

Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

What's Next
Helping Cities Remain Strong
By Suzie Boss

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WHAT'S NEXT

NEW APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CHANGE / BY SUZIE BOSS

📍 **CHECK IT OUT:** The first Librii branch, set to open in 2014, will serve residents of Accra, Ghana.

TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN

Libraries as Laboratories

By the time Andrew Carnegie completed his signature philanthropic effort in the early 20th century, more than 2,500 libraries had been built in the distinctive Carnegie style—graceful architecture outside, open stacks (where patrons could easily browse book collections) inside.

A century later, a library designed for the digital age is about to open in Accra, Ghana. And Carnegie wouldn't recognize it.

Called Librii, it challenges nearly every aspect of the traditional library. The first Librii branch, scheduled to be ready in early 2014, will use repurposed shipping containers in its construction. It won't even have books on its shelves; indeed, it won't have many shelves. Instead, users will generate content on their own using print-on-demand technology and multimedia tools.

Librii will charge for some services, such as Internet access and skills training, while providing other resources for free. Generating a revenue stream means that each Librii franchise will operate more like a social enterprise than like a traditional public library. Locally hired staff members will include both an entrepreneur to run the business and a professional librarian to curate content. (The umbrella organization for Librii has applied for nonprofit status.)

David Dewane, founder and CEO of Librii, came up with the idea as he was finishing graduate

studies at the Rice University School of Architecture. "I asked myself: What would it mean to undertake another Carnegie-scale project? Where would those libraries go? Who would they benefit? What would they look like?" he recalls.

Dewane, an American who lives in Washington, DC, had the chance to think through those questions when he participated in an online game called



Evolve. Developed by the World Bank Institute, the game immersed players from around the world in solving serious challenges from the not-so-distant future—a water shortage, say, or a pandemic. (See "Game Changers of the World, Unite," in the summer 2010 issue of *SSIR*.)

The digital divide was exactly the kind of problem that Evolve was intended to tackle. In Africa, for instance, only 3 percent of the population has broadband Internet access. By the time Evolve ended its run in late 2010, Dewane and a team of colleagues were ready to move

their napkin-sketch concept—a plan to build revenue-generating, Internet-enabled libraries across Africa—to the prototype stage. The World Bank Institute selected Librii as one of a handful of Evoke-inspired ideas that would receive seed funding and mentoring support. "This is a fantastic example of what we hoped would emerge from the game," says Robert Hawkins, senior education specialist for the World Bank.

Supporters, including Librarians Without Borders and Architecture for Humanity,

have rallied around the Librii concept. Gensler, the architectural firm where Dewane works, contributed schematic drawings for the shipping container prototype.

Equally important are the 650 backers who provided \$52,000 in funding through a Kickstarter campaign. To send a message to Librii patrons, the design of each facility will feature a display of donors' names. "It's a way to say: This building is here because all these people around the world want you to participate in the global conversation. Now what

are you going to do with it?" Dewane explains.

People in the development sector are watching for lessons to emerge from Librii. "When this concept hits the ground, it will adapt and change," says Hawkins. "There's a lot to learn here. Librii is going to be not just a source of information, but a space to gather people who will create new things together."

The first Librii branch will serve residents of the Osu area in Accra. Once that facility is operational, the next step will be to open branches in other parts

of that city. "We want these branches to function at the level of neighborhoods," Dewane says. Each branch will likely have "different tools of production" that reflect local preferences, he says. One might have a music recording system, another a green screen for making videos, another a 3-D printer.

In that way, Librii branches will not only embody the public library ideal, but also go a step further. "They're really laboratories," Dewane says. "We want to provide the best tools and then just get out of the way and see what happens." ■

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Blurred Images, Better Futures

The problem of “missing girls” persists in parts of the world where families prize sons over daughters. Technology, in many cases, worsens the problem. Widely available ultrasound equipment, which makes it easy to detect the sex of a fetus, allows people to circumvent legal bans on sex-selective abortion. “Doctors or technicians can make hints without saying a word,” says Sonya Davey, CEO of Ultrasafe Ultrasound.

Her organization—a start-up founded by an international team of college students—offers a technical solution to a problem that technology has exacerbated. Software developed by Ultrasafe Ultrasound blurs the part of a live ultrasound image that would otherwise show the genitalia of a fetus. In that way, the product prevents users from offering even a hint about fetal sex. Judges for the 2013 Dell Social Innovation Challenge named it a Top 10 Outstanding Innovation Project.

Field-testing is the next step for Ultrasafe Ultrasound. Davey is seeking an NGO partner to test the software in rural areas of India. She aims to complete that process in 2014 and then to bring the product to market by 2015. Potential customers include doctors, hospital chains, and manufacturers of ultrasound equipment. Each of those groups, Davey believes, has an incentive to buy and install the

software in order to limit the risk of criminal prosecution. In some countries, including India, it’s illegal to disclose the sex of a fetus.

