Hello and welcome to Sparks I'm Deirdre Brennan I am the executive director of the Reaching Across Illinois library system for reals and we develop this podcast to spark conversation and, even debate about issues that are current in libraries my guest today is Amy De La Fuente who is our senses Grand project manager here at rails that are our project is entitled census 2020 it counts thank you for joining me today Amy talked about this very important issue thank you for having our pleasure so the sensors just to remind everybody Out There Our listeners we do it at least every 10 years and libraries are always very involved in it so today we want to explore the sort of the importance of the census in general some things that real is doing things at libraries in general are doing and just as much as we can possibly relay to our listeners about the sentence the sentence and why it's important so why don't we start with just the general importance of the sentence then do you want to take us through that Amy you're an expert now sure so the importance of the census is that it counts everybody in every community and the reason why we do that is and we do it every 10 years is because the communities need to know how many people are there so that they can plan for the next 10 years so if communities are under representing how many residents live there it's really hard to plan for how many schools they'll need in those communities how many medical facilities at how they they can do urban planning like road development and parks and those sorts of things as well as a whole host of other social service organizations so thinking about Head Start and Early Head Start on children with special needs so while we don't get into details for census collection about the census not going to ask you whether your child has special needs but they do need to know that their young children that live in a household in a particular neighborhood so that they can anticipate over the next 10 years what does possible needs might be for that community so it's really important that everybody participates this as we found out last summer that the citizenship will not be a question that is posed on the census and in fact the Census Data is kept private and so your census data will not be leaked to anyone and if it is then that's a punishable crime and I'm there's a fine associated with that and a jail time and then the Census Bureau has gone to Great Lengths to make sure that they have all sorts of ways to protect your privacy and this is the first year that the census will be available to complete online so that I know a lot of people are very concerned about data privacy and putting in sensitive information online but the US Census Bureau and the government have gone through a lot of different methods in order to ensure that privacy and your data is private for 72 years and then 72 years from now it will be available but it won't be again there they're not asking for sensitive information so they'll know where you lived in 2020 they'll know what your age was and they'll know who lived in your home with you it's really important to count every single person that is living in your home and I'm that is for April 1st so I know that sometimes people might be on vacation in April 1st you don't need to report where you're going to be on vacation you just need to report where your residences on April 1st and while we mostly think about people who live in a home sometimes there are other circumstances such as students living in dorms or people in the military or people in assisted living facilities so and then also the homeless population so that sort account is taken care of and what what's called group quarters and there are designated days in which people will be counted for that purpose but for everybody else weather year and Apartment renter or Community wherever you are at on April 1st is where you should be counting yourself for the census so I want to put it in a couple of plugs to For The Senses as a base it's the basis of funding to four of you are making that point I know but just to reiterate that a lot of of federal funding that comes to States and local communities for different services including Library services are is based on the the count of residence in a particular Community or state and of course it also is the basis for representation in Congress and the other the other point I want to make because there is of course as we as we know it as you were referencing there has there's some I think suspicion even fear among amongst some communities or individuals about the census but I think we have to remember that it's been going on for her literally hundreds of years I don't know the first one but we can't forget the genealogical value of of it or you don't people doing research on their family history their ancestry ancestry.com wouldn't be what it is without the information that's provided in the census you're right on that and another thing that I wanted to mention is when we're thinking about what every person means to be counted in a community there is an estimate depending on which Community or state you live in that it's about 1,400 to $1,800 per person per year so for the next 10 years that counting somebody represents in terms of funding that goes Ford that community so whether it's libraries or schools or other social services roads infrastructure that that's kind of a good way to put a dollar amount on it and no we do not pay the individual people but all of these services that get funded they've had to try to figure out a way to conceptualize the dollar amount so so that's that's rough average and to your point about congressional representation if we don't know who's in the communities then it's really hard to have adequate representation right so as we continue to see demographics change racially with are age-related Geographics whether we're skewing younger or older especially as the lifespan of Americans continues to Trend older but we need to know who's living in those populations in those communities so that we can quickly meet their needs and and thinking about a congressional representative if they have no idea who they're going to be serving and it's really hard for them to try to understand what the needs of their individual Community are so it just really is a very complex thing that the census allows us to gather information about so that we can make sure that everybody's needs are being met but it's very simple to complete the census so let's talk about what's going on at rails