

# Transformations

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY

# FOUNDATIion

digital  
equitable  
accessible  
essential  
**Inclusion.**



**Z**oom is now the norm. Virtual medical appointments, classes, celebrations, even worship services fill our calendars. Job applications, interviews, and workplaces themselves are increasingly online.

What does this mean for the 10% of Mecklenburg County residents who don't have reliable internet service and the 20% who don't have a dedicated computer?

"They don't have access to essential information," says Seth Ervin, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's Chief Innovation Officer. "Libraries connect people with information, and that's shifted from primarily physical books to an entire online world. Access to the internet, a device, and the skills to use both are critical. **Until everyone has these tools, we have a lot of work to do.**"

Mecklenburg is the only county in North Carolina to have a digital inclusion plan, and your Library has been a key stakeholder in its development and implementation since 2016.

Today, your Library is the convening institution for the Charlotte Digital

Inclusion Alliance. This partnership of government, higher education, non-profit and business entities works to champion digital equity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made closing the digital divide even more urgent, and using both public and private funding, your Library has responded with speed, new partnerships and innovation.

- **Laptop Distribution:** By the end of January 2021 over 2,000 computers were procured, refurbished and distributed to households using CARES funds from both Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The MeckTech initiative can be repeated and scaled, and was recognized by Urban Libraries Council as a Top Innovator in Digital Citizenship.
- **Park and Learn:** With support from a state CARES grant, 24-hour public Wi-Fi networks now serve the parking lots at six Library locations.
- **Job Help:** With funding from Vanguard, a new Job Help Center will open this summer at the West Boulevard Library location, equipped with staff and technology to support a virtual job search.

- **Outreach:** A mobile library will hit the road this summer, bringing materials, technology, Wi-Fi and programs in English and Spanish to isolated neighborhoods throughout Mecklenburg County.
- **WISP:** Together with community partners and a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, your Library will create a sustainable wireless internet service provider (WISP) network in the West Boulevard corridor over the next two years.

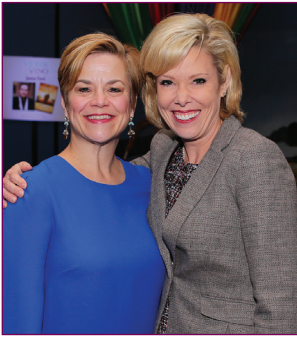
Your Library's commitment to providing equitable access to a world of resources is possible because of you.

"We're stepping outside the traditional role of a library and **becoming a national model for libraries helping to solve major community challenges,**" says Ervin. "The Library Foundation pushes my team to imagine the possibilities and refine ideas - and this community of donors helps ideas become reality."

*"Both our public health crisis and the collective fight for social justice necessitate closing the deep and wide information gaps and access gaps our nation has been facing for a long time. There is unique work for libraries to do."*

- TRACIE D. HALL, Executive Director, American Library Association





There's a saying about the importance of the right leader at the right time.

When Lee Keesler was appointed CEO in 2012, your Library was recovering from an economic recession. Under his leadership, your Library developed and executed a visionary strategic plan, realigned programmatic priorities, launched and strengthened partnerships throughout the community, and grew this Library Foundation. Lee retires this month leaving us strong and well-positioned.

Nationally, Lee Keesler's impact and our Library's momentum have been noticed. The caliber of candidates for the CEO role is a strong validation of the course we're on, and Marcellus "MT" Turner comes to Charlotte from Seattle Public Library as a nationally recognized library leader. We look forward to writing the next chapter with him.

Spring is a season for celebration. Final Draught at Home brings authors to you virtually - visit [foundation.cmlibrary.org](http://foundation.cmlibrary.org) to see who's staying home with us next! And we hope you've participated in some of this month's Community Read programs, meant to engage readers of all ages in important dialogue through books.

The Bookmark the Town yard sign campaign invites everyone in the community to show their support for libraries while sharing favorite books with neighbors. The campaign kicks off during National Library Week in April, and we hope we can count on you to display a sign.

Your support makes all these initiatives possible. Thank you for improving lives and building a stronger community - one season, one conversation, one connection at a time.

Warmly,

Jennifer Green, Board Chair

Jenni Gaisbauer, CFRE, Executive Director



## Welcome

We're proud to welcome Alessandro Morante to the Library Foundation's board. Alessandro is a managing director at Wells Fargo Securities. Prior to his current role, Alessandro was based in his hometown of London where he led the European expansion of a lending division with the bank's Asset-Backed Finance group.

## Board Members

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## Living Archive Documents Covid-19 Stories

A three-year collaboration, made possible with a \$250,000 investment from The Duke Endowment, will capture the impact of COVID-19 in Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities across Mecklenburg County.

The project pairs your Library with Johnson C. Smith University, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University and Levine Museum of the New South. This spring, the group will launch a series of listening sessions on Charlotte's west side to identify recurring themes and engage residents who can help drive this effort within their neighborhoods. Ultimately the stories will be shared through exhibits, digital interactive experiences, performances, town meetings and other means that promote ongoing collaboration.

