

BOOKS@WORK

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

Letter to the Books@Work Community

Dear Partners, Participants,
Professors, Supporters and Friends:

We are delighted to report that 2016 was a banner year for Books@Work, with significant growth in programs, geographies, partners and titles. By the end of last year, we had delivered 63 programs in 12 states and three foreign countries (Brazil, Canada and Ireland). And we are poised for even more growth in 2017!

Most importantly, we continue to learn every day. Our research since inception has yielded a rich trove of qualitative and quantitative data; our participants, professors and partners generously share their insights, experiences and stories, helping us to understand the experience of the program and providing practical advice to continue to shape and refine its delivery.

Books@Work invites participants from all walks of life – and employees from across hierarchies and functions – to create meaningful personal networks and high-quality connections in the face of changing workplaces and communities. Our most important insights of 2016 included

a deepening awareness of the program's specific power to tackle some of the wicked challenges of the 21st-century workplace. These include

- **Diversity & Inclusion:** We invite everyone to the table and encourage participants to recognize and embrace diverse voices and diverse thought.
- **Team Effectiveness:** We provide a platform for teams to tackle difficult issues and practice team dynamics outside a specific work topic.
- **Culture Change:** We inspire colleagues to co-create collaborative, open and respectful organizational cultures.
- **Wellness:** We address workplace wellness at its roots, enhancing social, mental and emotional health.

These specific applications – or service lines – help us bring Books@Work to new organizations with challenges or needs in these areas.

Whether a partner organization chooses to focus on wellness, diversity & inclusion, culture change

or team effectiveness, or simply to deliver the program “just because,” all Books@Work programs share some common themes. They create opportunities for participants or colleagues to practice respect and collaboration, to share their views and to listen to the views of others. Through their continuity, they help develop and condition muscles of personal connection. Finally, they permit individuals the safe space to explore essential questions and to consider what it means to be human – together.

In this Annual Report, we are delighted to share our progress and impact in 2016 as well as our efforts to build service lines – highlighting workplace wellness and diversity & inclusion as examples – to better serve our partners and their associates. But most importantly, we thank you for your partnership and support as Books@Work expands into workplaces and communities across the country. We are honored to engage minds and transform communities and to foster safe, healthy and meaningful work environments through shared narratives. We're proud and humbled to have you by our side.

“

“[These are] conversations that I don't typically have at work. I don't typically talk about family life [or] that kind of stuff in work settings. So it was nice to be my whole self in the space.”

What is Books@Work?

Books@Work partners with university professors to bring vibrant and productive literature discussions to workplaces and the community. Led by a skilled facilitator, participants read and explore a literary text together, engaging in meaningful dialogue and building cultures of trust, respect and inclusion.

Since its inception, Books@Work has successfully served employees at all levels in healthcare, distribution, food services, manufacturing, technology, human services, professional services, municipalities, education and non-profits. In a typical three-month program, natural teams or cross-functional groups of colleagues meet weekly with a college professor to explore narrative texts (long and short fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry and more). In addition, Books@Work has delivered similar programs in community settings, working with veterans, urban parents, and police officers together with members of the communities they protect.

We believe that the discussion of literature is uniquely suited to bridge economic, educational and cultural divisions. Through collective reflection, Books@Work breaks down barriers of difference and creates robust communities of lifelong learners.

2016 by the Numbers

63
PROGRAMS

12
STATES

4
COUNTRIES

118
PROFESSORS

1,092
PARTICIPANTS

192
BOOKS

37
COLLEGES

27
COMPANIES/ORGANIZATIONS

Ann Kowal Smith
Founder and Executive Director

Felix M. Brueck
Chairman of the Board

Books@Work for Wellness

According to the Global Wellness Institute (2016), workplace wellness encompasses far more than employees' physical health. In fact, the research shows that lack of physical health is often preceded by stress, social isolation and a lack of emotional and social wellness. Solely addressing physical wellness will, in many cases, treat symptoms without eradicating the root cause.

"As work tasks – blue, white, and gray collar – are increasingly borne by computers and machines, human beings add value by complementing and

harnessing technologies and by being creative, innovative, perceptive, intuitive, empathetic, and adaptable. We need to be in a good state of physical, mental, and emotional wellness to be able to bring these qualities to work each day."

While many companies offer fitness incentives, wearable devices or healthy eating initiatives, wellness programs that address mental, emotional and social health are less common. But how is employee wellness possible if employees feel stressed, excluded, unheard or isolated from their colleagues?

Enter Books@Work. Since our inception, we have strived to transform workplace relationships and dynamics through shared reading, shared stories and shared reflection. When we read together, we build a foundation for high-quality interpersonal connection. At its core, Books@Work creates the conditions for an open and inclusive organization where all voices are welcome, embraced and respected. Books@Work is a living, breathing champion for sustainable mental, emotional and social well-being.

