

This Strategic Plan 2011-2015 for the Winnetka-Northfield Library District – adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on Monday, August 15, 2011 at its regular monthly meeting – represents many months of work and the invaluable participation of library district staff members, library district board members, and representatives from our communities of Winnetka and Northfield. It is a direct response to the voices of our residents and library users, heard clearly, that told us how and why they use our library district facilities and resources and how they need and want to use them in the future.

At the heart of this Plan are a new mission and vision for our Library District, followed by objectives and strategies to accomplish that mission and to fulfill that vision. The next step in our work is to create plans and describe actions to carry these strategies forward. The Library Board of Trustees will be completing this important step in the coming months with my assistance and with the assistance of library staff. Discussions and decisions will take place, as always, at the board's public meetings.

In this document I will describe for you the process followed by our Strategic Planning Committee that began in December 2009. I trust that this Plan will be recognized and received as a foundation for our library district and that it will provide clear direction as we prepare to make important decisions about the future of our services and our place at the center of our communities.

It has been my honor and privilege to be the Library Director and the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee throughout this important process and I sincerely thank and congratulate all those who worked with me along the way.

Yours truly,

David J. Seleb
Library Director

PROCESS

The Board of Trustees of the Winnetka-Northfield Library District in December 2009 appointed a twelve-member Strategic Planning Committee to study the needs of its communities' residents regarding library district services, to recommend a process and timetable to develop a strategic plan based on its findings, and to create and recommend a strategic plan for final adoption by the board. That plan, the board anticipated, would provide a guide for the library district for at least three to five years. The board recognized the need to take a fresh look at its strategies based upon substantial changes in library use over recent years and to make important decisions about how to respond to those changes.

The Strategic Planning Committee began its work in January 2010 and realized quickly that to determine the needs of its library users it would have to do several things: 1. analyze the current state of library services and facilities and their use; 2. complete an environmental scan of our service area and beyond; and 3. ask our communities what they wanted and needed from the library. The Committee was able to accomplish the first two tasks with existing resources. What was lacking, however, was current, reliable, and thorough data on our communities' use of the library district.

In the spring of 2010, the Committee identified several firms with the qualifications and resources to assist it to create a comprehensive community survey about library district services, materials, programs, and facilities. Following a months-long exploratory process, the Committee chose the firm of LC Williams and Associates in Chicago and recommended that the board hire it to create a library survey. The board agreed with the recommendation, and in July 2010 Greg Gordon and his team at LC Williams began working with the Committee to create the library district's first comprehensive survey in over thirteen years.

The survey development continued, and in October 2010 the survey was delivered to every identifiable household in the library district's service area. Residents of Kenilworth, who receive library services through a contractual agreement with the library district, were also included in the survey mailing. Participants were also provided with the opportunity to complete the survey online, and a teen version of the survey was also created and sent to every household.

Survey responses were collected by LC Williams and throughout December 2010 and January 2011 the firm analyzed the results. In January, the firm presented its final reports and analyses to the Strategic Planning Committee and participated in two community meetings to reveal its findings to interested residents. Since January 2011, the Committee has been engaged in a close study of the analyses and has been using them to complete the library district's new strategic plan.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The Strategic Planning Committee has been focused on the results of the library district's survey to complete the district's next strategic plan. Those results have added tremendous value to our work.

Nearly 1,300 households completed our survey for an overall response rate of 23 percent. This response provided us with a margin of error of +/- 2.4 percent. The adult survey asked some initial questions to determine the demographics of the respondents and to measure general satisfaction with library district services. The substantial part of the survey was divided into sets of questions on nine subjects: Library Staff, Collection of Materials, Facilities, Library Atmosphere, Interlibrary Loan, Technology, Reference and Research, Program and Events, and Library District Communications. A final question was asked to obtain opinions regarding the future direction of the library district.

