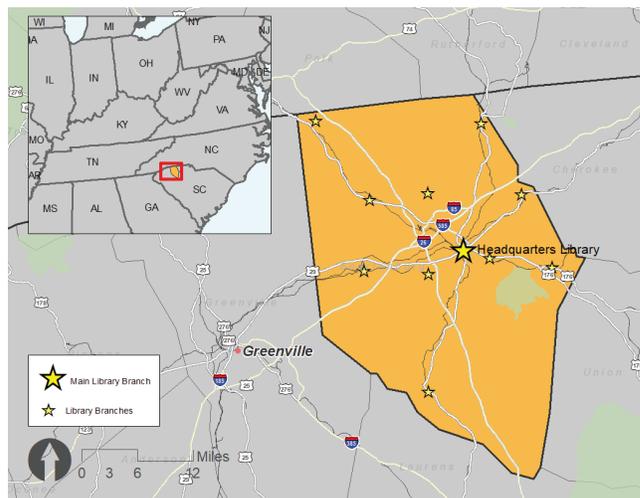
# Library Profile: Spartanburg County Public Libraries



## SPARTANBURG COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Spartanburg County Public Libraries (SCPL) serves a large county of 811 square miles, encompassing seven school districts in northwestern South Carolina. The library system includes a main library (Headquarters) in Spartanburg and nine branch libraries. In 2019, SCPL had a budget of more than \$15.5 million with 220 staff. SCPL's service area includes diverse settings that range from suburban to more remote rural settings.

In 2019, SCPL completed a strategic planning process that guides library activities and priorities within the resulting three-year plan. The plan's objectives include increasing library outreach; making the library more accessible; increasing programs and collections to meet the needs of underserved populations and non-English speaking residents; attracting and retaining staff, volunteers, and interns who reflect the diversity of the community; increasing internet connectivity for those with



limited access; and building new partnerships with diverse community organizations. Through a variety of programs and partnerships, SCPL aims to promote health and wellbeing for children, adolescents, and adults throughout the community.

## SPARTANBURG COUNTY

Spartanburg County is a suburban county in northwestern South Carolina with a population of 319,785. The city of Spartanburg is the county seat and home to the main branch of SCPL. The median household income in Spartanburg County is \$45,219, slightly less than the state

median of \$46,898, and 12.8 percent of families live in poverty. The county is about 70 percent White, 20 percent Black, 6 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian, and about 2 percent other or more than one race.

	Population	% Change in Population (2000–2016)	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian	% Other	Median Household Income	% Families in Poverty
United States	318,558,162	13.2	62.0	12.3	17.3	5.2	3.3	\$55,322	11.0
Spartanburg County	294,229	15.9	69.1	20.5	6.3	2.2	1.8	\$45,219	12.8

Compared to other suburban counties across the country, Spartanburg County residents have relatively low levels of overall community health. Spartanburg County fell in the bottom quartile of the Community Health Index.<sup>1</sup> The primary

industries in the county include Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Education Services, and Accommodation & Food Service, which account for roughly 52 percent of adult employment in the county.

	Total Labor Force	% Manufacturing	% Retail Trade	% Education Services	% Accommodation & Food Service
United States*	131,362,978	9.3	10.9	9.2	8.9
Spartanburg County	127,394	22.0	12.0	9.0	9.0

Data Sources: 2012–16 American Community Survey five-year estimates; U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2017.

\*Continental figures for total labor force include the 48 lower states and Washington, DC.

<sup>1</sup> Data elements included in the Community Health Index, along with measures for Spartanburg County, can be found at the beginning of Appendix II.

## SITE VISIT PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

In January 2020, the study team conducted interviews with eight current library staff and representatives from five different partner organizations. Site visit interviews focused on understanding the SCPL programming and partnerships that support community health in Spartanburg County as well as SCPL's institutional approaches to assessment, staff support, and sustainability.

