



**The Chicago Literacy Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the combined impact of the community’s literacy agencies by providing opportunities for creative and effective collaboration.**



From reading an early picture book through acquiring essential workforce skills, literacy is the key to a successful and independent life, and to a vibrant and sustainable city. The Chicago Literacy Alliance (CLA), founded and run by literacy entrepreneurs with decades of experience in collaboration, startups, and the local nonprofit landscape, brings together the practical knowledge and expertise of literacy-focused organizations across the city to promote collaboration, break down barriers, and accelerate the pace of change for this critical cause.

**Working together, we envision a future in which 100% of Chicagoland residents are functionally literate and in which that shared literacy is a defining characteristic and point of pride for the city.**

**In Chicago...**

**30% of adults (882,000 people)** have low basic literacy skills.

**49% of 4th graders** are below basic levels of reading proficiency.

**18% of the population** has not completed high school or the GED.

**Each Year...**

**CLA’s 90+ member organizations** serve **3.6 million people** of all ages, from early childhood through adults, with **tens of thousands of hours** of literacy programming and **hundreds of thousands of books** given away.

**In General...**

Low literacy rates affect quality of life and diminish Chicago’s standing as a world-class city.

**66% of students** who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare.

Low literacy rates cost the U.S. **\$80 billion annually** in lost worker productivity.





# Literacenter is North America's first shared nonprofit workspace devoted to the cause of literacy.



In May 2015, the Chicago Literacy Alliance launched its largest project yet: **Literacenter**. This first-of-its-kind landmark provides literacy organizations in all stages of development with exciting, creative, and affordable space; a full slate of events where members can connect with experts and each other; and an ever-growing network of support and resources to empower collaboration.

**90+**  
member organizations  
providing literacy services at every level, from early childhood literary arts through adult learning.

**16**  
meeting rooms  
named after books, equipped with WiFi and A/V equipment, and holding 2-100 people apiece.

**41,000**  
sqft of  
offices, workspace, social lounges, meeting spaces, and conference facilities.

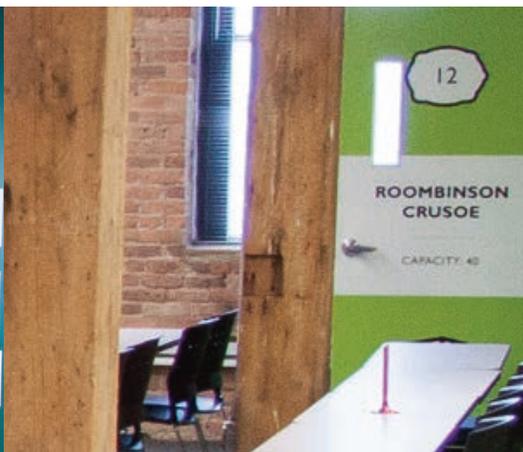
**11**  
resident members:  
Working In The Schools (WITS), Open Books, Kids Like Us, Infiniteach, Tutoring Chicago, Literacy Chicago, Literacy Works, Cabrini Connections, Chicago HOPES For Kids, Launch U, and Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition.

**5**  
Literascooters  
for getting around the space and meeting fellow collaborators.

**20+**  
programs  
each month, including expert mentor hours, topic info sessions, book clubs, member meetups, and more.

Chicago Tribune

WBEZ91.5



**Literacenter**  
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Chicago, IL 60661

@literacenter  
www.literacenter.org



**The Chicago Literacy Alliance started in 2009 as an informal meetup of literacy leaders. When 19 of them found they were working in the same school — and that none of them knew the others were there — the group began working on increased communication and small collaborative projects.**

**It became an official 501(c)(3) in 2012, and has been expanding its range of programs, projects, and collaborative opportunities ever since.**

## Signature Programs



Weekly lunchtime workshops on professional development topics.



A podcast featuring stories of member partnerships and collaboration.



A cohort program to help emerging leaders prepare for careers in the literacy field.



Literacy Nights where CLA members share resources with students, parents, and teachers.



Searchable online database to help identify members' programs, areas served, and more.



Events where attendees create sessions and share knowledge based on a common theme.

## Membership

Open to organizations with literacy, reading, writing, and/or book distribution as part or all of their mission and programs.



### Mike Ban

**Executive Director** [mбан@chicagoliteracyalliance.org](mailto:mбан@chicagoliteracyalliance.org)

After serving as the volunteer President of CLA for four years, Mike was named Executive Director in 2014, taking a full-time and even more active role in building the cause. His involvement in literacy dates back to his days as Executive Director of Book Worm Angels, which he headed for 9 years before merging it into Open Books in 2013. Mike brings a wide range of business and nonprofit experience to the CLA party, including stints as the first ad sales manager of The Weather Channel, Advertising Director of the Sherwin-Williams Company, and, with his wife, Jean, starting a pioneering concept in staffing with their national company, Paladin. Mike is an active cyclist, proud dad of three wonderful children, grandpa to two awesome junior hockey players, and committed friend to literacy.



### Stacy Ratner

**Co-Founder** [sratner@chicagoliteracyalliance.org](mailto:sratner@chicagoliteracyalliance.org)

After ten years in the startup world, during which she helped bring three companies from idea through a combined total of \$30 million in venture funding, Stacy came to literacy in 2006 by founding Open Books, an award-winning nonprofit social venture that now serves 5,000 students each year through a spectrum of exciting programs funded in large part by the sale of used books in its two Chicago stores. Her work in the sector has gained her an Emerging Leader Fellowship from the Chicago Community Trust, places on NewCity's Lit 50 and the national 40 Women To Watch Over 40 list, the Social Enterprise Alliance's Innovation Award, the Chicagoan of the Year award, and recognition on the White House's blog for "spreading the infinite and awesome power of books." She writes a novel every year, eats ice cream every day, and is always starting something.



**Heather Bronson**  
Communications  
Manager



**Jen Daniels-Lake**  
Membership  
Coordinator



**Alison Hanold**  
Partnerships  
Director



**Jimmy Martin**  
Facilities  
Director



**Erin McCann**  
Community  
Manager

## Media Assets

Downloadable **logos** (vector and raster formats),  
hi-res **photos** of the Literacenter,  
and head shots of key team members  
are all available at:

[www.chicagoliteracyalliance.org](http://www.chicagoliteracyalliance.org)



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