The Special Library Express:

“An open dialogue about library-express stations being created in local community centers and cultural arts complexes in the United States”

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Visit the online website regarding the Special Library Express to learn more about the research, view the power point presentation, take the library user survey, and dialogue with like-minded individuals about the project here:

www.thespeciallibraryexpress.wordpress.com
Abstract:

The special library express is a research project in progress that will provide quantitative and qualitative data and information about the need for special library express stations to be housed in non-traditional spaces including cultural institutions, malls, art galleries, and transportation terminals. There are six areas that this research project will target in the future: Internet Use in America, The Digital Divide, and The Special Library: Role of Special Librarians in the Community, The Special Library: A Moving Express Station Design, and Dialogue: Librarians, Students, Community, and Advocates.
The Special Library Express

With the current trends in the United States changing daily in regard to technology, jobs, and the economy, there is a dire need for the librarian community to help with the infrastructure of our country that has lapsed into the digital divide. This can be carried out by helping the needs of the community through library express stations—located in community or cultural centers. The idea for a library express station project came into fruition after overhearing a group of African-American mothers and college students in Dallas, Texas, discuss their online experience with registering for classes. Citizens were in outrage, because the community college did not provide resources for them to take trainings on navigating the new online shift.

Instead of returning to the college to inquire about help, parents stated they were too frustrated to go on with the process of enrolling their children—and decided to let them sit out a semester (until they had time to understand the online process that was implemented). Many individuals of color in the United States do not have access to the internet, or understand how to navigate the web to access email, job-educational portals, or social networking sites today. The world that we live in now requires that you go online to access services for just about anything in question.

Through technology and community resources, librarians can be of service to individuals who might need to look for a job, or learn about social assistance organizations in their community. A library express station would propose that a librarian either work in a community center, or cultural center. They would have the option to train staff or implement the project themselves. The library express station would consist of a designated stationary area where a librarian could perform the following duties:

- Create a database of community resources and create a community library literary database.
- Help patrons learn how to navigate the internet [by setting up a computer with software to teach this information or it can be done manually] or a particular online site in question.
- Guide patrons on how to look for a book—on their city library online website.
- Inform patrons of the benefits of obtaining a library card + different resources that are available to them including internet trainings, community events, and resume/educational workshops—at their local library.
- Be a community resource guide by informing patrons of social resources that include city department of human services, employment opportunities, shelters, food banks, educational systems and public transportation information.
*The objective for this presentation is to have a dialogue with participants regarding the importance of a library express station project in their community- cultural centers, and how the project can be expanded with more resources to help patrons in the digital age.