In addition, SCPL staff provided the following data to create the network map included in this profile:

- 2016 Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Public Libraries Survey
- Spartanburg County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
- Friends of the Spartanburg County Library 990 tax form
- Program reviews for several SCPL programs
- Interview notes and related materials collected by the case study team

This site profile includes the following:

- A summary of select SCPL programming and partnerships that support library customers' personal health and the overall public health of Spartanburg County
- SCPL's institutional approaches to providing training and supports to enable staff to address personal and public health needs
- A descriptive network map that illustrates the scope and variety of connections SCPL maintains with local partners throughout the county and beyond

## KEY PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE THE WELLBEING OF SPARTANBURG RESIDENTS

SCPL has developed multiple initiatives that support patrons' physical, social, and emotional wellbeing:

- **Physical health programs** include a variety of exercise classes available at all branches at a modest cost (\$2 per person) as well as information and support programs on topics such as diabetes and Parkinson's disease. SCPL advocated for a planned bike path to run near the library Headquarters, where it has located bike racks to help encourage physical activity. The county librarian noted that examining county indicators in areas such as hypertension and obesity reinforces the importance of SCPL's emphasis on wellness

and health. SCPL also partners with the local hospital system to provide free health services like blood tests, prescriptions, and weight loss counseling to staff.

- **Food and nutrition programs** include gardening and canning workshops, seed libraries at four branches, a mobile farmers' market that rotates among branches spring through fall, and a summer food program hosted by several branches. SCPL offers programming for children and adults alongside the food program. The Adult Services Department chose "Food and Nutrition" as the theme for its summer 2020 reading program, and though it was cancelled

due to the pandemic, the theme will be used in summer 2021.

- **Efforts to make SCPL more accessible** moved ahead in early 2020. SCPL used grant funding to partner with a local nonprofit to assess accessibility at Headquarters and at one of the branches as well as to educate staff from all branches about how to program for patrons with a wide range of abilities and needs. The partner nonprofit provided suggestions for physical changes to make the library more accessible (e.g., making some tables usable for people with wheelchairs). Other efforts include greater outreach to the nearby South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, including several staff learning American Sign Language, and creating more programming for people with sensory processing issues.

Partnerships enhance many of the above programs. The Master Gardener program teaches gardening classes, and the Arthritis Foundation provides a facilitator for arthritis exercise. In 2019, SCPL partnered with the Spartanburg Housing Authority, which organized the overall summer food program, to become a feeding site, and it joined community partners to help provide programming for participants. For example, Clemson University's Cooperative

Extension program provided a nutrition program for caregivers accompanying children to the summer food site.

Like many library systems, in recent years, SCPL has expanded programming to better address community residents' health needs in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Sharing information and resources
- Linking customers to community food programs
- Making physical spaces more accessible
- Helping participants to increase their knowledge and skills or to try new practices (yoga, gardening)
- Reducing social isolation and building community, especially in some of the ongoing groups

SCPL's involvement in promoting community health is noteworthy because of its highly networked and coordinated approach to supporting both healthy child and adolescent development and serving people experiencing homelessness.

## SCPL PROGRAMMING PROMOTES WELLBEING BY SUPPORTING HEALTHY CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

SCPL focuses on the unique developmental needs of children, tweens, and teens. Aligned with community goals of kindergarten readiness, increased academic achievement, high school completion, and overall healthy development, SCPL is engaged in multiple programs to support children of all ages. SCPL's Children's Services Department uses a logic model to guide its work. Desired outputs include children reaching developmental milestones and families being equipped with literacy tools they can use at home. Longer-term outcomes include kindergarten readiness, especially for children in vulnerable areas, third grade reading proficiency, and eighth grade math mastery. Both of the programs described below grew out of collaborative community processes with multiple partners.

### Language ENvironment Analysis Supports Early Brain Development and Language Acquisition

SCPL's implementation and leadership roles in the Language ENvironment Analysis (LENA) grew out of a partnership with the Spartanburg Academic Movement (SAM). SAM is a community-based nonprofit that convened local stakeholders, including school districts and other local organizations, to examine data and strategize about how to enhance kindergarten readiness in Spartanburg. The group identified the "talk gap," often described as a 30 million word gap correlated with socioeconomic status, as a focus. SAM brought in LENA, a national program with the slogan, Building Brains Through Early Talk, to address the gap. The LENA Start program focuses on kindergarten readiness with the goal of increasing interactive conversations between young children and their caregivers—both at home and in other settings, especially early childhood education. The Mary Black Foundation in Spartanburg funded the LENA project and worked with SAM to implement it.

