# “Popping Up”

## A Partnership for Community Outreach

*Karen Westwood & Rich Harringtonat Pop-up #1, Brian Coyle Center (January 30)*

## Background

The Cedar Riverside neighborhood is a small, densely-populated area just east of downtown Minneapolis. The neighborhood population is 7,200. Just under half were born in a country other than the United States, primarily Somalia (Minnesota’s Somali population is the largest in the United States).

The neighborhood has a much higher proportion of adults aged 18-24 than the city as a whole, while also having a higher poverty rate and a lower rate of educational attainment.

A majority of the population relies on public transportation (or walking or biking). But, the neighborhood is bordered by Interstate highways on two sides, and the Mississippi River on the third, isolating it somewhat.

Hennepin County Library found a notably lower percentage of library card holders in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood than in the city and county as a whole.

In community meetings, Hennepin County Library found residents identified needs that are often fulfilled by public libraries.
**A specific need they cited was a desire to become more proficient in English so as to better understand legal documents.**

*Riverside Plaza apartment complex in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood (photo: August Schwerdfeger)*

## Public Library Goals

Hennepin County Library determined that temporary “pop-up” libraries in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood would be an excellent way to demonstrate library services to the community.

The pop-ups included stations for creating library cards, along with a sampling of books. Mobile technology kits showcased online databases and services.

Liaisons from the Cedar Riverside neighborhood were hired by the library attended community events beforehand to promote the libraries in general and the popup in particular.

Specific goals to be achieved during the first year include:

- Creation of at least 200 new library card accounts
- Increased use of public libraries by Cedar Riverside residents (informal and voluntary survey)
- Increased knowledge of library services by Cedar Riverside residents (surveys)
- Cedar Riverside residents participating in library programs and services will learn new life/job/cultural skills (post-program survey)

*Pop-up #1, Brian Coyle Center (January 30)*

## Law Library Goals

- Increased awareness of law library services to members of the public
- Increased awareness of law library services and holdings to the public librarians
- Demonstrating that the law library is available to help members of the public who are not necessarily involved in litigation (e.g., need information on a landlord-tenant issue)
- “Field research” by law librarians to the legal information needs of underserved communities of Hennepin County, as represented by the residents of Cedar Riverside

*Rich at Pop-up #6, Riverside Plaza courtyard (May 21)*

## Implementation

The public library took the lead in securing six Cedar Riverside locations for the pop-ups:

- Brian Coyle Center (community center gymnasium)
- Lincoln International High School (charter high school for English language learners and recent immigrants)
- Riverside Plaza lobby (apartment building)
- Islamic Civic Society of America (mosque)
- Mixed Blood Theatre (professional theater with a focus on promoting cultural pluralism)
- Riverside Plaza courtyard

Law librarians selected some popular law books held at the public library to display at the pop-ups to help show the areas of law we could assist in. The books could be checked out.

Law librarians ordered or printed a number of pamphlets and booklets to give out, including:

- Hennepin County Bar Association’s *Legal Stuff* (most popular!)

- MN Attorney General’s booklet on landlords and tenants

- ACLU’s “Know Your Rights” brochures, in Somali and English

The law library also created bookmarks with general information about the law library, including contact information.

## Results

Over the six pop-up events, the law library had contact with 85 individuals.

The Law Library distributed 57 publications or pieces of literature (not including bookmarks) during the events. The most popular:

- *Legal Stuff* by the Hennepin County Bar Association
- *Landlords and Tenants: Rights and Responsibilities* by the Minnesota Attorney General
- *Know Your Rights: What to do if you are stopped by the police* (English version) by the ACLU of Minnesota

Soon after the last event, two Cedar Riverside residents reported to the reference staff that they had visited the law library with ordinance questions because they had heard about us at the pop-up events.

*Karen at the Islamic Civic Society of America mosque, April 2.*

## Lessons Learned

- People without a current legal need often have difficulty imagining why they might need a law library.
- In a pop-up environment being outgoing is key.
- Engaging with young children often served as an invitation for adults to visit the law library display. Having giveaways for children (such as stickers) might have encouraged more interaction.
- It is important to be mindful of differences in cultural norms. For example, in general Muslims do not touch members of the opposite sex to whom they are not related (including shaking hands).
- Librarians from the public library also often had questions about the law library, such as what types of questions we handle and what services we offer. Law librarians learned more about the public library, in particular the breadth of online offerings. This mutual exchange will help librarians from both institutions to make appropriate referrals.
- Pamphlets and brochures in English were much more popular than those that had been translated into Somali.

## Future Steps

- Join with public library in future pop-ups; currently in the planning stage for 2016-2017
- Consider using pop-up model in other law library outreach; under consideration is the law library “popping up” in public library locations on occasion.
- Continue to investigate and purchase Somali-language legal titles as they are available.

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