Inform, Enrich, Connect, Transform

Strategic Plan for Mount Laurel Library 2012–2015

Prepared by the
Mount Laurel Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee

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I. Introduction

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

Mount Laurel Library is a special institution that serves the entire community.

The Library is the place where young children get early experiences in reading, where seniors come to relax and learn, where teens are involved with active programs geared to their interests, where students, entrepreneurs, and job seekers come to improve their careers and businesses, where families come to explore ideas together, and adults come to experience reading, community connections, and local culture in music and arts programs.

Since 1973, Mount Laurel Library has become the cherished center of a flourishing community.

The Mount Laurel Library Strategic Plan is an essential tool to ensure a thriving future for both the Library and the community. After communicating with residents on their needs and desires, we crafted a plan to meet those needs.

We learned from focus groups, community meetings, and surveys that people are proud to be living in Mount Laurel and that having an exemplary library plays a significant part.

This plan was the product of many hours of work on the part of the many groups of individuals—staff, board members, and community representative volunteers on our Strategic Planning Committee—who jointly forged a shared vision of the Mount Laurel Library of the future. Our entire community owes them a debt of gratitude for the care and commitment they have demonstrated.

We also thank the community: the 1,586 people who took the time to fill out the planning survey, and the 103 people who participated in focus groups and the Town Meeting.

Mount Laurel Library trustees, staff, and volunteers have a passion for making lives better. We pride ourselves on making the Library a place of invitation, ideas, and innovation.

The Library has been entrusted with the task of continuing to improve the social and economic well-being of the Mount Laurel community. We look forward to reaching and exceeding that goal. Join with us as we move into the future, together.

Sincerely,

Dale Kramer, *President of the Board of Trustees*
Kathy Schalk-Greene, *Director*

II. Executive Summary

The Mount Laurel Library Strategic Plan for 2012 through 2015 will guide the Board of Trustees and Library Staff as they make operational and facility decisions in the face of a challenging and quickly changing environment. This Strategic Plan was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee with significant community input, including responses to a survey with over 1,586 respondents. In addition to the details of the plan on the following pages, an appendix contains an action plan for each objective and details from our technology review conducted as part of our planning. The Plan is designed to be an evolving and dynamic process to guide the staff and Board of Trustees and will be subject to an annual review and revision. Following is a summary of the Strategic Plan and key objectives. The Mount Laurel Library is an innovative leader in library services today in New Jersey and in the United States. This plan will continue to guide the Library and the community in developing one of the most responsive and effective public library programs in New Jersey.

Vision:
The Mount Laurel Library makes Mount Laurel a great place to live, work, learn, and thrive.

Mission:
The Mount Laurel Library informs, enriches, connects, and transforms our community.

Primary Goals:

I. Anticipate and fulfill the community's increasing and changing needs for services and programs and enhance the user experience in new and thoughtful ways
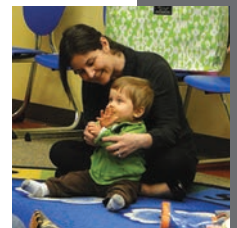**Objectives:**
- Continue to evaluate the Library's collections (books, games, movies, and music) in order to create the most effective balance of new, traditional, and emerging formats
- Identify and provide new and compelling programs and services in response to community interests
- Make it more convenient and more rewarding for all residents to visit and use the Library in person and online
- Expand the scope of services currently offered to all ages
- Collect information on usage and community awareness to measure success in meeting these objectives

II. Provide the leadership, staff, facilities, and technology necessary to meet these needs
Objectives:
- Invest in the effectiveness of the administration, staff, and board
- Maintain technical infrastructure for today's needs and in anticipation of tomorrow's
- Identify and implement key projects to maintain and enhance the library facility for this and future generations

III. Secure the support and financial resources necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the Mount Laurel Library
Objectives:
- Expand fundraising strategies, leveraging community awareness of the Library's increasingly important role
- Develop an effective identity campaign, expanding and enhancing communication in all forms and media
- Build community awareness and involvement through new efforts of communication and collaboration
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, local businesses, and local non-profits to meet the needs of the community
- Strengthen our partnership with town government to meet the needs of the community

III. The Strategic Planning Process

To provide continually improved service to the Mount Laurel community and all Mount Laurel Library users, the Board of Trustees and the staff of Mount Laurel Library continuously review its mission and objectives in order to align them with the needs and desires of the community. This requires assessing the resources needed for service provision, trends in content formats, patterns of usage, continued customer focus, and advances in technology. In September 2011, a Strategic Planning Committee was authorized by the Board of Trustees to undertake such a periodic review and revision for the period 2012 through 2015.