As the lead partner organization for LENA Start in the county, SCPL distributes materials to other organizations or schools who want to implement LENA Start and takes responsibility for logistics such as buying books for families and managing data. SCPL began implementing several LENA groups at its Headquarters in 2020 and secured funding for home-based LENA programs to occur through home visits in partnership with the local hospital's nurse/family program. Partners in this effort also include Head Start and Spartanburg School District 7. A LENA staff person explained why they wanted to partner with the library:

*"It (Headquarters) is a great location, and there are nine other branches . . . the system already has partnerships in place with school districts and lots of other local organizations that meet families where they are. So, we thought that would be the perfect place to do outreach from, do recruitment from, and start serving children through LENA."*

### The Palmetto Basics Uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to Promote Kindergarten Readiness

As part of its mission to foster kindergarten readiness, Spartanburg County First Steps adopted the Palmetto Basics (Basics) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) as key programs. The ASQ-3 is a simple screening tool that can identify children ages 0–5 at risk for developmental delays and is used to provide referrals to appropriate interventions. The Basics emphasize five practices—sing, talk, read, write, and play—along with three other components: managing stress, maximizing love, and math. Organizations throughout the county were adopting the Basics, including schools, prompting SCPL to use it as a guide for its early childhood work as well. This way, organizations across the community would be using the same language so that county residents could receive coherent messages.

Basics at the library launched in 2019. SCPL has incorporated the Basics into several aspects of its children’s programming. Headquarters uses posters to highlight a different Basic each month, and children’s librarians incorporate Basics into story times and share ideas of what parents can do at home to support the month’s Basic. The SCPL training department also provided training on the Basics to library staff. Summer Reading Challenge cards were also used to engage parents of children ages 0–3 in Basics-related activities. To implement the ASQ-3, the library planned to post QR codes so that parents could complete the survey on their phones and to make computers and iPads available for filling out the ASQ-3 to evaluate children’s developmental progress. Librarians would serve as ambassadors for the ASQ-3 and talk about the importance of screening for developmental delays with patrons. Assessment results go directly to First Steps, which follows up with caregivers to let them know about assessment results and free resources. Another partner, Help Me Grow SC, helps to connect parents and developmentally delayed children to needed supports. A First Steps staff person said, “The library is literally the first group I went to get this out and rolling. They’re a community hub.”

### **Supports for Teens Promote Strategies for Healthy Intellectual and Social-Emotional Development**

Over more than a decade, the teen department (defined as grades 7–12) has grown from one librarian to 15, including a teen librarian at every branch. Key goals of the teen department include helping teens to “empower and build resiliency as a response to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)” and to be a safe space with trusted, caring, safe adults. Headquarters has a newly renovated teen hub with comfortable seating (couches, booths), a program room, and supplies and activities for teens to explore. A librarian noted that learning about ACEs had greatly informed teen staff’s approach, and they have continued to build their skills and knowledge about teens and their needs. For example, staff have incorporated restorative justice into their work with youth. A librarian shared an example of one teen:

*“[He] would get angry and throw the PS4 controller. He broke it and couldn’t play, but he still came here. So, then we talked with him about it and had him do volunteer work to earn the right to play again.”*

SCPL’s children’s and teen departments deploy a variety of strategies to engage youth and to support healthy intellectual and socio-emotional development. Programs for young children seek to engage parents as partners and to build their knowledge of activities and resources to support their child’s development and individual needs, with the overall goal of increasing the percentage of kindergarten-ready children in the county. Teen department staff encourage teens to build relationships with library staff and peers, develop skills and knowledge, and use the library as a safe space. Through these activities, staff seek to help build teens’ resilience.

## **SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELLBEING OF THE COUNTY'S MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

Several years ago, SCPL and a local nonprofit, the Haven, identified the need to provide more resources for patrons experiencing homelessness. SCPL Headquarters is in central Spartanburg, close to a mission and a soup kitchen. One partner noted, "The library has done a good job of welcoming [people experiencing homelessness]." SCPL partnered with the Haven to provide services for and outreach to people experiencing homelessness. A Haven staff person comes to the main library four days per week to meet with customers individually and to provide group programming. Security and other staff identify and refer patrons who may need services. The library provides space and computer access for the Haven to meet with people and connect them to resources, such as food stamps. A library staff member from the security department serves as a liaison with the Haven and is a member of the Haven's board of directors. Through this involvement, and by participating on a committee for a newly formed homeless court,

the staff person can bring information back for the library to share with staff and patrons.