Davey is careful not to blame equipment makers for the missing-girls phenomenon. The chief purpose of ultrasound technology, after all, is to enable a wide range of beneficial health screenings. “This is not the manufacturers’ fault,” Davey says. In fact, she sees an opportunity for companies that sell ultrasound equipment to become part of a solution to the problem of sex-selective abortion.

General Electric took steps in that direction in 2008, when it launched a campaign that aimed (in its words) to champion “the rights of the girl child.” The company now labels each ultrasound machine sold in India with a warning sticker that explains the law against fetal sex determination.

What if manufacturers decide to develop software solutions that compete with Ultrasafe Ultrasound? Davey would see that move as a win for her project. “We want to show that it’s viable and that this kind of product will decrease the rate of feticide,” she says. “We want manufacturers to move quickly.”

Davey, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania, acknowledges that software alone won’t change entrenched attitudes about the value of

girls. “If we sit around waiting for society to change, it may take another hundred years,” she says. Meanwhile, gender imbalance is worsening. The law that bars sex-selective abortion in India has been in place since 1994. Even so, census figures show little progress. In 2011, for every 1,000 male births in that country, there were 914 female births—down from 962 in 1981. (The data for China are similarly skewed.)

“We need to think seriously about what the world will be 20 or 30 years from now if vigorous steps are not taken to stop selective elimination of females from Indian society,” says Manisha Sharma, a visiting assistant professor of gender and women’s studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Sex-selective abortion remains a taboo subject. One day, a woman will be visibly pregnant; then, suddenly, she’s not. “People aren’t comfortable talking about it,” Sharma says.

“It’s a mute conversation.” That kind of silence makes it hard to sort through the cultural complexities of the issue.

To understand the issue better, Sharma and Davey teamed up to interview a cross-section of Indians, ranging from government officials and health activists to village women and street sweepers. Sharma, to her surprise, found that few interview subjects seemed to appreciate the role that misuse of ultrasound equipment plays in the missing-girls phenomenon.

Outside India, meanwhile, other challenges loom. “As soon as you mention the word ‘abortion’ in the West, it becomes a classic abortion debate,” Sharma says. So she tries to avoid that word, and instead refers to “selective elimination of female fetuses” or “sex selection,” for example. “We can’t alienate any part of the population that might be important in coming to a solution,” she says. ■

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Helping Cities Remain Strong

In the wake of a natural disaster like Hurricane Sandy or a terrorist incident like the Boston Marathon bombing, news reports invariably feature brave citizens who pull together to face adversity. Heartwarming though they are, such tales don’t tell the full story of what it takes for a city to recover from a major disruption.

Resilience on a citywide

scale requires “complex systems to be able to quickly return to normal and to build back,” says Neill Coleman, vice president of global communication at the Rockefeller Foundation. “You need more than a sense of ‘We’re going to overcome this.’”

What helps some cities bounce back while others struggle for years after disaster strikes? That’s one

question that the Rockefeller Foundation aims to answer over the course of a three-year initiative called the 100 Resilient Cities Centennial Challenge. The foundation will invest \$100 million to sponsor resilience-enhancing efforts by selected cities. (It will name the first round of award cities in December 2013.) Each city, for example, will receive support to create a new position: chief resilience officer (CRO).

Resilient cities, Coleman says, are able to look forward “rather than trying to prevent the last disaster.” Early lessons about urban resilience—drawn from fields as diverse as disaster preparedness, public health, and social psychology—point to the importance of factors such as flexibility and resourcefulness.

Even in cities with a detailed disaster-preparedness plan,

“there will be failure,” says Craig Applegath, a Toronto-based architect and a pioneer in this emerging discipline. A truly resilient city, he suggests, will have a ready response to this crucial question: What kinds of operational strategies are in place to help a city prepare for that failure and recover quickly?

Bouncing back isn’t always possible. Resilience, in many cases, “is actually about adapting to a new situation—a new normal,” says Douglas Ahlers, director of the Harvard Kennedy School Broadmoor Project, a redevelopment effort that focuses on a New Orleans neighborhood that was devastated



GATHER HERE:
An EvacuSpot sculpture marks an emergency pick-up point in New Orleans.

in it,” he explains. “If the disturbance to the system hits a solid part of the resilience layer, it stops. But if it hits a hole, it advances to the next slice.” If the prevention layer fails, for example, then the crisis mitigation layer and the emergency response layer become critical.

“Resilience is about closing the holes,” Ahlers says.

The CRO role will require a generalist who can navigate all the layers and mobilize all the players. “Whoever gets the job will need to be, first, a

by Hurricane Katrina.

Ahlers suggests thinking of resilience in terms of “layers of protection or strength.” Like slices in a block of Swiss cheese, “each layer has holes

Philanthropy and the Social Economy:
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Lucy Bernholz is a Visiting Scholar at the Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. She was named a “philanthropy game changer” by The Huffington Post. Fast Company Magazine chose her blog philanthropy2173.com as Best-in-Class. Partners in publishing the Blueprint include Grantcraft, a joint project of the Foundation Center and the European Foundation Centre; Stanford University; and the Stanford Social Innovation Review.



diplomat,” says Applegath. In addition, he notes, the job involves the “responsibility of tying together many different silos of expertise”—from engineering to economics.