LC Williams' final reports are available on our library district's website at <http://www.winnetkalibrary.org/about-us/StrategicPlan> with a video of one of our public meetings at which the survey results were revealed and discussed. Please refer to these documents and this presentation for complete information about everything that we learned through our survey. Some of the most significant survey findings:

- The two most important elements to library users that the library district offers are books and staff. Nothing else ranked higher in importance or satisfaction.
- Over 90 percent of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with their consultations with library staff, with the renewing of library materials, with children's programs, with interlibrary loan services, and with borrowing books for adults and for children
- 92 percent of respondents said that they are likely to use library district services in the next year, 90 percent said that library district facilities and services improve the quality of life within their community, and 87 percent said that the facilities and services are relevant to them, personally.
- 80 percent of respondents said that the library district is a good value for their tax dollars.
- Service to teens is a key driver of the perception that the library district improves the quality of life within the community, meets the needs of the community, and is a good value for the tax dollar.
- Other very important or important things to our users include the library district's facilities, library atmosphere, interlibrary loan, and technology.
- 70 percent of respondents said that the library district keeps them well informed about what is going on in the district.
- The Northfield Branch received significantly higher ratings statistically in several areas, especially regarding general satisfaction with the library district. Northfield residents are more likely than Winnetka residents to agree that library district facilities and services improve the quality of life of the community, are a better value for the tax dollar, and are meeting the needs of the community.

- Opinions are quite evenly split on whether the library district's facilities and services should stay much as they are today or should evolve to better accommodate the needs of the community.

The Strategic Planning Committee has also relied upon other informational resources and upon library experiential and statistical data to determine the goals and objectives for our next strategic plan. The participation of our library staff in this regard has been indispensable. Their deep knowledge of library practices and trends, their understanding of the needs of library users through years of service, and their familiarity with the regional library landscape added a very important dimension to our plan development. The voices of the community members on the committee were consistent and strong throughout our process, as well. They ensured that the points of view of our communities' residents were represented, understood, and valued.

Perceptions of Libraries, 2010: Context and Community, a comprehensive study of the past, present, and future of America's libraries, provided another important component to the committee's studies. That report – available at <http://www.oclc.org/reports/2010perceptions.htm> -- included data analysis that supported many of our own findings. Among other information in the report, it is clear that not only in Winnetka-Northfield but across America, books remain the library's brand. Nothing else, not even technology, is as important.

ENVIRONMENT

Our library district serves the approximately 18,000 residents within our service area that includes the Villages of Winnetka and Northfield. By contract, we also serve the 2,500 residents of the Village of Kenilworth, as does the Wilmette Library District. Our communities are committed to the success of the educational and social institutions that have helped to form the lives of their residents for over 100 years. Schools, park districts, and other community treasures receive outstanding support. All of our data show that the library district is recognized strongly as one of these important institutions.

Indicated in our research results mentioned above, service to teens is a key driver of the success of the library district, and this is no surprise. Winnetka, in particular, is home to many families with children and teens. Winnetka has one of the highest proportional youth populations among its surrounding communities. Of the 12,419 residents of Winnetka (2000 Census), 4,297 are between the ages of 0 and 18 (35 percent) and 3,233 are between the ages of 5 and 18 (26 percent).

Changes in public library services in recent years, and in the public's expectations regarding those services, have been nothing short of revolutionary. They point toward the library of the future.

In recent years, national discussions about the role of the public library within the life of a community have included the concept of the Third Place. Simply, the Third Place is a place other than the home (the First Place) or the workplace/school (the Second Place) where people spend much of their time. According to Ray Oldenburg in his 1989 book *The Great Good Place*, Third Places are essential to

vibrant, healthy community life. He argues that to be a true Third Place a place must be highly accessible, free or inexpensive, convenient, welcoming, comfortable, and full of people who regularly spend time there. In many communities across America, the public library *is* a true Third Place. The Strategic Planning Committee considered whether that is also true of the Winnetka-Northfield Library District and concluded that today it is truer of our Northfield facility than of our Winnetka facility.