A partnership with the Homeless Period Project (HPP) was sparked when a librarian heard an HPP speaker at a local women's leadership networking event. HPP provides free menstrual hygiene supplies at no cost to people in need. Though the project started with an emphasis on people experiencing homelessness, it has expanded to serve anyone in need, no matter their housing situation. An HPP staff person noted that some girls have to miss school because of lack of access to these products. All branches serve as distribution sites, and Headquarters is also a collection site for donations. Partnerships with HPP and the Haven position SCPL to meet some of the immediate health needs of patrons and to support patrons to take steps to make broader and more long-term improvements in multiple areas related to the social determinants of health.

## **A STRONG COMMITMENT TO TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUILDS STAFF SKILLS AND CAPACITY**

While many library systems benefit from state library training resources, SCPL is unusual in that it also has its own training department, including a director and two staff. The training director is also responsible for progress on the strategic plan, such as developing action teams and measuring impact. The training department supports SCPL staff skill development and prepares staff to support the achievement of larger library goals, including goals related to promoting health and wellbeing.

SCPL staff run several in-house health and community wellbeing-related trainings. Trainings cover a broad array of topics:

adverse childhood experiences, spotting and reporting abuse, the Basics, and working with specific populations (e.g., people experiencing homelessness or people with disabilities such as autism). All new employees participate in a crisis prevention and intervention training, including de-escalation, which can be helpful with patrons experiencing mental health or substance abuse issues. Staff with particular skills also offer trainings to their peers. For example, a librarian who offers sensory story time at her branch trains other SCPL staff so that they can offer it in their settings and create a more welcoming environment for visitors with sensory needs.

SCPL also brings in external trainers, including state library staff and local organizations, who have provided education on topics such as mental health needs or local emergency services, positively impacting staff wellbeing and their ability to support community wellbeing. The state library is an especially valuable partner, contributing additional resources and assistance. For example, the state library's Equity, Diversity,

and Inclusion consultant provides support for meeting SCPL's goal of doing outreach with and programming for diverse groups and also provides related programming (e.g., a children's author's review of books focused on Native American heritage, with ideas for books for story times and how to approach these books in a culturally appropriate way).

## SCPL EMPLOYS A NETWORKED, DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Spartanburg County has several initiatives that focus on using data to identify and respond to community needs. Both library staff and partner interviewees described Spartanburg as highly collaborative. According to one partner, "Spartanburg is very good at working together and very close-knit." These initiatives emphasize working together and engaging county stakeholders to strategize and plan how to address issues raised in the data. SCPL participates actively and uses insights from the data and collaborative processes to shape programming. Data initiatives include the following:

- The Spartanburg Community Indicators Project is a decades-long initiative now run by the Metro Studies Institute (MSI) at University of South Carolina Upstate. The project collects data about indicators in seven key areas and reports on progress in these areas over time. SCPL serves as an area leader for the Civic Health indicator area, convening leaders to work together to improve outcomes. A Community Engagement librarian helps coordinate these efforts.
- The Community Health Needs Assessment, commissioned by the Road to Better Health Coalition (RBHC) and conducted by MSI, served as a foundation for RBHC to engage stakeholders in efforts to improve the health of citizens in Spartanburg County. SCPL serves as a partner in the coalition, including supporting its work with a donation.

- The Spartanburg Racial Equity Index presents wellbeing data focused on racial equity in a range of areas, including employment and income, health, education, and criminal justice. It is also conducted by MSI.
- The Assessment of Kindergarten Readiness by SAM uses the Early Development Instrument (EDI). SAM describes itself as a nonprofit organization and community movement promoting the vision of economic mobility anchored in academic achievement. The EDI allowed SAM to present data about kindergarten readiness in five domains in specific communities across the county. The county librarian sits on SAM's board.

Library leadership encourage staff to get involved in the community and be engaged in all seven areas measured by the Community Indicators project (e.g., by sitting on boards or participating in programming or through partnerships). The county librarian noted that it's helpful "to have people in place who are hearing what's taking place . . . if I can be proactive, I can do a better job of supplying services."

