



2016-2018 Strategic Plan

Researched and prepared by the Worthington Libraries staff and board of trustees with input gathered from Worthington residents.

Approved by the Worthington
Libraries Board of Trustees on
March 15, 2016.

Strategic Planning Timeline | 2015-2016

July 2015

- July 11: Library Board Retreat
- July 20: Leadership Group Meeting

August 2015

- August 11: Board of Trustees Meeting
- August 18: Meeting with Board Officers
- August 20: Staff Planning Group Meeting
- Members of Community Planning Group Identified
- Identify areas for Trend Tracking focus

September 2015

- September 1-30: Trend Tracking for staff and trustees
- September 15: Board of Trustees Meeting/SOAR Exercise
- September 29: Strategic Planning Team determines community questions

October 2015

- October 1-16: Voting on trends
- October 1-31: Community questions posted in the libraries and online
- October 14: SOAR exercise with former trustees
- October 20: Board of Trustees Meeting
- October 27: Community Strategic Planning Group Meeting
- October 29: Staff Strategic Planning Meeting
- Website redesign in tandem (this project has its own timeline and its completion is not tied to the adoption of the strategic plan)
- Analyze trend tracking data

November 2015

- November 12: Staff Strategic Planning Meeting
- November 17: Board of Trustees Meeting
- Analyze community feedback and identify common themes

December 2015

- December 15: Board of Trustees Meeting
- December 17: Staff Strategic Planning Meeting
- Revise Future Scenarios

January 2016

- January 13: Staff Strategic Planning Meeting
- January 19: Board of Trustees Meeting
- January 20: Community Strategic Planning Meeting

February 2016

- February 1: First Draft of the Plan Complete
- February 4: Strategic Planning Meeting
- February 19 & 20: Board Retreat & Review of Plan
- Community Planning Group Meeting (if necessary)

March 2016

- March 15: Board of Trustees Meeting/Final Plan Presented for Approval

Primary Personnel

COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL

Donna Baker
Alain Bengochea
Allison Chapman
Jon Cook
Cindy Meyers-Foley
Michelle Geissbuhler
Brian Geniusz
Dana Horton
Tim McCarthy
Lori Overmyer
Jim Palmisano
Dale Rhoda

STAFF STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

Katy Hite, Lead
Lisa Fuller, Administrative Liaison
Steve Herminghausen
Morgan Hidy
Molly Meyers LaBadie
Shanley Pease
Kara Reuter
Lindsey Smith
Erin Wilson

LIBRARY ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Chuck Gibson, Director/CEO
Margaret Doone, CFO
Monica Baughman, Deputy Director
Susan Allen, Director of Technology Services
Lisa Fuller, Director of Community Engagement
Phyllis Winfield, Human Resources Manager
Theresa Messenger, Executive Assistant

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

John Butterfield, President
J. Craig Baker, Vice President
Linda Mercadante, Secretary
Lauren Fromme
Zita Hunt
Adam Smith
Dawn Valasco

Organizing Statement

In the next three years, we will focus on increasing access to library services and information, helping our patrons to build 21st century skills and facilitating the exchange of ideas in an atmosphere that encourages creativity and community engagement.

Positioning Statement

For the first time in many years, no financial crisis, such as cuts to state funding or an expiring levy, was on the horizon when this plan was conceived. The Library, with a 2.2 mill permanent replacement levy passed in 2013 and a 2.6 mill permanent levy passed in 2005, is in a strong financial position to meet the present demand, which remains high, for library service.

Circulation in 2015 surpassed four million items for the first time in the library's history. Annual program attendance exceeded 57,000 people. Outreach activities continued to increase and specialized services, such as the Homework Help Center, were greatly utilized.

Worthington Libraries is now one of only 21 libraries in the country to be recognized as a Five-Star Library in each Index of Public Library Service published by *Library Journal*. Our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report provides financial transparency about how the Library is managed and continues to be recognized with awards from the Government Finance Officers Association and the State Auditor of Ohio.

This begs the question: how can we take an already high-performing organization and make it better? Our research shows libraries throughout the country answering this question in different ways:

- Anythink Libraries (Adams County, CO) has embraced a “revolution” at their library system, referring to librarians as “book wranglers” and offering classes in hog butchering (complete with hog).
- Housed in what was once the Stickley furniture factory, the Fayetteville Free Public Library (Fayetteville, NY) has a large makerspace where patrons can use (or, in some cases, borrow) tools, sewing machines, laser cutters and 3-D printers.
- More and more libraries are lending non-traditional items such as bicycles, musical instruments, baking pans and fishing poles.
- In a partnership with the San Francisco Department of Health, the San Francisco Public Library hired a social worker to help patrons, especially the homeless, with issues librarians are not trained to handle.
- And, the Salt Lake City Public Library is working to provide 24/7 access in at least one of their locations, making it a round-the-clock haven for people seeking information or respite from the weather.

The initiatives, ideas and innovations just mentioned work because they are community specific. While a hog butchering class offered in the meeting room of Old Worthington Library might not be well attended, it works in a library located in farm country. Fishing poles? Sure, if your library is on the banks of the Mississippi.

So, how can we make Worthington Libraries, specifically, better? By focusing on you.

This plan is all about you.

In this strategic planning process, we endeavored to learn more about our community—that's you!—to discover your personal aspirations and professional goals and to determine how the Library could change your life.

Plan Development

The development of this strategic plan began with a meeting of the library's Leadership Group, which includes all professional librarians, circulation supervisors, technology staff and the administrative team. The group used the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) process to discuss the library's current position and future goals.