The Planning Committee consisted of members of the Board of Trustees, staff and the community. (A complete list of the members of the Board of Trustees and the Planning Committee is contained in Appendix IV and V.) The Board and the Planning Committee engaged the services of Library Development Solutions of Princeton, N.J. The Planning Committee synthesized information, identified priorities, considered internal strengths and weaknesses, external threats and opportunities, and identified possible future strategic directions for the Library. Particular attention was paid to information from the community survey, focus groups, and town meeting.

Planning Steps

Data Analysis

The Planning Committee reviewed statistics on library use and recent annual reports provided by Director Kathy Schalk-Greene. Metrics regarding collection size, number of visits, programs offered, circulation, and program attendance were considered as Library planners discussed future needs of the library community and the community at large. The Committee also read and discussed many recent articles about nation-wide trends in library and information services.

Focus Groups, Town Meeting, and Survey

- During the planning process, the consultants conducted focus group sessions and a town meeting with 103 community residents and library users, library staff, and department heads and with the Board of Trustees and staff to gather suggestions about the future for the Library.

- Additional suggestions came from 1,586 people who responded to a Library survey, both online and in print. This successful effort generated many suggestions regarding desired services and features, as well as many comments about current library services.

Planning Committee Meetings

*"The library is a great gathering place. Offers excellent resources and services.
Out-of-town friends are amazed by all the offerings."*

*"The library is a coffee-house experience...away from a coffee house. It is so relaxing
to be able to go with my kids and know there are so many things there for them to experience
yet I can also relax in a comfy chair with a book (and my cup of coffee)."*

*"We are so lucky to have this library in town. My friends in other states are
surprised to hear everything offered here. The staff is great as well—so helpful.
I love the Mount Laurel Library."*

*"The best use of my tax dollars possible. I love my library! The coolest library for
at least 100 miles around. I've brought friends from other countries, NJ, and PA
and they're amazed and jealous."*

The Planning Committee, over the course of several meetings, did the following:
- Identified social, technological, and demographic trends that will affect delivery of library services
- Considered Mount Laurel Library's internal strengths and its capacity to deliver excellent and responsive library service
- Articulated the challenges the Library will face, particularly with regard to funding in the future
- Developed a new vision and mission statement describing the Library's primary purpose
- Discussed and agreed upon goals and objectives to guide the Library's development for the next few years and a specific multi-part action plan for each objective

Board of Trustees Approval

The resulting strategic plan was approved by the Mount Laurel Library Board of Trustees on September 9, 2012.

IV. Strategic Considerations

After reviewing the information from the survey, focus groups, and town meeting and meetings with staff and the board and analyzing usage and demographic trends, the Strategic Planning Committee organized information into a group of strategic issues to which the Library would respond in its plan.[1]

Customer-Focused User Experiences, Convenient Services and Spaces

Changes in Mount Laurel's demographics and population, the ways in which people use the library, new technology resources, and continued demand for more public gathering and work areas requires Mount Laurel Library to frequently evaluate its space for more convenient access. Although the Library's facility is not as old as many other area libraries, there is an ongoing need to monitor how people use the Library and respond with improvements to accommodate their needs and interests.

Technology

Digital information technology has already transformed the way libraries do everything. Many people rely on the Library as their only source of access to digital information and computers and devices. Overwhelmingly, Library staff is asked about and expected to provide one-on-one instruction and coaching in the use of new technologies and this demand will continue to increase in the future. The survey identified a significant trend that will have an impact on the Library and the way in which it provides content. Twenty-one percent of respondents identified themselves as regular ebook readers, a trend that will increase rapidly. The Library will need to make critical decisions about how to balance the needs of traditional print readers versus ebook readers who seek more and more digital content. At the heart of it all, is how to provide convenient access to both print and digital resources in a way that makes it easy for customers to find what they want.

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[1] *Mount Laurel Library – Voices of the Community December 2011 – A summary of comments about the Mount Laurel Library from Mount Laurel Residents* is available at http://www.mtlaurel.lib.nj.us/about/MLL_Voices_of_the_Community.pdf

The survey report is here: http://www.mtlaurel.lib.nj.us/about/Survey_Powerpoint.pdf

Services for All Ages

Mount Laurel Library is committed to serving all age groups within the community. Consistent programming and staff dedicated to all age groups are key components of a successful library service program. Dedicated library resources that support the cultural, intellectual, and social needs of all age groups as well as a wide variety of programs are essential. The Library has been successful by identifying the different needs of these age groups and addressing them.

