2019

Achievement Awards

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2019 Achievement Awards
ROANOKE COUNTY

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In June 2018, Roanoke County Public Library (RCPL) became the first public library in America to recruit Pepper®, the humanoid robot manufactured by SoftBank Robotics, launching the library system into the national spotlight, and establishing them as an industry leader in Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and coding. The decision to procure the robot stemmed from a new strategic plan, where RCPL was identified as a top priority in addressing the changing needs brought about by the technological revolution. Foremost among the reasons for taking this step were the desires to stem the tide of talent loss, build the future workforce, and more fully contribute to the economic development of the county and region. As Pepper was developed for service use, program delivery, and teaching coding to the community of all ages, library staff formed new partnerships in the community, created more sophisticated tech programming and grew their reach. In this short period of time, approximately 7,000 people in the Roanoke and library communities have been exposed to AI and coding through RCPL's workshops, programs, and presentations. As staff is invited to write, present, and serve on panels, the library's reputation continues to grow and the knowledge shared with their newfound friends and partners across the nation is benefiting the local community in ways never imagined.

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