



**Martin G. Reynolds**  
**Editor**  
**The Oakland (Calif.)**  
**Tribune**

## **Oakland Tribune West Oakland Media Access Center**

### **Presentation to the New England Library Association Annual Conference**

October 20, 2008, Manchester, N.H.

#### **The what:**

It has taken two years to make happen, but the Tribune recently brokered a lease with the City of Oakland to house its ground-breaking community media access center inside the West Oakland Branch of the Oakland Public Library.

#### **Goals:**

1. Empower West Oakland residents to cover the stories they feel should be addressed in their community, told from a perspective different than that of a mainstream media outlet.
2. Remove the traditional walls that exist between large, mainstream media outlets and the community by actually being in the community, accessible to readers and non-readers.
3. Create a critical mass at the library.
4. Create a roadmap for others to follow. Duplicate model in other neighborhoods, cities and towns.

#### **The Tribune's role:**

Currently, there is an actual center established, complete with phones, computers, furniture, etc. We could continue to:

1. Maintain funding for the center, i.e., rent, utilities, phone, etc.
2. The Tribune would create a space on its homepage for a West Oakland community page, which would help drive Web traffic, as well as provide technical support for maintaining the page.
3. The Tribune would use its brand and marketing resources to promote the center and encourage its use.

## **The back story:**

The decision to pursue this project was made during a “Journalism That Matters” conference in St. Louis two years ago.

## **Why?**

1. Journalism and libraries are cornerstones of democracy, so we talked to the library folks and they agreed the idea fit with their mission. They allowed one of their librarians to accompany us to the St. Louis conference.
2. The Tribune wanted provide the community greater access to existing media, while providing a space for residents to create and tell their own stories.
3. People would knock on the Tribune -- it was out of touch with readers and non-readers and wasn't really the city's newspaper. This helps change that. Once open, our reporters will work out of the center a couple of days each week, as well as invite other media outlets to participate.
4. This is a model that could be replicated in other parts of the city and across the nation.

## **Why West Oakland:**

West Oakland is by far the most organized district in Oakland. The activism dates back to when residents were galvanized to combat urban renewal back in the 1960s that steamrolled the community despite their best efforts to hold it off. But the tradition of involvement remains, and there are many long-time residents and activists who still participate in various city committees. So starting the center here made sense. We attended numerous meetings to gauge whether center would be welcomed, and were told it would be.

## **What we produce:**

We want to create a West Oakland Neighborhood page on the Tribune's Web site that houses the work of the community, including blogs, multimedia, print stories, data bases, public safety information, events, etc. Eventually we would reverse publish what's produced.

## **How would it work?**

- 1) The center is currently set up with computers donated by the company, has internet and phone service and is adjacent to the main entrance to the library itself. Visitors can walk right in when the center is open.
- 2) Staff reporters from the Oakland Tribune will work out of the center on specific days. And we have invited other media, including Youth Outlook and ethnic media, such as The Oakland Post, the region's oldest African American newspaper, to participate. Theoretically, reporters from those organizations would work out of the center on specific days and help to draw more people to the library.
- 3) The program coordinator and team would be at the center everyday, cultivating the curriculum, doing outreach, training residents, editing stories and working with the Tribune to get the stories posted, etc.

**Contact:** Martin G. Reynolds, Editor, the Oakland Tribune  
[mreynolds@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:mreynolds@bayareanewsgroup.com)  
510-208-6433  
[www.oaklandtribune.com](http://www.oaklandtribune.com)