SAM used EDI data to identify an area of Spartanburg County where children were especially vulnerable (e.g., almost 70 percent of children were not kindergarten ready). SAM convened an August 2019 meeting at the local SCPL branch. Attendees included representatives from schools, the county council, and church leaders as well as the town mayor. Discussion

focused on what the community could do to increase the number of children who are kindergarten ready. SAM also connected the branch to First Steps, which conducted training for staff. Branch librarians have sent information about the Basics to churches and businesses to encourage them to use the framework and are encouraging adults to complete the ASQ-3 for their children as well.

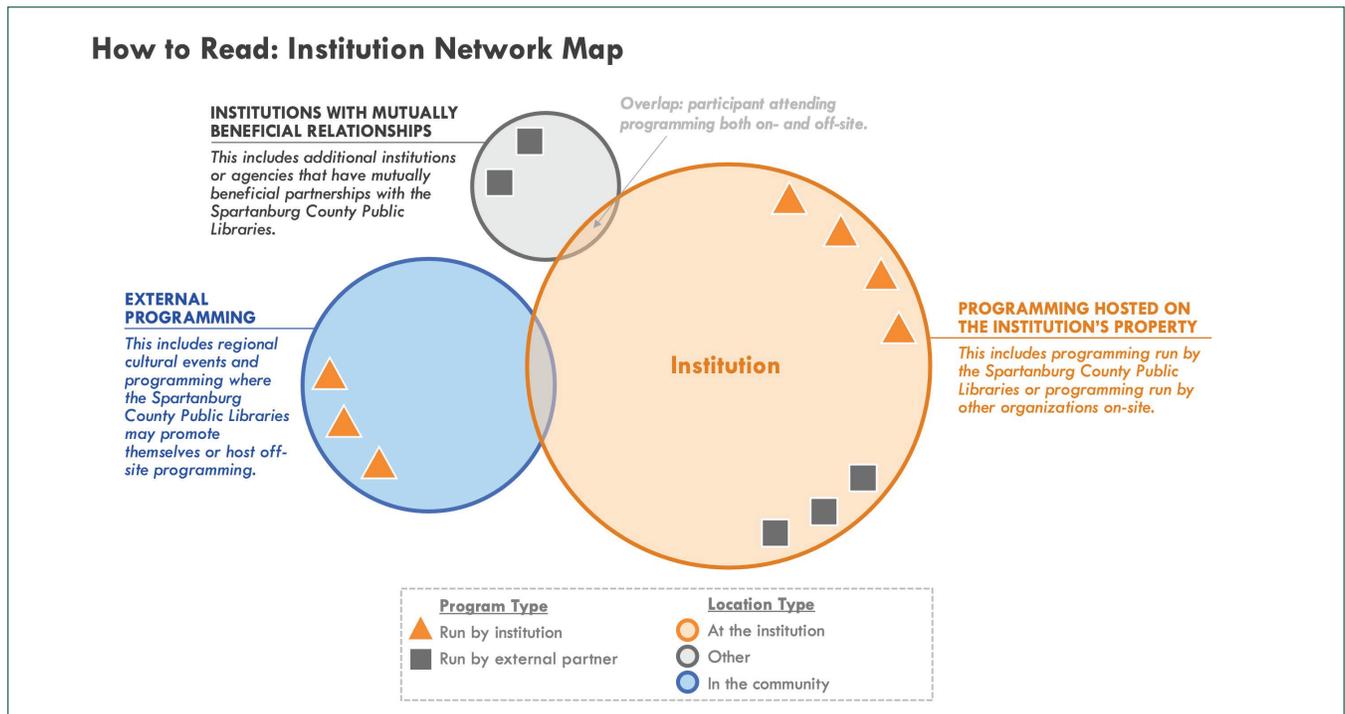
SCPL's highly networked and data-driven approach to supporting the wellbeing of their staff, patrons, and the broader community provides a compelling example of how an institution has evolved to serve an increasingly diverse range of communities. By using data and its connections throughout its service area, SCPL can augment and extend a range of programming that enhances the health and wellbeing of residents throughout the community.

