



From left to right:

Cara Cadena

Business Liaison Librarian,
Grand Valley State University

Steven Assarian

Business Librarian, Grand
Rapids Public Library

Karrie Yukon

Librarian, Bloomfield Township
Public Library

Challenges

- Positioning public and university libraries as hubs for entrepreneurs and business professionals seeking an edge in a competitive global marketplace.
- Persuading small business owners and students to rely on and use rich demographic and business data to make informed business decisions.

Solution

- Gale's *DemographicsNow: Business & People*, provided by the Michigan Electronic Library (www.MeL.org) at no cost to all citizens, libraries, and businesses in Michigan.

Results

- The library becomes a business incubator for entrepreneurs and students in search of reliable business data.
- Easy access and visually appealing customized data reporting to make smarter business decisions and produce higher quality student homework assignments.

Libraries in Michigan Rely on *DemographicsNow* to Deliver Extensive Sources of Business Data for Students and Entrepreneurs

Whether it's a student enrolled in a college business course or an executive navigating the complexities of global commerce, the business community is looking for an edge. Increasingly, that means a trip to the library regardless of whether it's on or off a college campus.

Cara Cadena, a Business Liaison Librarian at Grand Valley State University, knows this firsthand as does her public library colleague, Steven Assarian, who heads the public library in Grand Rapids. Each is responsible for connecting information seekers with data that can determine whether their next homework project or business decision is a success.

"Usually, the people who come to us are really in need of help," Assarian said. "They just don't know what's available or where to begin the process." It's why librarians are pointing students and patrons to what's quickly becoming a secret weapon for business—the library's highly customizable business and demographic data reporting through *Demographics Now: Business & People*.

In the state of Michigan, The Michigan Electronic Library, or MeL, (www.MeL.org) provides access to Gale's *DemographicsNow: Business & People (DemoNow)* for free to all businesses, citizens and libraries in Michigan. *DemoNow* is a comprehensive business research tool that provides the power and functionality to assess business viability, create sales leads and marketing mailing lists, analyze trends in a given population, find potential sponsors and donors to grow a nonprofit, and much more.

The three librarians featured here encounter patrons who are looking for business resources every day, and turn to *DemoNow* for help.

DemoNow Prepares Tomorrow's Leaders for a Global Business Environment

To help students validate business ideas and define target markets, Cadena connects GVSU's future business leaders with *DemoNow*. After informing students about *DemoNow* and helping them understand what it offers, Cadena says students have been pouring into the library to ask about some of the tool's advanced features.

"To get them excited I ask them to give me a product or a zip code," Cadena said. "Then I show the class how to use *DemoNow* to find potential customers or to gauge the likelihood a product will succeed in a certain area."

The increased engagement with *DemoNow* has resulted in higher quality student business projects and homework assignments. One of the most popular features is the customer expenditure (CEX) reports, which students use to analyze consumer spending trends, combine with demographic snapshots, and export as visually compelling charts and graphs. "The export feature is just fantastic," Cadena said. "Students really like being able to see the data visually."



"I've gotten great feedback on *DemoNow* because it's just so much easier to use and understand."

Cara Cadena

Business Liaison Librarian,
Grand Valley State
University

"It's a workhorse and I'd recommend *DemoNow* because there is no other that can do what it does for entrepreneurs."

Steven Assarian

Business Librarian, Grand
Rapids Public Library

"It's very powerful and provides business owners accurate and timely information they're looking for."

Karrie Yukon

Librarian, Bloomfield
Township Public Library

To learn more about
this and other digital
solutions provided
by Gale, visit:

www.gale.cengage.com

Cloud-Based Collection of Reference Materials Gives Existing Business Owners Confidence to Expand

Karrie Yukon, a librarian at the Bloomfield Township Public Library in Michigan, might be mistaken for a business consultant if she weren't stationed at a reference desk. Besides helping startup founders develop business plans and analyze potential locations, Yukon assists entrepreneurs in identifying and researching potential competitors.

"There are so many ways to search," Yukon said. "The interactive mapping tool not only finds locations of business competitors but also provides their size and financials, which can help you determine where you want to locate."

In Grand Rapids, Assarian says *DemoNow* is also helping existing business owners with expansion plans. The confidence such plans require are bolstered by the specificity *DemoNow* provides to executives. For instance, Assarian recently used the platform's tools to analyze seasonal population data for an entrepreneur interested in building a resort for tourists. "It allows you to find things you'd never expect to find," Assarian said. "I can help patrons find out how many homes have bottles of ketchup in the refrigerator, which is extremely useful."

DemoNow Positions Libraries for Future Growth and Community Leadership

As more students enroll in business courses and business owners continually reinvent themselves to remain competitive, Michigan libraries with *DemoNow* are quickly becoming community and campus cornerstones.

The impact *DemoNow* is having reaches well beyond the library and traditional business community in Grand Rapids. Besides helping businesses succeed, Assarian says library staff are using the databases internally to plot a new course. "We are currently working on a strategic plan for Hispanic populations," Assarian said. "*DemoNow* helps us better target our efforts and really lets us back our business plans with real numbers."

As *DemoNow* helps public libraries expand their footprints, it's simultaneously turning campuses into business incubators that prepare students for success outside the classroom. "I'm getting great feedback," Cadena said. "When the right data is readily accessible students learn to make intelligent decisions that result in better business outcomes in the real world."



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