Perhaps the most revolutionary developments, however, have been the expansion of digital media and the mobile device explosion, and these incredible changes have had and will continue to have a tremendous impact on the roles and functions of public libraries. OCLC's new study, *Perceptions of Libraries 2010: Context and Community*, provides much of this important data. According to the report, cell phone ownership among all Americans stands at 93 percent today and Smartphone ownership is at 23 percent, and how people are using these devices is forever changing the nation's communication landscape. Shipments of smart phones are now poised to overtake shipments of PCs for the first time, and texting is increasingly the preferred and primary mode of communication for owners of these devices. The rise of mobile applications, or apps, is also changing dramatically the ways that people access online resources.

For libraries, this means that the ways in which we provide information must also change significantly. As a library, we have already ceased to be a purely physical place and are now a combination of both

the physical and the virtual. In other words, we offer not only physical items in a physical destination but digital resources that may be accessed wherever our user may be. Now, however, we must begin to provide information and resources not only for the virtual user but for the *mobile* virtual user. This means diving right into the ocean of mobile applications and both creating and remaking our services.

The library of the future is also one that is moving away from an exclusive focus on the needs of the individual and toward one that includes the needs of a community. A 2011 report by the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy entitled *Confronting the Future: Strategic Visions for the 21st Century Public Library* describes this trend. While the "individual" library provides the spaces and services required to provide for the needs of individuals or small groups with the same interests, the "community" library includes a focus on the broader needs of community by providing such services as multi-functional meetings spaces, advanced media and technology, and a broad offering of community activities. On a continuum, the Winnetka-Northfield Library today is closer to an individual library than a community library, although it does include elements of both. How far we choose to move from one end to the other, if at all, will depend on the identified needs and demands of our users and on our desire as an organization to remain relevant in a changing world.

The library district's own statistical resources tell us much about the growth of library use today and in the recent past, a clear indication of how much our communities value what we do.

- Over the past 5 years, the Library District's annual number of visitors increased by 22% to 285,063.
- Over the past 5 years, the Library District's circulation increased by 55%, with over 400,000 items circulated in Fiscal Year 2010-2011.
- 46,512 reference questions were answered by Winnetka-Northfield librarians in Fiscal Year 2009-10 which is equal to 131 questions each day that we are open for service.
- 330,024 users accessed the Library District's website in Fiscal Year 2009-10.
- Website traffic has increased by 72% since Fiscal Year 2004-05.
- Since Fiscal Year 2005-06, both the collection and circulation of audiobooks have increased 15%.
- Since Fiscal Year 2005-06, circulation of DVDs/videos has increased 66%.
- Our shelves contain over 132,000 book volumes
- More than 10,000 people attended one of the library's 553 programs in Fiscal Year 2009-10.

Our library district today combines the past, the present, and the future. The Winnetka facility was constructed in 1958 and few alterations have been made to the facility since then. The building's size is approximately 24,000 square feet. In 1974 the Winnetka Library was converted to an independent governmental unit to include the Village of Northfield, and in 1997 the name of that unit became the Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District. The Northfield Branch, a facility leased from the Village of Northfield, was remodeled in 2000. The size of Branch is approximately 4,500 square feet.

The library district's spaces are used today for many services that were unheard of a few short years ago, technology being one of the more significant. As the statistics above indicate, use of the library district has increased greatly and continues to increase. Our survey results indicate over and over that our users would like to have more of many things including books, programs, and technology.

At the same time, we are space constrained in a number of ways, and we already have limitations imposed upon us by those constraints, such as the inability to increase the size of our collections. Our shelves are full and we have no room to add more. For every book added to our collection, we must remove one. Every month on average we add 1,000 books to our collection and we remove 1,000.