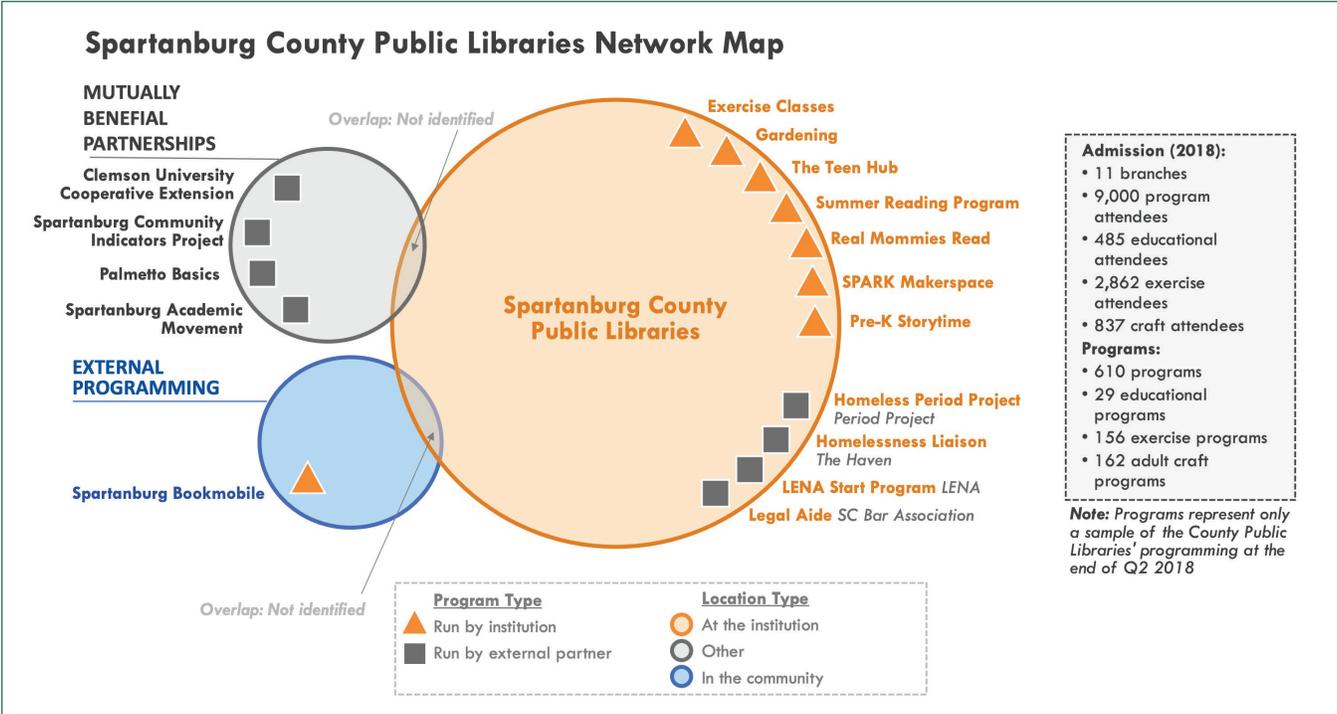
## SPARTANBURG COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES NETWORK MAP

Using data provided by SCPL, the study team developed a descriptive network map to highlight the different types of connections SCPL maintains with other institutions in the local community. The map illustrates the relationships between SCPL and those entities that offer programming at the library itself and

those that support cross-marketing efforts or have reciprocal relationships with the library, and it includes examples of off-site, SCPL-led programming. The map does not provide an exhaustive list of the library's programs but attempts to illustrate a subset of the relationships that the library maintains.

*NOTE: The network map is purely descriptive. The connections represented on the map do not necessarily, and are not intended to, provide estimates of the duration, durability, intensity, or broader economic impact of the relationships between SCPL and any single entity, or the broader network itself. The goal of the network map is to represent the range and diversity of different types of institutions that connect to the library in different ways.*





The figure above illustrates a *sample* of the connections of the more than 600 programs offered across SCPL's 11 locations. Within the orange circle is a small sample of programs conducted on the physical property of the institution—both programs produced by the institution and those produced by others. Within the blue circle is a sample of programs produced by SCPL and offered off-site in the community. The gray circle represents a sample of additional institutions and initiatives where the library has mutually beneficial partnerships.