A staff work group was formed, led by Katy Hite, and a community advisory panel with members representing Worthington Schools, area arts organizations, small and large local businesses, the Friends Foundation of Worthington Libraries and The Ohio State University, was convened to help guide and inform the planning process.

Eventually, more than 60 people completed the SOAR exercise, including the library's current board of trustees, former trustees and the community advisory panel. We saw common threads with all groups.

- In the area of strengths, people cited the library's staff, collection and relationship with the community.
- Opportunities exist around the school district's changing demographics (more economic and racial diversity) and in our position as a community center where everyone feels welcome.
- In terms of aspirations, participants continued to stress the library's role as a place for learning, discussion and engagement.
- Although harder for each group to frame as a specific outcome, results focused on the library's ability to maintain financial support and to meet changing demands for service.

In these sessions, we were advised to "talk less about resources and more about expertise" and to "get more mileage out of the Five-Star Library rating." We also heard that it was "okay to be offbeat" and do the unexpected in programming and marketing.

In addition to completing the SOAR exercise with specific groups, the process involved the entire staff in trend tracking. We identified customer service and programming trends in libraries and other fields,

such as museums and retail. We also looked at industry trends in the publishing field and at demographic and economic trends that could impact the Library in the future.

The top trends identified included food programs in the library, the return of the quiet library, improving service to tweens, improving service to LGBT youth and afterschool programming.

The process also included a series of weekly community questions posted through social media and in each library location (patrons responded via sticky notes). The questions posted, in order:

- *Before I die, I want to _____.*
- *What is the one thing that would make your life better?*
- *What is the one thing that would make our community better?*
- *What equipment or technology would you like to try, use or learn?*
- *My dream library would....*

We received nearly 900 responses. Each was recorded and classified according to Manfred Max-Neef's matrix of fundamental human needs and satisfiers.¹ A single response could be classified with multiple needs and satisfiers.

Responses showed that people aspire to enjoy themselves through travel and other activities and at the same time to improve the lives of others. People hope to realize goals in their careers and their religions. They also desire strong familial connections.

People long for more freedom in their lives, especially when it comes to money and time. They seek affection in their lives from pets and, once again, look to connect with their families. They want to eat better. In a whimsical turn, they wished for magical or fantastical scenarios.

People believe the community can improve its overall living environment, especially when it comes to natural surroundings and transportation options. They'd like to see more solidarity and goodwill. People expressed concerns about the social environment, especially safety and crime. They brought up food, both in terms of dealing with hunger and making healthy choices. People also wished for changes related to education, especially in the area of early childhood.

When it comes to the Library itself, people continue to be devoted to books. They're looking for comfortable spaces to connect and a pleasant environment, including food and opportunities to interact with others in programs. They are interested in trying the kinds of technology and equipment typically associated with makerspaces, especially 3-D printers, but are also interested in using mobile devices, especially smartphones.

¹ Max-Neef, Manfred. (1992.) "Development and human needs." In Paul Ekins & Manfred Max-Neef (Eds.), *Real-Life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation* (pp. 197-213). London: Routledge.

Max-Neef's matrix was designed to "define and assess an environment in the light of human needs" (p. 201). A community can use the schema "for purposes of diagnosis, planning, assessment and evaluation" (p. 205) as part of an exercise "to become aware of both its deprivations and potentialities" (p. 210). The matrix is comprised of nine needs with example "satisfiers," or things that satisfy the larger need.

In addition to all of the information gathered, analyzed and noted previously, we also reviewed our organizational mission and core values. Both were defined in our last strategic planning process, completed in 2013, and we feel they still accurately reflect the organization as it is now and aspires to be in the future.

Mission

Worthington Libraries connect people to a world of ideas and each other.

Core Values

Service

We help people.

Innovation

We create a dynamic environment for learning and discovery.

Collaboration

We share our talents and build partnerships to strengthen our community.

Leadership

We inspire our community and the library profession to excel.

Fun

We engage people in experiences that surprise and delight.

This research and community feedback was used to develop the 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, which will serve as the library's blueprint for growth and development over the next three years.

Primary Focus Areas

PEOPLE

We build partnerships and bring people together to share ideas, meet their neighbors and have fun in a welcoming space.

EXPLORING

We are an innovative and creative library system that encourages learning and exploration.

POSSIBILITIES

We have a highly-skilled staff that works with the community to provide enriching experiences for people of all ages.

Strategic Initiatives

PEOPLE

- Help people access services they need, even if unrelated to the Library
- Improve outreach and access to individuals who are underserved
- Enhance and improve service to our tween population
- Provide people with welcoming space—both inside and out
- Build community partnerships that benefit residents
- Assist the Friends Foundation of Worthington Libraries in its fundraising efforts

EXPLORING

- Explore the option of providing expanded hours of operation
- Offer non-traditional items for circulation
- Accommodate the different ways people use the Library
- Encourage people to explore their creativity
- Increase afterschool programming
- Provide new and convenient ways to access library materials
- Give patrons greater access to technology both for take-home and in-library use
- Examine large programming initiatives, like the summer reading program, to determine if we are meeting our goals

POSSIBILITIES

- Develop a plan to meet the growing demand for service in the northeast part of our community
- Create a formal process for community members to propose and present library programs
- Develop a new marketing campaign
- Enhance communication initiatives across all formats
- Take advantage of training opportunities to better ourselves and the community we serve
- Offer diversity training for our staff to meet the needs of our changing population