that which probably is a lot of similar projects going on all over the country so rails did receive a grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services in the amount of $750,000 to reach out to connect libraries and other agencies that are involved in the senses to get as complete account as possible to a in particular to reach out to let the Census Bureau cause hard to count community so I added me as I said is in charge of this project and do you want to talk about what kinds of services we are and are our library partners and non Library partners are going to be providing sure so I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the great leadership of rails because they're the ones that had the idea to apply for the grant along with many other Regional intermediaries in the state of Illinois so we're just one of many organizations that have this responsibility and working with numerous sub-recipients and So currently rails has 23 sub-recipients and they are mostly libraries in the collar County region in Illinois and then we also have a few social service and county-level agencies and they expressed interest in becoming sub did they receive pass through funding through rails from the state of Illinois in order to engage with their their community members and to be able to completely educate residents and eventually get an accurate count of residents who are living in the community so each sub-recipient has done research about their community and to go back to something that that Deirdre said earlier there are different hard to count populations identified by the Census Bureau and rails has been asked to focus on six specific hard to count population those are children under the age of five older adults renters people living at or below the poverty line people experiencing homelessness and people who are young and mobile every Community has those residents some in Greater degrees than others and the majority of our sub-recipient already had plans that were targeting some of those populations that the one thing that we have to remember particularly with libraries is that they are a trusted member of the community their doors are open for every one and you don't have to buy anything in order to get through their doors you don't have to prove through you are who you are they're welcoming they offer a variety of services and this is one of the reasons why I think rails was able to successfully become a regional intermediary because of the reach that they have and the network that exists within rails with all of the library entities across the state of Illinois because of what the library currently. There's a lot of Rich programming already built into each library that the libraries are building off of if you go to any of these libraries websites you'll see a multitude of story times and programs that are geared toward young children and school-age children these are prime opportunities to have a small intimate conversation with parents the caregivers of those young children just mentioning the census talking about the importance of the census and one of the reasons why this is so important that that there's this engagement and this little bits of Community Education is because for some reason children are really hard to count population I think that there's been a lot of speculation about why this is but one of the reasons is that sometimes we think you know they're just babies they're just a little they don't they don't take a whole lot to take care of but I think what people don't realize is that those babies are going to grow up they're going to go to school they're going to go to the parks to the hospital they're going to be members of the community and if we don't know that they're there right now then it's really hard to have the appropriate resources for them as it gets a little bit of Education during these programs that are already very well-attended that's going to go a long way in providing some basic information so that parents and caregivers can be a little bit more informed about the importance of counting all the children and their and their families and the other thing or at least one of the other things right now is that during this this time of Engagement in education the libraries can also promote that right there at the library they're going to be computers and resources so that if people don't have internet access or they don't have a computer at home they can complete the census at the library so the library is not only educating residence about the importance of the census depending on their demographic but they're also letting their community members know that the library is a safe place to complete the census that there will be computers available and there will be staff available to answer questions about the census or help somebody navigate to the census website can you give us some examples of some of the really innovative ideas that libraries have had to engage people so 1 Library comes to mind if you are a Sesame Street fan then you probably want to head over to this Library I'm right around since its time because the count.. Crazy character from Sesame Street he is going to be visiting the library and obviously with a name like the count he's going to be engaging children and families and Counting activities because what we're obviously trying to do with the senses has to make sure that everybody is being counted we that are I'm going out into the community to build off of existing programs that they already do there's a library that meets regularly at different laundromats around the community and they do book swaps so for during the time of that leading up to the census they are going to provide books related to the sentence senses that are geared towards young children they're also libraries that are going into a preschool and Head Start classrooms with the census counting books so that young children can engage with these books and then I can take them home which will spark conversations with their family members we also have libraries that are I'm going to be meeting I'm older adults out where they participate in Mall walking so that they can have conversations about the importance of those residents participating in the census we currently have a library that due to geographical issues and possibly some language issues they're not able to actually get to the library for resources and so for about a year now that library has gone out to their residential building and engaged with with Library materials and programming in