

HELPING ITS COMMUNITY THRIVE

How Germantown Community Library Became a Vital Neighborhood Resource

TAKING CONTROL

At the start of the new millennium, Germantown Community Library was a branch library operated by Shelby County, Tennessee. It met the basic requirements of the region with a collection and programs that reflected a broad range of interests but not the specific needs of the Germantown community. The Board of Mayor and Aldermen wanted the library to better represent its constituents and decided that direct control of library operations and policies was the best way to achieve that.



But the City of Germantown had never operated a library.

How do books get cataloged and technology modernized? How should the city integrate the library's accounting functions for operational and capital costs? What is the budget impact of employee retirement plans and other non-obvious expenses?

Simply transferring staff from the county to the city payroll would not provide answers to these and other tough questions, so the board looked outside its realm for expertise. As members discussed the many layers of library issues with Library Systems & Services (LS&S), they began to understand how better service and cost savings were both achievable with the public-private partnership model.

This enabled Germantown to retain oversight while contracting the day-to-day operation and planning to LS&S.

FINDING THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY WITHIN A CHALLENGE

Cities and counties across the nation are reeling from the combined pressures of constrained budgets and rising costs. Critical public services, such as fire and police departments, come first in budget considerations. As a result, many libraries are forced to reduce hours and postpone purchases for collections or technology infrastructure.

Library Systems & Services is the only company offering library management through public-private partnerships. Within our unique methodology, LS&S is the actual employer of library personnel while policy, direction, and asset control remain with the municipality. This allows LS&S to streamline and modernize operations, find cost savings, and still respond to the specific needs of the community.

It is a model that has been proven again and again with remarkable success across multiple government functions. In the case of LS&S, it is making a difference in more than 80 libraries across the country.

“Overnight, the city went from just owning a library building to also being responsible for its operation. We hit the ground running with the LS&S operations team leading the way.”

Sharon Goldsworthy, Mayor (retired)
City of Germantown



HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED

- **STABLE STAFFING** - Every library staff member was offered a position with LS&S and many remain loyal employees to this day. LS&S offers competitive pay packages and attractive developmental opportunities that enhance skills and promote career growth.
- **MICRO-FOCUSED INITIATIVES** - Collections, programs, policies, and events are now directed toward the specific needs of the Germantown community and are overseen by the Library Board of Directors, which was put in place by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.
- **UPGRADED SYSTEMS** - Library services, technology and databases have been modernized with an automated system offering new patron services and advanced reporting features with no increase in operational costs.
- **ENHANCED COLLECTIONS** - "Hot off the Press" and "Automatically Yours" programs offer nearly 140,000 bestseller books. Patrons get access to 152,000 physical items, more than 60 online databases, and over 100,000 downloadable e-books and audio books.
- **EXPANDED PROGRAMS** - The library offers more than 800 programs specifically tailored to educational outreach in the Germantown community.



AND THERE'S MORE

- **NOTEWORTHY PRAISE** - The Summer Reading program is recognized by the state of Tennessee as “best in the state” for libraries of any size. The library is also best in the state for Books From Birth participation, boasting a 90 percent enrollment.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** - Active social media programs help the library serve its community better. More than 7.8 percent of the entire Germantown population follows the library on Facebook—an incredible number that is more than two and a half times better than the closest regional online forum.
- **STRONG ADVOCATES** - The Friends of the Library has grown from only a few dozen individuals to more than 500 committed members who actively support book drives and redistribution programs.
- **GROUP PARTICIPATION** - Influential local organizations, such as the Tennessee Genealogical Society, the Germantown Women’s Club, Boy Scouts, and Kiwanis Club are actively affiliated with the library and regularly contribute time and expertise to its many community programs.
- **CONTINUED EXCELLENCE** - In 2014, when the original LS&S contract and its extensions expired, a new contract was awarded to LS&S that included no cost increase—a fact specifically praised by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

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“LS&S has been a key impact catalyst in the modernization and revitalization of the Germantown Community Library.”

Don Riley, President
Friends of the Library

DEFINING THE LIBRARY AS A MAJOR HUB FOR THE COMMUNITY

The success of the Germantown Community Library under LS&S was immediate and dramatic. Its example clearly shows what can happen when a library is re-directed to serve the needs of its specific community rather than the generalized needs of its region.

Relationships with Germantown-specific organizations are thriving with renewed attention to the role played by the public library in the life, education and socialization of the community.



LIBRARY OPERATING HOURS INCREASED FROM 60 TO 95 HOURS PER WEEK

Sunday hours were added for the first time, which increased services and access for multiple audiences and groups. Facilities expanded from the original library building to a second location that houses the Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center.



35,000 CARD HOLDERS ENJOY 20,000 VISITS PER MONTH

With 35,000 card-holders the library enjoys a monthly average of 20,000 customer visits each month and circulates an average of 30,000 items —an extremely high level of constituent participation for a city of this size.



11,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS OF LABOR 28,900 PROGRAM ATTENDEES

In 2015, the library was supported by more than 11,000 hours of volunteer labor, an overwhelming community endorsement. More than 28,900 people attended library programs. And the three meeting rooms in the library facilities were used for 1,594 events.

CURRENT BENCHMARKS INDICATE A SOLID FUTURE FOR GROWTH

The Germantown Community Library continues to grow in its role as a community resource and valued municipal asset. Service enhancements are coupled with cost reductions that come in part from a focused grant writing program. For example, receiving funds from The Big Read grant increases life-long learning for individuals in businesses, nonprofits, schools, and government agencies. Another grant to the library is designated to digitizing and preserving local history documents in collaboration with the Tennessee Genealogy Society.

Other success indicators are the metrics that have increased across the board in 2016:

- ▲ 23% New Library Cards
- ▲ 22% Adult Program Attendance
- ▲ 19% Volunteers
- ▲ 27% Educational Outreach Programs
- ▲ 21% Teen Programs
- ▲ 16% Children's Programs



THE ADVANTAGES OF A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Municipal governments work hard to provide core services that enhance the safety and well-being of their constituents. However, specialized services such as library management are rarely a top priority when it comes to fundamental public needs.

As a result, libraries across the nation are falling behind, becoming outdated and inefficient financial drains on their municipal systems.

LS&S is changing that.

LS&S draws on more than 30 years of experience in developing unique and customized public-private partnerships that improve services while lowering operational costs and modernizing customer access.

The result is an upgrade in municipal assets, reduced payroll and pension costs, and a revitalization of the role the library plays in its community. The library becomes a gathering place, a resource for learning, a community hub, and a delivery mechanism for enhanced educational opportunities throughout the greater municipal area.



The Germantown Community Library is an ongoing success story that engages the passion, the vision, and the active participation of the community it serves.

We are proud to play an integral role in this story.



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