Summary of Presentation by Diane Kresh, Arlington County Director of Libraries
At the November 12 CCCA Annual Meeting

Diane Kresh, Arlington County Director of Libraries, discussed countywide topics and visions for our library system. She was assisted by Susan McCarthy, Chief of the Branch Services Division of the library. The library has recently been laying out its vision for the future for purposes of county planning, including targeting new audiences: the aging in place, new immigrants, and entrepreneurs. In doing so, they have looked at what libraries around the country are doing. Library services (both in Arlington and elsewhere) have evolved into something much broader than the traditional lending of books. Increasingly, the library function has been integrated into multi-purpose facilities which serve as community centers.

Libraries add value to communities, giving an identity and a sense of place. They can drive growth and serve as a commercial anchor, rejuvenate struggling neighborhoods and downtowns, anchor business districts, and serve as a "third place" (along with home and work) to promote lifelong learning and community knowledge and relationships.

The library brand has value, which can be optimized in new and creative ways in temporary or pop up locations in developing business districts and neighborhoods. Opportunities exist for mixed-use planning and co-location of services for vulnerable populations There is an insatiable demand for youth-related services and programs. The community wants flexible uses and spaces: the library is not just for books any more. Modern technology has impacted, and will continue to impact, the way libraries deliver services. From "book vending machines" to electronic libraries, these innovations open the door to increased and diverse services. Moreover, online resources through the Library have increased significantly: e.g., Lynda.com for online courses; Mango for language learning; Overdrive for ebooks; etc.

The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session that raises possibilities for further revitalization in Crystal City. How can the library be involved in planning by county and commercial bodies, especially in areas such as Crystal City which is a high-density area with emphasis on walkability, while coping with a total absence of County facilities within our boundaries? Are there opportunities for pop-up libraries in the current vacant areas in the Crystal City Shops? Would Vornado be willing to partner with the Library for temporary use of that vacant space? Can the libraries team up with the various technical services (such as the Tech Shop or We Work areas) and/or the burgeoning Arts Community in the Underground? How can the library be part of the solution to meet the needs of a diverse demographic in Crystal City which is not a typical single-family residential area with lots of little kids? Can we interest the BID in looking at a satellite Library facility? Is there any way to develop a Library/Community Center/Transit Hub facility such as the one in Silver Spring? How about a Shirlington-type community anchor in new Pentagon City or Crystal City redevelopment? Greater density should yield greater community benefit and this seems like a logical outgrowth of that concept. Lots for the CCCA to consider.