Each city’s CRO will serve as point person for resilience planning and as a coordinator of cross-sector activity. “We know this person will need to be a networker, a connector,” Coleman says. “We also expect them to play the role of an evangelist for resilience thinking.”

The good news is that city resilience appears to be a learnable skill. That was the message sent by Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, at a forum in June that her organization cohosted with PopTech and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. She associated resilience with “what we build in those moments between catastrophe

and the next big disruption.” Examples range from San Francisco’s adoption of tougher building codes (to ensure that new structures can withstand future earthquakes) to an initiative in New Orleans to identify and highlight “EvacuSpots”—places where people can meet to exit the city safely in the event of an oncoming storm.

Cities chosen for the Resilient Cities project will gain access to a network of people with whom they can share strategies, along with help in figuring out how to pay for improvements. “Many city leaders realize that they should be making an investment now to save millions [of dollars] in the future,” Coleman says. “But it’s not easy to find those up-front funds. We hope to connect cities with innovative finance solutions.” ■

FUNDRAISING

The Science of Donor Connection

Say that you’re the leader of a mission-driven organization that’s poised to scale up. You have compelling evidence to show that your program gets results and a well-rehearsed elevator pitch. All you need is a chance to get in front of the right people.

You could spend hours poring over Facebook pages or Googling potential donors. Or you could take a cue from Andrew Bernstein, major gifts director for the YMCA of Greater New York. He goes right to Relationship Science, or RelSci. It’s an online platform that launched in early 2013. RelSci, Bernstein says,

is “the first tool I use when I’m researching an individual.”

Designed to streamline the kind of networking that’s essential to business development, RelSci shows at a glance the shortest distance between you and the people you most want to reach. Although the tool has obvious applications for deal-makers in the for-profit world—bankers and lawyers were among its early adopters—RelSci also aims to meet the needs of the nonprofit sector.

“The nonprofit segment is important to us,” says Josh Mait, chief marketing officer of Relationship Science, the start-up that operates RelSci. The

ARE YOU DRIVING MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN YOUR NONPROFIT?



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company has more than 200 clients, and among them are nonprofits such as the Nature Conservancy, World Economic Forum, and Yale University.

Fundraising for organizations like the YMCA would be easier “if we had access to those who might support our efforts,” Bernstein says. “Relationship Science helps to bridge the gap between those already in our network and those we hope will learn about our work.” Assistance with board recruitment is another common use of the platform.

Clients pay an annual fee of about \$3,000. In exchange, they get access to a proprietary database that covers more than 2.5 million prominent people in the private and public sectors. A staff of 500 people scan publicly available information to build a dossier on each VIP.

“Which causes do they support? Which boards do they sit on? We want to help illuminate the full person, beyond the résumé,” Mait says. Individuals cannot add themselves to RelSci. Nor do they get a tip if someone is checking out their profile. Those features, among others, set this tool apart from social networks like Facebook or LinkedIn.

RelSci uses a six-degrees-of-separation algorithm to map relationships. The goal is to ensure that “no call is ever cold,” Mait says. “Think of this as a warmth tool.” When clients load data from their own list of contacts into the RelSci database, they find out how many handshakes removed they are from targeted VIPs. The tool also rates the likely strength of those connections. It does not, however, provide VIP contact information. Instead, users

must establish contact on their own—typically by asking a mutual acquaintance to make a personal introduction. “There’s work to be done after you’ve used this tool,” Mait notes.

That emphasis on the use of personal introductions is a selling point for RelSci, at least in some quarters. “Many of our initial investors told us that this is how they’ve been doing business throughout their careers,” Mait says. Neal Goldman, founder of Relationship Science, previously started Capital IQ, a financial database service that he sold to McGraw-Hill. He launched RelSci with \$60 million from high-profile investors, including Henry Kravis of KKR & Co. and Andrew Tisch, cochairman of Loews Corp., along with corporate backers such as the Hearst Corp. A postlaunch funding round, held

last June, brought in an additional \$30 million from investors such as Salesforce.com.

RelSci provides “exactly the kind of information you need to make intelligent decisions about how to reach out to someone for the first time,” says Nancy Sims, president of the Robert Toigo Foundation, an organization that promotes workforce diversity among finance professionals. Recently, while test-driving RelSci on a new initiative, she entered a wish list of new supporters into the platform. “We were amazed by how many people in our organization had first- or second-degree connections to the very people we most hoped to reach,” she says.

Sue Toigo, founder of the Toigo Foundation, was quick to appreciate the benefits of the tool, according to Sims: “She calls this her ‘magic book.’” ■

Giving that Gets Results

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Created by *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in partnership with The Bridgespan Group, this new online resource features leading philanthropists and foundation executives sharing how they are adapting their strategies, aiming for results, and measuring their impact to learn and improve.

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