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Howard County Library System  
**HCLS President and CEO Gross Named  
Innovator of the Year by The Daily Record**

ELLCOTT CITY, MD -- Howard County Library System (HCLS) President and CEO Valerie J. Gross was named a 2015 Innovator of the Year by The Daily Record for developing a 21st-century vision for libraries that provides equal opportunity and education for everyone. The award recognized Ms. Gross's three pillar approach to establishing a curriculum that combines self-directed education, research assistance and instruction, and instructive and enlightening experiences. The innovative approach repositioned Howard County Library System as a key component of Howard County, Maryland's education enterprise. Her strategies include branding libraries as educational institutions and library staff as educators. By developing and using strategic vocabulary, she has helped HCLS to dispel misperceptions about libraries and increase respect for library educators.

Ms. Gross detailed her vision in 2013 in her book *"Transforming Our Image. Building Our Brand: The Education Advantage."* She credits her vision with "ushering in a new era where libraries are assigned their accurate value, which means heightened respect and maximized funding."

Library Journal recognized the power of this philosophy when it named HCLS Library of the Year in 2013.

Now in its fourteenth year *The Daily Record Innovator of the Year Awards* seeks out Maryland organizations and individuals who have demonstrated the spirit of innovation by creating products, services or programs that benefit their businesses, industries, or communities. Innovators of the Year are selected based on four criteria; originality, power, challenge and value.

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