



Interim Report | October 2021

This report provides a snapshot of the design, implementation, and early results of the Library of Local (LoL) Project in context of the realities of a pilot program rolled out in a pandemic.

The Library of Local (libraryoflocal.org) is a partnership between the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS), Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley and four pilot libraries: the Kingston Library, Hudson Area Library, Morton Memorial Library and Community House, and the Mountain Top Library.

The Library of Local (LoL) provides library patrons in the Hudson Valley with a collection of books, tools, and other resources that foster local self-sufficiency and community resilience. Additionally, the project provides in-person and virtual educational events that are free and open to the public. Each pilot library supports a kiosk of LoL tools and materials and contributes programming to a schedule of events in line with the LoL's theme. Support for local libraries comes from MHLS, Partner for Climate Action HV, and Dirty Gaia, local experts in education around sustainable growing practices. Regular meetings between the LoL Support Team and participating Library Directors and staff provide a channel for communication and collaboration and innovation in development of programs and services, which library directors highly value as part of LoL program participation.

In 2021, the LoL's theme is *Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat! Gardening and Foraging for Resilience*. The tools and programming provided bring community members together, while supporting people in growing food for themselves and their neighbors and providing information about sustainable large-scale solutions for food production. Patrons enjoy the programs, and, as you will see below, a majority of participants plan to apply what they learn in their everyday lives.

Much of the work of the Library of Local took place in early spring 2021 when a lack of vaccines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 meant libraries and businesses struggled with New York State safety restrictions on public gatherings and providing services. Despite the changing restrictions, and often unpredictable effects of COVID-19 and the limitations put on library service hours, circulation, and in-person programming, LoL libraries began circulating titles from the LoL collection and hosting programs to support the LoL theme in April and May of 2020, and tools were added to the collections shortly after in June. While the pandemic has contributed to staff shortages and increased demands on existing library staff, after less than six months of activity, LoL programs and collections have seen healthy use by library patrons.

Library directors and patrons alike report they believe the LoL and LoL programming are furthering the community's self-reliance and resilience. LoL Pilot Library leaders reported in a focus group held in September 2021 that participation in the program benefits their library and ultimately their community and helps build local resilience and look forward to participating in the future if possible.



The LoL kiosk engages patrons and provides access to books, tool, seeds, and more to promote local and self resilience.

Circulation of Materials

Each of the four Library of Local collections includes over 40 books, 20 tools, and 12 different types of seed housed in kiosks prominently placed in public spaces in each library. Additionally, LoL collections are augmented with tools and resources to meet local needs.

Hitting LoL shelves in Spring 2021, the books, tools, and seeds are now helping people grow their own food, and build their community's resilience.



In less than six (6) months, **LoL books have been borrowed 239 times**. To date, **53% of LoL books have circulated**, while circulation of nonfiction books systemwide is 21% for the same period.

The most popular titles are *Braiding Sweetgrass*, *Farming While Black*, and *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

"Patrons have been thrilled to find and borrow the selection of titles on the LoL kiosks, and they love the tools."

- Addie Smock
Assistant Director,
Kingston Library



Library patrons have borrowed every tool in the LoL Tool Collection at the Kingston Library with a total circulation of 36. The Kingston Library had the most significant circulation, and while other LoL libraries haven't seen much tool circulation, they report **great interest from patrons in borrowing tools**. To date tool lending has been implemented at three of the LoL locations.

"I believe next year when we have the seeds and the tools available for the Spring planting season we will be inundated with requests."

- Sandy Bartlett
Director,
Morton Memorial Library



All four LoL kiosks include seeds **sourced from local seed growers, including Hudson Valley businesses, Dirty Gaia, and library patrons' gardens**, which provide neighbors with **plants better adapted to our local climate**. Seed circulation was good, with libraries reporting **all seed varieties borrowed, and up to 44 packets taken by patrons through one seed library**.

"Patrons were very interested in the kiosk and excited about the seeds in particular. Seeds were also added to our collection via donations from patrons."

- Emily Chameides
Library Director,
Hudson Area Library

Programs & Partnerships

Monthly programming provided by LoL libraries and anchor events from Dirty Gaia include workshops, discussions, and lectures which are timed to follow our local agricultural calendar and provide community members with information about regenerative food production practices. To date, 30 events have been held and more than 500 people have attended these programs.