The resources required to maintain our aging facilities will most certainly increase before any discussion of the possible alteration of those facilities takes place. The Winnetka Library is 52 years old and, as mentioned above, very few structural or mechanical changes have been made to the building in those 52 years. A recent capital asset study of our Winnetka facility estimates and projects the costs for the building's continued maintenance, and the board of trustees will now consider the establishment of a special reserve fund for capital improvements, as the study recommends.

Our financial environment presents certain challenges, as well. The library is an independent taxing district in Cook County that includes most households in both Winnetka and Northfield. Nearly 95

percent of our operating funds come from local real estate taxes. This percentage is typical for library districts in Illinois. The library district operates under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law or PTELL. This law limits our annual tax levy to the lesser of 5 percent or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for the previous year. Only a referendum would give us permission to increase our tax rate and tax levy above that limitation.

The tax burden of Winnetka and Northfield residents is high and getting higher. Unemployment rates also remains high while housing values remain low. Great pressure exists for all public bodies to do more with less, to consolidate services and programs, and to reduce the overall tax burden of residents. The board and staff of the library district are committed to effective collaboration with all other local government units – the Villages of Winnetka and Northfield, park districts, and school districts – to achieve the efficiency and the cost savings that residents expect and demand. It is important to note, however, that the Winnetka-Northfield Library District receives only approximately 2.5 cents of every local tax dollar that is paid. Despite this low figure, our service statistics, such as circulation of materials and program attendance, are higher than they have ever been, and an overwhelming majority of our residents consider the library district to be a good value for their tax dollars, according to the results of our recent community survey.

All of these facts and figures – a brief snapshot of the library district's environment – were used by the Strategic Planning Committee in the development of the plan. On the following pages, we present all of our key learnings from our process, our organizational values, our mission, our vision, our objectives, and our strategies and plans. These constitute the heart of our Strategic Plan.

KEY LEARNINGS

Our key learnings are derived directly from the results of our community survey. Through an analysis of our survey data conducted by LC Williams that statistically identified patterns and factors – key drivers – that help to predict desired outcomes, we know what is important to our library users and what we must do to continue to serve them well.

- **User Satisfaction**
High user satisfaction with library services demands a focus on what we are doing right and how to grow and to improve those services.
- **Personal Interaction**
Personal interaction – whether in person, via online chat, or via e-mail – drives the overall library experience for patrons.
- **Staff**
The staff makes the library district personally valuable to library users.
- **Books**
Books are the library’s brand and drive satisfaction with the overall library experience.
- **Teens**
Support for educational endeavors drives teen satisfaction with the library district.
- **Technology**
Technology drives the personal importance of the library district to individual users.
- **Facilities**
Our facilities are key to the library district’s ability to meet our communities’ needs and expectations.
- **Communication**
Clear, concise communication through our newsletter, in our facility, and on our website is essential to keep our communities aware of library district services and programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Our organizational values are our guiding principles. They affect the attitudes and behaviors of everyone who works for the library.

- **Customer Focus**
We are committed to providing exceptional, personal service to all library users.

- **Enthusiasm for Learning**
We offer an environment that invites study and intellectual pursuits and we encourage and support a learning environment for our staff.

- **Innovative Services**
We provide the best and most innovative materials, services, and programs for library users.

- **Inviting Spaces**
We provide and maintain library spaces, both real and virtual, that are appealing, inviting, and comfortable.

- **Freedom to Read, to Learn, to Know**
We protect and defend intellectual freedom, personal privacy, and unrestricted access to information.

- **Finance**
We provide excellent service and value to our communities for their investment of tax dollars.

- **Choices**
We offer programs and collections for all ages that are informative, enriching, and fun.

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Our mission statement is what we are and what we do. It is focused on whom we serve, on our roles, and on what we are working to accomplish. Our vision statement is the reason for our existence, a statement of what we can and should be.

MISSION

We provide exceptional service, reliable information, enriching programs, and welcoming spaces for everyone in our communities.

VISION

We will be a trusted gateway to a world of information, culture, and ideas.