Defining the Wellness Opportunity

Workplace wellness is a \$40 billion industry, despite the fact that only 9% of the 3 billion-plus global workers have access to some type of workplace wellness program at their jobs. (Global Wellness Initiative)

38% of the world's 3.2 billion workers suffer from excessive pressure on the job. 24% are actively disengaged at work. (Global Wellness Initiative)

71% of employees say they have a "somewhat or very high" level of stress on the job. (National Business Group on Health)

A Wellness Program in Action

Books@Work allows participants to see the potential of an environment in which employees are welcome to bring the whole self to work. Employers "who value and care for employees as their organization's most important asset; who set an example for empathy, honesty, openness, and healthy behaviors. . . can be a major source of motivation and wellness for their employees." (Global Wellness Institute, 2016)

Over the past several months, we have piloted multiple Books@Work programs in different organizations under the aegis of wellness. One example:

Who: Two diverse groups of participants in various roles – from professionals to administrators to clerical staff – at a large multifaceted organization.

Why: Participants met weekly as part of a wellness initiative to encourage community among staff.

What They Read: Cyrus Copeland's *Off the Radar*, Per Petterson's *Out Stealing Horses*, Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*, Thrity Umrigar's *The Story Hour*, Sy Montgomery's *The Soul of an Octopus*

What They Said: Participants voiced surprise and pleasure at the Books@Work experience, describing the sessions as "a weekly respite from the stress and rigors of my job. . . like social therapy," and commenting that they found that "feeling connected to the larger organization and others contributes to a sense of belonging."

Wellness Outcomes

Books@Work promoted a holistic workplace culture of trust and dialogue.

"I didn't feel any sense of hierarchy in that room at all from anybody. You know? We felt like colleagues in the true sense of the word. . . We all felt that we're here to discuss the book. We're people together in a room discussing this book. There was no sense of I know more than you how to do this."

Books@Work enhanced social connectedness and workplace relationships.

"This is not wellness for your book reading. This is wellness for getting to know people."

Books@Work offered relief from the stress of the work day.

"Having the Books@Work sessions as a weekly respite from the stress and rigors of my job was a lot like social therapy. I love reading books, but discussing them makes them more impactful for me."

Books@Work for Diversity & Inclusion

When we think of diversity & inclusion, we imagine fair hiring practices and programs that level the playing field and diversify the makeup of a workforce. But according to the *Harvard Business Review*, the reality is much more complicated:

“Part of the problem is that ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ are so often lumped together that they’re assumed to be the same thing. But that’s just not the case. In the context of the workplace, diversity equals representation. Without inclusion, however, the crucial connections that attract

diverse talent, encourage their participation, foster innovation, and lead to business growth won’t happen. As noted diversity advocate Vernā Myers puts it, ‘Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.’”

Books@Work believes that without a robust mechanism for authentic inclusion, companies cannot leverage the full value of a diverse workforce. When employees do not feel welcome to share ideas, to make mistakes, to challenge colleagues – or simply, when employees feel excluded or isolated

– diverse perspectives are silenced and powerful contributions are lost.

In Books@Work sessions, the literary text provides a safe conduit for respectful discussions that can otherwise be fraught in the normal work environment. Sharing thoughts on a piece of literature lays the foundation for the acknowledgment and appreciation of all voices. Colleagues find common ground and the hard work necessary to build a diverse workforce – in race, in gender, in thought and more – begins.

Diversity & Inclusion Outcomes

Books@Work provides a natural and informal setting for tough discussions about diversity & inclusion.

“In the past when we’ve talked about diversity in general, it was more formalized. This is a relaxed atmosphere where it’s not a supervisor, leader or somebody forcing something on you. That fact that you don’t even notice that it’s happening until afterwards actually starts to change who you are and the way you look at things.”

Books@Work sessions are a safe space for sensitive and crucial conversations that are difficult to breach in the work environment.

“We really do touch on some very sensitive things at times – racial issues, religious issues – and they’re brought up in a way that we can have this open discussion in a safe environment. What you’re getting is this human piece, the human interactive piece. Actually being able to confront things that you weren’t going to confront any other way.”

Books@Work encourages all participants to speak, to express opinions and to be appreciated without fear of retribution.

“It’s hard to speak up in a meeting talking about business if you have a different idea or you disagree with an idea. It’s hard to stand up and say something different than the group might think. In Books@Work, you can just naturally do that.”

A Diversity & Inclusion Program in Action

Books@Work is a unique and ongoing experience that levels hierarchy and empowers employees to speak and to share in an inclusive environment. Many of our participants comment on the culture of trust and psychological safety borne from the program. One example:

Who: A diverse group of employees from a range of departments and functions at a professional services firm

Why: Participants met bi-weekly as part of a diversity & inclusion initiative.