Dirty Gaia's support is critical in planning anchor events and coordinating a speakers bureau of local experts to provide programming following the LoL theme *Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat*.

LoL programs have helped build connections between community members attending programs as well fostering new and existing partnerships between participating libraries and community organizations.



Deb Habib leads attendees in planting a container garden at the Rhinbeck community Gardens as part of the Grow Food Anywhere LoL Anchor Event.



Hudson Area Library's Bee A Pollinator Pal Program.

LoL events have taken place online and in-person in step with safety regulations around the pandemic. Some happened online or in libraries, while others took people to farms, gardens, and into the woods. **Over 500 people attended** monthly and anchor events between April and September of 2021, with **over 90% of respondents giving the events 5 stars**, and **85% of attendees planning to apply what you learned to a new or ongoing project**. **Seventy-five percent** of attendees report the events help further the community's self-reliance and resiliency, and one attendee said *"I liked breaking down into smaller groups and meeting other local people who are gardening in the area."*



Bee & Pollinator Program at the Fromer Market Garden.

LoL programming helped increase the visibility of the library and build local resiliency by bringing libraries together with individuals and organizations working toward goals aligned with *Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat*. The Hudson Area Library **established a new partnership with the Sylvia Center, a group working on a community garden focused on food justice for individuals living in incarceration**, and bolstered other partnerships including one with the **Cornell Cooperative Extension to support bilingual programs** in the library. LoL events also strengthened library connections with community garden and YMCA groups. *"We plan to continue to partner with not only Fromer Farm but their parent organization, the Hunter Foundation even more. We also were able to include local businesses into some of the programs as well, which helps everyone!"* - Maureen Garcia, Director Mountain Top Library



Plant Swap at the Kingston Library.

The participating **LoL Pilot Libraries all report the LoL as a positive experience that made their libraries and communities stronger and more resilient**. Library directors and staff cite the support from Partners for Climate Action HV, Dirty Gaia, and MHLS, as important in helping them create and augment connections in their community and provide the programs and materials for *Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat*. Libraries also found **great value in the collaborative process of meeting with fellow LoL Pilot Libraries and exploring ways to increase community resilience together**.

"Being able to work with the cohort of LoL libraries to find ways to provide programming and resources was a valuable part of the program."
- Margie Menard, Director, Kingston Library

Lessons Learned & Looking Ahead

Looking to 2022

- **Lessons Learned:**
 - **Approaches to program design need to be iterated to achieve the desired results of accelerating the strengthening of a communities' resilience.** While delivering information/education through programs is a desired outcome, program outcomes are often at the individual level rather than scaling to result in more widespread community impact. We would like to explore the use of the “Books to Action” model used by the California Center for the Book [<https://calbook.org/programs/bta/>] to bolster the desired outcome in a second year of this program.
 - **More socialization is necessary to build community resilience.** While the pilot year of LoL helped libraries get off to a good start in building the libraries reputation as a hub for folks to learn more and connect around issues related to the theme, the relationships that need to be built – both among libraries and community partners and among neighbors themselves - to affect true change will need to be more deliberately built into the project design.
 - **More lead time is necessary to effectively promote programs locally and throughout the Hudson Valley.** To connect with a wider audience, folks that are not already in the library’s publicity channels, it is recommended that both local and anchor programs be on the calendar, ready for registration six (6) weeks in advance of the event date.
 - **Administration of the project can be streamlined through MHLS.** MHLS staff can take on more responsibilities in the administration of the project both from the “front of house” side by helping with the web site, social media, and marketing, and “back of house” issues such as issuing payments to the libraries and managing reimbursement for collections.
 - **Staff at LoL libraries should be more active in the development and progress of the program.** Input from library directors early in the timeline can generate buy-in for the program and help shape LoL collections and kiosks to best meet their communities’ needs. In a second year, clear goals and timelines can be reviewed at monthly meetings with library directors and staff including reporting on progress in planning and delivering events and usage of collection and programs.
- **Looking Ahead:**
 - **A second year of this program is desirable.** Through a focus group held with LoL Pilot Library leaders, all agreed that a second year of providing LoL activities and resources focused on building community resilience would be valuable. In this focus group MHLS and Partners for Climate Action HV explored concepts for a second year’s theme with LoL libraries and found climate change and action around mitigating its effects would be a good focus for a second year.
 - **Satellite Libraries are feasible:** This year, the LoL will be bringing the Philmont Library on as its first independently funded satellite location which will serve as a model to replicate the LoL and its benefits to communities beyond the targeted libraries and serve as a model for other libraries looking to participate.