OBJECTIVES, SITUATION ASSESSMENTS, STRATEGIES

Collections

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will maintain and improve patron satisfaction with our books and collections and will shift materials spending to address the opportunities for greater service that improved digital access, increased popular materials, and enhanced teen services present.

Situation Assessment

Book borrowing is our top service and a key driver of overall patron satisfaction with the library district. Our collection of materials is very important to an overwhelming majority of our users, and those users are very satisfied with the collections that we provide. We are committed to maintaining and increasing, if possible, that high level of satisfaction. We acknowledge, at the same time, that our patrons want more popular materials and want us to provide better access to non-print materials and current technologies. We also know that we must improve services and materials to our teens, an important community demographic and one that deserves better service. Our buildings, however, have no more space for our collections and services to grow. For every new item that is added to our collections, another item must be removed. This fact has significant implications for present and future strategic, facilities, and financial planning.

Strategies

Use internal resources and funding to address the opportunities of popular titles, teens, and digital access and materials

Eliminate less-used print materials to increase shelf space for higher-demand items

Staff

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will maintain and retain a staff that is knowledgeable and innovative and ensure that staff size is adequate to meet all service demands.

Situation Assessment

Direct consultation with library employees is another key driver of overall patron satisfaction with the library district. Other than our book collections, nothing is more important to our users than a knowledgeable, well-trained, friendly, and accessible staff. We intend to maintain this high level of satisfaction, and to do so we must ensure that we are investing in its development. Change is a constant, and to remain relevant and vital our staff must be equipped for change.

Strategy

Ensure that patron-focused service remains our number one priority

Spaces and Facilities

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will better accommodate materials and programming while delivering safe and well-maintained facilities.

Situation Assessment

Library District facilities and spaces are very important to our users in making the Library District valuable to them. Library users also have a favorable opinion of our current spaces and believe them to be functional. Many believe that they have enough space to read and to work. We also know that library atmosphere is very important to our users and that the advanced age and older style of some of our furnishings has a negative impact on patron comfort and on the approachability of our staff. When it comes to “Third Places,” our Northfield Branch comes closer to serving that purpose, and we should investigate ways to make that facility even more useful, functional, and attractive. We also know that we are space constrained, as mentioned in the objective concerning our collections. Children’s spaces are inadequate and inappropriate in a number of ways: many materials are out of reach of younger patrons, shelves are not appropriately sized for the materials they house, and adequate space does not exist to provide the many popular children’s programs and educational materials that our families use and expect. There is room for improvement in shelving, in signage, and in the amount of space for and the placement of materials.

Strategies

Ensure that all library materials are easy to locate and access

Determine condition and comfort of library facilities and furnishings and plan for the future

Address space limitations for collections, programs, and group meetings

Programs

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will continue to develop and conduct programs that are relevant, accessible to our users, while drawing on staff expertise to improve the variety of programs.

Situation Assessment

Programs and events are important to our library users, and most are satisfied with the kinds of programs that we offer. Users have also said, however, that the spaces and the times for programs are less than adequate and convenient and that we should offer more. We know that this is another area of service in which we are both space constrained and staff constrained: we do not have enough places, times, or people to meet all demands. Programs and classes are often oversubscribed, and people are often turned away. Our patrons also want our programs to be relevant, and that will require learning more about what our patrons want and need and developing new programs or ending less popular ones.