What They Read: Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, Carson McCullers’ *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, G.K. Chesterton’s *The Man Who Was Thursday* and Drew Magary’s *The Postmortal*

What They Said: One participant commented that the program led to a discovery that her colleagues, despite being in different departments, “were far more like-minded than I ever guessed.” Another noted that “when you understand someone on a different level, you’re able to work with them easier.”

Defining the Diversity & Inclusion Opportunity

Companies that prioritize fairness and inclusion outperform their peers by 80%. (Deloitte)

Employees with inclusive managers are 1.3 times more likely to feel that their innovative potential is unlocked. (Harvard Business Review)

Although 71% of companies strive for an inclusive culture, only 12% meet that goal. (Deloitte)



“[It’s good] to sit down and talk about something that’s not work-related, but a shared passion that we all have. It is always nice to meet your tribe, people that have similar interests to you. It was quite therapeutic to talk about some of the issues that we all face and say, ‘Yay, that happened to me. That happened to me too.’”

Lessons Learned



A service line delivery model helps companies understand how Books@Work tackles common challenges they are already working to address.



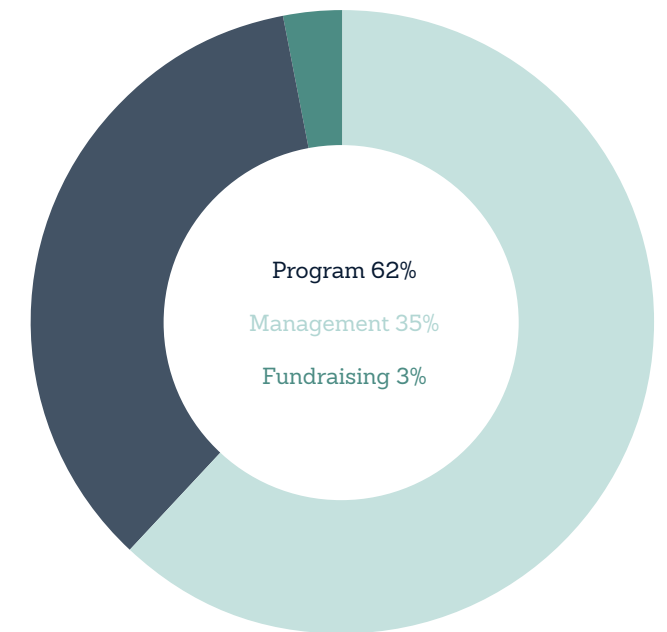
Our research demonstrates the overwhelming benefit of Books@Work for individuals and teams; increasingly, companies that have deployed the program deeply within their organizations have also seen measurable cultural and financial benefit.



Short stories are powerful platforms for rich discussion, especially for natural teams that meet more sporadically.

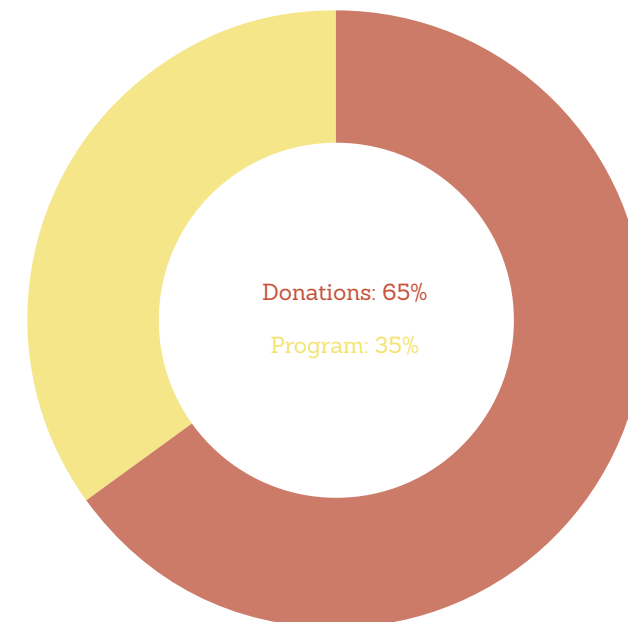
Financials

Total Expenses = \$284,212



Uses of Funds

Sources of Funds Used



* In addition to the donations used for programming, we set aside \$90,291 for community-based programming and future use



“Books allow you to go on a journey without leaving your comfort zone. You take a journey to learn and to grow, and the learning increases exponentially when others travel with you.”

THANK YOU

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You – our donors, partners, participants and professors – give life to Books@Work. Your dedication to lifelong learning helps individuals, families and communities. You are making learning accessible and inspiring. Together we are breaking down barriers and building up workplaces and communities.

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