The partnership is a marriage of each organization's mission, strengths, relationships and expertise. "As The Duke Endowment moves closer to its 100th anniversary in 2024, we know firsthand how personal stories can help us understand the experiences that shape us," said Rhett Mabry, the Endowment's president. **"This initiative will shed an important light on the pandemic's toll, and we are honored to support the work."**





# A New Generation

Charlotte is built on generosity. Names linked with our most impactful organizations – cultural institutions, hospitals, universities and more – reveal a generation of civic leaders whose vision and philanthropy benefit our entire region. Many have long supported and continue to invest in our Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

As The CommonSpark campaign proceeds, new names - representing a new demographic - are joining that list.

Meredith Heimbürger and Brandon Neal are familiar faces around the Library. Meredith serves on the Library Foundation's board, and Brandon is a Library trustee who also serves on the board of the Urban Libraries Council. They're both parents to young children, full time professionals and proud members of Generation Y (born in the 1980s and 1990s). Together, the two have set a personal goal: recruit 50 young families to contribute a total of \$1 million to build a new Main Library.

"The Library is so meaningful for our community and our own families, and everyone we've asked has been excited to be a part of this project. **It's a demonstration that our generation is ready and willing to participate, to step into the very large shoes of people who have long given so generously to the organizations we all use,**" Heimbürger explains. Pre-COVID, the two hosted a cocktail party to introduce friends to the Library's plans. Neal observes, "We know there are people in our age group who have the capacity and the motivation to invest in The CommonSpark. They use Library services and understand its value. We just need to engage them."

So far they've received commitments totaling nearly \$500,000, and word is spreading. "We set a \$1 million goal because people want to contribute a meaningful amount, to step up in an impactful way. It's aspirational but achievable, because people are passionate about our Library." And it is *our* Library. Heimbürger continues, "Every child in Charlotte will look to this gorgeous new Library and say 'That's mine.' There's something powerful about that, and we can be directly involved in making it happen."

Neal reveals, "Early on, I had some skepticism – but then I visited the new Central Library in Calgary, Alberta. Staff and customers see that library as a manifestation of the city's values: that every citizen deserves beauty, dignity, empowerment and knowledge. I saw an incredible diversity of users making that library their own – taking selfies, playing on an indoor playground, having afternoon wine and cheese, meeting and learning and interacting together. That's when I understood. **We can build a destination like that, a library that really reflects our community, where learning, empowerment and access to opportunity are free to all.** That's what this campaign is about."

*"We are especially inspired that younger donors like Meredith and Brandon are playing such a vital role in this effort. We're all on the same team, lighting a CommonSpark for our community!"*

- SALLY AND RUSSELL ROBINSON,  
Longtime civic leaders and philanthropists



THE NEAL FAMILY



THE HEIMBURGER FAMILY



The CommonSpark is a public-private partnership to infuse \$135 million into improving lives and building a stronger community in Mecklenburg County. The comprehensive campaign includes funding for a new Main Library and support services center; technology, innovation, programming and annual operating support throughout the Library system; and an endowment for the future.

To learn more and help ignite The CommonSpark, contact us at [foundation@cmlibrary.org](mailto:foundation@cmlibrary.org) or 704-416-0803.

# Ways to Give

## FOUNDATION

310 N. Tryon St.  
Charlotte, NC 28202

Your Library is a place for all, and every gift makes a difference. Help improve lives and build a stronger community, together.



### GIVE ONLINE

One-time or monthly  
[foundation.cmlibrary.org/securegiving](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org/securegiving)



### MAIL

Make checks payable to  
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation  
310 North Tryon Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202



### LEAVE A LEGACY

Make a lasting impact through a retirement account, will, insurance policy or other vehicle  
Learn more at:  
[foundation.cmlibrary.org/dewey-circle](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org/dewey-circle)  
or contact Karen Beach at 704-416-0802

**Thank you for your generosity and investment in the community we share.**

### Foundation Staff

Jenni Gaisbauer, CFRE, *Executive Director*

Karen Beach, CFRE, *Deputy Director*

Teleia White, *Director of Individual Giving*

Melanie Baron, *Marketing and Communications Specialist*

Opening a book  
can open a conversation.  
Together, let's...

**Bookmark  
THE Town**

I recommend ...

*GREAT EXPECTATIONS*  
by Charles Dickens

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY  
FOUNDATION

#bookmarkthetown  
Learn more at [foundation.cmlibrary.org](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org)

Personalize  
your sign with  
your favorite  
book!

Bookmark the Town yard signs support your Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, celebrate National Library Week, and share your favorite books — all at once!

Plant a sign with a gift of \$15 or more and help community grow.

Signs will be available for pickup at Library locations beginning April 1.

Learn more at  
[foundation.cmlibrary.org](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org)  
**#bookmarkthetown**