Staff Investment

A great staff is the hallmark of service at the Mount Laurel Library. As the Library considers its future, it is important to consider the skill sets needed to meet the changing demands of the community. Investing resources to ensure that staff members receive ongoing instruction and learning opportunities and the development needed to provide high quality and outstanding service is essential. The Library will also consider the need to attract, hire, and retain the right people with the right skills for the Library. The Library will continue to review work flows and routine activities and to free up staff for new roles, as needed.

Resource Development

Mount Laurel Library as a municipal library depends primarily on tax support, supplemented by private donations, fees and gifts to deliver library services. The Library has been a proud steward of its budget through a thoughtful use of funds. Increasing needs for additional private and public funding in the future may require the Library to explore other partnerships and means for generating support and funding.

These strategic issues provided the foundation for the challenging goals and objectives to address during the course of this plan.

V. Mount Laurel Library Strategic Plan 2012-2015

The Library's vision and mission will provide the overall direction that the Library adopts for the next several years. Goals and objectives identify specific strategic actions that will help the board, staff, and community achieve the mission. A complete set of action plans to achieve each objective is contained in Appendix I. The Board of Trustees and Director will determine responsibility for each item of the action plan.

Vision:
The Mount Laurel Library makes Mount Laurel a great place to live, work, learn, and thrive.

Mission:
The Mount Laurel Library informs, enriches, connects, and transforms our community.

Library Accomplishments

During the course of the last strategic plan of service, "New Opportunities," the Mount Laurel Library transformed itself into a community center. In subsequent years, the Library achieved more than most public libraries in meeting its goals. The Library as an organization has a thoughtful bias for action and this has led it to become a much-respected and admired public library in New Jersey and in the country. Because of these accomplishments, customers are able to do the following:

- Easily browse and find books, DVDs and music with the library's retail inspired layout and staffing
- Use the Library with convenient 7-day-a-week hours and many 24-hour services on the Library website
- Choose convenient self-service options such as self-checkout and online program registration
- Download thousands of ebooks and digital audiobooks
- Easily obtain material from other libraries through interlibrary loan
- Learn how to use new and emerging technologies such as ebook readers
- Enjoy arts and culture through monthly concerts and art exhibits
- Connect with the Library and other members of the community through Facebook and Twitter
- Find out about library events and services through the website, email newsletter, and electronic signs
- Connect with other members of the community through line-dancing, yoga, movies, and lectures
- Visit local museums and gardens using the Museum Pass Program
- Get assistance finding a job
- Work from the Library using WiFi, high-speed Internet and access to self-service scanners, copiers, and fax machines
- Get assistance from staff members who are committed to providing a high level of customer service, in person, phone, email, or chat

In addition, particular groups achieve their goals with help from the Library:
- Children maintain and enhance their reading skills through our Summer reading Programs and year-round early literacy programming
- Students are able to work with their tutors in the Tutor Zone
- Special-needs students are able to learn job skills working with job coaches in the Library
- Teens are able to become engaged in the community through the Teen Space, Teen Advisory Board, and volunteer opportunities
- Veterans or residents whose ability to read is affected by vision loss or impairment, a physical handicap, or learning disability are able to access personalized services

Shared Values

The staff, board, and community of the Mount Laurel Library believe that libraries change lives. That manifests itself in the following:
- Staff that treat customers with respect and generosity
- Collections and services that represent the books, music, and videos of today and yesterday
- Programs that promote democracy through civic engagement and that help to create an informed and thoughtful population
- Space that is inviting, comfortable, and encourages interaction within the community
- Technology that helps people live, learn, work, and thrive

Primary Goals:

I. **Anticipate and fulfill the community's increasing and changing needs for services and programs and enhance the user experience in new and thoughtful ways**
Objectives:
- Continue to evaluate the Library's collections (books, games, movies, and music) in order to create the most effective balance of new, traditional, and emerging formats
- Identify and provide new and compelling programs and services in response to community interests
- Make it more convenient and more rewarding for all residents to visit and use the Library in person and online
- Expand the scope of services currently offered to all ages
- Collect information on usage and community awareness to measure success in meeting these objectives

II. **Provide the leadership, staff, facilities and technology necessary to meet these needs**
Objectives:
- Invest in the effectiveness of the administration, staff, and board
- Maintain technical infrastructure for today's needs and in anticipation of tomorrow's
- Identify and implement key projects to maintain and enhance the library facility for this and future generations

III. **Secure the support and financial resources necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the Mount Laurel Library**
Objectives:
- Expand fundraising strategies, leveraging community awareness of the Library's increasingly important role
- Develop an effective identity campaign, expanding and enhancing communication in all forms and media
- Build community awareness and involvement through new efforts of communication and collaboration
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, local businesses, and nonprofits in the community
- Strengthen our partnership with town government to meet the needs of the community