the lobby of that building so they are building on an existing relationship in the community and because they already have distrusted relationship they're going to be using that as an opportunity to talk about the census and even bringing iPads out there so that once the census is available to complete online they can offer that as an opportunity for residents to complete that there and make sure that those residents are counted so those are just a few examples of some things that libraries are already doing I feel like they they didn't have to to stretch really far with this that's in general libraries are a very creative institutions always thinking about how to meet people where they're at what's going to get people to come in through their doors what's going to get people to spread the word about their programs to the neighbors and to the community because they're very relevant part of every community so these kinds of activities are going on all across Illinois in libraries and in other agencies where we're obviously a trails are are focused on the libraries that we are specifically working with but we're also going to be providing for General resources to the Library community that we serve at large for example we have a pulse page about this devoted to the senses on our website where people can find out a lot about sort of General training that we're doing events that are going on at libraries are for libraries resources that the Census Bureau has made available to us what am I forgetting Amy so if you're part of our rails Library System we have a listserv that's devoted specifically to the census and then to deirdre's point about the pulse page where it says I'm only about census information not only are we sharing training information and resources but a specific links to resources from the Census so we're taking some of the the grunt work out of deciphering I'm sifting through the multitude of information on the census website so there are a variety of PSA is there printable downloadable materials there are books I'm geared towards young children that you can that you can download and print out and have available in your in your library and I'm also just want to mention that rails also has a membership that consists of school libraries and there are a lot of things that schools can do that that school librarians can assist with I just wanted to mention that a lot of our libraries currently have Partnerships with the local school district and they do plan to address the census and do some education at opportunities like fun fairs and Library report card pick up times and so I'm there there's statistics in schools and they have a lot of resources as well and it's not just limited for the school-age population where you would think of kindergarten through 12th it starts Pre-K and it actually goes through the college-age level so if you have on folks who are working on their GED or folks who are taking part in ESL sorts of classes at your library which it seems like most libraries offer that as a program their resources I'm related to the senses that are available as well so it's there's just a wealth of knowledge and we're trying to call all of that to put on the the real census page so that you don't have to spend hours and hours looking for things we we really want to do our part in making sure that people have access to information and that they can utilize it so that we can spread the word so that we can have a complete and accurate count and that that we can partner with as many organizations and institutions that are expressing interest in doing census work and we know that a lot of complete count committees are working together with library is that the League of Women Voters is working with libraries that there are places that that are asking how can we get involved and since the Illinois Library Association has asked all libraries to open their doors and to help participate in the census we feel strongly about encouraging Partnerships encouraging collaboration and we hope that that everybody listening will think about how they can partner with those in their Community for the census and academic libraries say just wanted to give them a shout out because they have a there's an organization called campus Compact and they are very engaged in this hole a complete count as well because of course college campuses are the hardware of the those young and mobile a lot of our residents are and so they're they're very active as well I know so yes and you reminded me of something that the census needs they need workers for the census they also need workers that have flexible schedules which often times are college students they need workers that are bilingual in a variety of languages because you can complete the census online or on paper and I believe it's 13 languages and then if your language is not covered you can call in and get phone assistance for an additional I think 30 or 40 some other languages and so in addition to just providing a variety of senses Port the census also needs on the ground people so those would be your door knockers or your enumerators coming to ask you information in case you don't complete the census online or through the mail or over the telephone and so thinking about you know we have a huge population of have young bilingual students in a variety of languages that this just maybe something up their alley plus it it's our constitutional mandate to participate in the census and so this is just another form of of Civic engagement which I know that we're really trying to promote in our young people to to feel like they're contributing to their Community they are aware of what's happening and also helping them become aware of why the census is important to them especially as they start moving into their careers and older life well there was a tour of of the senses activities that are going on in Illinois and as I said probably around the countries as always if you if you visit or get in touch with your local library whatever type of library that might be and you can find out more so I want to thank you Amy for joining me today and I encourage everybody out there listening to look into what you can do to assist in getting the complete of course be sure that you get counted yourself thank you for having me thank you very much for listening to Sparks today Sparks is produced by the Reaching Across Illinois library system if you would like to learn more about the show or share your feedback on the 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