Continuing the work of the LoL will have reverberating effects in providing libraries with the space and platform to explore ways to build the local resiliency and connections that their communities will need in the face of an uncertain future. We thank you for the opportunity to explore this model and build on the trust equity of libraries in the Hudson Valley to address the crucial issues surrounding community resilience.

Statistics

Library	Kingston Library	Hudson Area Library	Morton Memorial Library	Mountain Top Library
Programs	5	6	7	9
Attendance	53	90	126	165
Books	86	95	70	37
Book Circulation	89	82	41	27
Tool Circulation	36	N/A	3	0
Seed Circulation	44	"Many"	30	22
Partnerships	Grow Well Kingston HV Climate Solutions Week Live Well Kingston YMCA Farm Project	The Sylvia Center Hudson Youth Center Columbia Land Conservancy Cornell Cooperative Extension	Rhinebeck Community Garden	Fromer Farm Hunter Foundation Local Businesses

Dirty Gaia Support
Anchor Programs: 3
Anchor Program Attendance: 108
Resources Development: Speaker's Bureau to Support <i>Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat</i> LoL Print Collection Development with Local Expert Input LoL Tool Library Collection Development Promotional Resources Development Procedure and Documentation Development

Thursday, October 21 • 4pm
DIY: Native Wildflower

Seed Bomba

Teens, learn about the importance of native wildflowers while making seed bombs. This is a messy, hands-on project. We'll get a little dirty and expect to get dirty. Register at the link below.

This event is in conjunction with the Hudson Valley Climate Action Plan.

growing food indoors cultivando alimentos en el interior

Thursday, October 28 de Octubre

Hudson Area Library
14 W. 9th St.
Kingston, NY
Biblioteca del
Municipio de la
ciudad de la calle 9 Norte
Kingston, Nueva York

To register, email programs@hudsonarealibrary.org or call 518.534.2222. For more information, visit hudsonarealibrary.org.

Earth Day Giveaway!

Pick Up Your FREE Conservation Kits

Fromer Market Gardens
Sat. April 17th
9am-2pm

Mountain Top Library
Thurs. April 22nd
12pm-4pm

THE LIBRARY OF LOCAL

REGISTRATION OPEN!

GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE
LOW MAINTENANCE, CLIMATE RESILIENT, BOUNTIFUL GARDENS FOR EVERYONE

Join Deb Habib and Ricky Benic of Seeds of Solidarity for a hands-on workshop. We'll dig into the why and how to Grow Food Everywhere!

Saturday, May 22 2021, 10-1, Rhinebeck NY

Limited spots available! Pre-registration required.
Register now at www.libraryoflocal.org

THE LIBRARY OF LOCAL



THE LIBRARY OF LOCAL PRESENTS:
Community Gardens in the Age of Climate Collapse" or Stedman
Friday, October 20, 2021, 6:00 (Online)

As climate change intensifies worldwide, there is an urgent need for resilience: in ecosystems and in the communities that we live in. How can we contribute to this on the scale of our homes and neighborhoods? This workshop explores how home, community, and neighborhood gardens can make a difference in food security, wildlife habitat, watershed restoration, and community building. Bring your ideas and dreams for playing an active role in the health of the living systems that you are part of.

This is an ecological designer, farm business planner, and climate change educator based between the Hudson Valley. Current has spent over a decade supporting businesses and communities to implement industry- and climate-adaptation systems, and to reimagine how they affect and can be guided by food.

Register for this free online event: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lib-home-and-community-gardens-in-the-age-of-climate-collapse-tickets-11042807289>

open to the public

Brought to you by Library of Local, Dirty Gaia, and Morton Memorial Library & Community House