Strategies

Use existing staff and spaces more effectively and efficiently

Ask our patrons what they want and need and respond appropriately and promptly

Technology

Objective

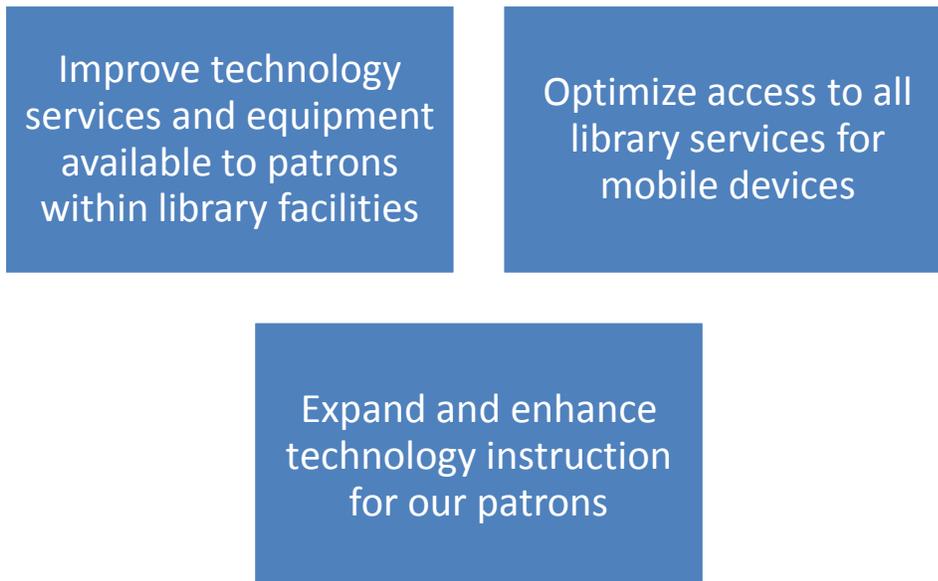
The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will provide greater and enhanced access to relevant technology and technological resources.

Situation Assessment

Technology is important to our patrons. It is key in making our library district valuable and relevant. Our users want us to be current technologically, to offer access to new technology, and to provide technology training. They also want equipment and programs to be available when they come to the library. We constantly look for ways to meet these demands and to achieve our objectives of access, relevance, and improved service.

Technology users also expect more and more that the digital and virtual services and information we provide will be optimized for a mobile environment. We must redevelop our services and create a mobile presence that these users will depend upon and want to use.

Strategies



Teens

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will better address our teen population through the development of spaces, collections, and services that support the educational and developmental needs of teens.

Situation Assessment

Teens are underserved by our library district. We have no spaces for them to use or to receive library service. We have no spaces for their materials or their programs. We have inadequate places for them to study, to work, and to collaborate. Teens have said that they want spaces and services that will assist them in their educational endeavors and we believe that it is important for the library district to provide those spaces and services.

Strategies

Create welcoming spaces for teens in our library facilities

Develop collections and services that are relevant to teen goals and interests

Increase teen awareness of library services

Communications, Public Relations, and Marketing

Objective

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District will improve communication to increase awareness of its services and to provide greater organizational transparency.

Situation Assessment

Our patrons tell us that we keep them well informed about what is happening in the Library District, but we also know that there is room for improvement. The library district's last comprehensive community survey before our most recent was in 1997. We need to gather information from our users much more frequently than that. We also need to spread the word about many of our services and programs that are underused, including digital databases and programs for adults. Our patrons are traditional in their use of communication methods. Most prefer to learn about the Library District through *The Source*, our quarterly, printed newsletter; but many are also using email notification and our website to get their information. The demand for organizational transparency is increasing and we must be more accountable to our taxpaying public.

Strategies



CONCLUSION

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District is a successful, vibrant, and essential institution within and for our communities. It is valued by the people it serves, and it adds value back to the lives of those same people. Our community members use our library district, they are happy with it, and they want it to continue to grow and to remain useful and relevant to them and to everyone who may benefit from its services.

This plan makes clear that there is work to be done and important decisions to be made. The Strategic Planning Committee believes that it has created a solid guide for the many decisions to be made by the Board of Trustees over the next several years and further into the future. There are shorter-term and longer-term objectives offered in this document. There are implications for the next five years and beyond.

The Winnetka-Northfield Library District offers its sincere thanks to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee who, for eighteen months, spent so much of their time and energy on the development of this document.

The Strategic Planning Committee

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