Appendix I:
Full Strategic Plan and action steps

I.	**Anticipate and fulfill the community's increasing and changing needs for services and programs and enhance the user experience in new and thoughtful ways**
	1. Continue to evaluate the Library's collections (books, games, movies, and music) in order to create the most effective balance of new, traditional and emerging formats
	• Revise and update the Library's collection development plan to reflect changes in publishing and customer preferences
	• Focus on improving collections based on improved customer feedback and assessment tools
	• Determine the optimal mix of databases and all other digital formats
	• Continually evaluate the need for specific print collections, including reference, and all new and evolving formats
	2. Identify and provide new and compelling programs and services in response to community interests
	• Increase the number of lectures, performances, and concerts made available in the library and via the website and streaming media broadcast
	• Offer new and innovative types of volunteer opportunities for community members of all talents who choose to donate their time
	• Explore the feasibility of hosting (vendor-supported) online conferences and classes

3. Make it more convenient and more rewarding for all residents to visit and use the Library	
	• Consider expanding library hours to include 9:00 am openings
	• Consider using offsite book drops in other parts of the township
	• Explore the feasibility of a reimagined and appealing version of the existing vending area
	• Develop a new technology plan for the library based on the 2012 Technology Review, including provision for the use of emerging technologies and possible migration to a new Integrated Library System
	• Plan for additional quiet and group study spaces
	• Increase access to and promote the Library's ebook readers with preloaded books for all ages
	• Add the use of credit card payments for Library fees, fines, and donations
	• Consider expanding self-checkout capabilities
	• Consider adding self-check-in capabilities
4. Expand the scope of services currently offered to all ages	
	• Promote programs and the collection increasingly through electronic, social networking methods
	• Build the collection in ways that meet the needs and trends of customers
	• Consider creating advisory boards to include college-age residents, adults, and especially seniors
	• Develop new connections and relationships in partnership with other organizations' after-school programs
	• Build the children's collection, including ebooks

	• Review and evaluate the need for purchasing materials in various languages
	• Form a relationship with the schools on a project that encourages all school-age children in Mount Laurel to have their own library cards
	• Plan to improve the Computer Lab
	• Add more Early Learning (AWE) PCs and update furniture as needed in the children's area
	• Expand and promote online services for children and teens
	• Find ways to make the current indoor and outdoor spaces more integrated and interactive
	• Provide more lectures and seminars for seniors, during the day and evening that stimulate and satisfy their social and cultural interests
	5. Collect information on usage and community awareness to measure success in meeting these objectives
	• Measure and analyze traditional customer use trends and patterns
	• Measure levels of community satisfaction and feedback through surveys
	• Monitor and measure levels of support, both financial and emotional, through surveys and the annual report

II. Provide the leadership, staff, facilities, and technology necessary to meet these needs		
	1. Invest in the effectiveness of the administration, staff, and Board	
	• Review and revise the new orientation session and packet for new Trustees	
	• Review staffing needs based on changes in collections, services, and programs and to meet requirements of the strategic plan	
	• Attract, hire, compensate and retain quality staff	
	• Evaluate the need for information technology assistance to handle emerging technology-related issues	
	• Create a staff development plan and implement ongoing training that facilitates staff development opportunities	
	2. Maintain technical infrastructure for today's needs and in anticipation of tomorrow's	
	• Review, evaluate, and implement the suggestions in the 2012 Technology Review	
	• Review and evaluate migration to a new Integrated Library System (ILS) as needed	
	3. Identify and implement key projects to maintain and enhance the Library facility for this and future generations	
	• Revisit the 2008 Building Program from Arcari and Iovino Architects for new ideas and thoughts about the Mount Laurel Library for a new generation	
	• Use this strategic plan and the 2008 Building Program to begin assembling the elements of both a short-term and long-term Refresh Project for the library facility to include systems, equipment, grounds, and building	

	• Repurpose space to meet short-term needs and model new services for the community
	• Respond to identified needs for more meeting space, quiet and group work space and modernization of the current spaces
	• Identify "green" projects that might be eligible for grants or matching funds and make the library building more sustainable and efficient in its use of energy and a model for other facilities in Mount Laurel
	• Update and complete the regular audit of the building, noting capital needs such as carpeting, HVAC, painting and maintenance efforts, repairs, replacements, and additions that are needed.
	• Develop a new modern signage program for the outside and inside of the facility
	• Evaluate and construct additional parking spaces near by or adjacent to the library and re-stripe the lot
	• Expand or relocate the Computer Lab

III. Secure the support and financial resources necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the Mount Laurel Library	
1. Expand our fundraising strategies leveraging community awareness of the Library's increasingly important role	
	• Identify the level of support needed to supplement local tax support and determine how much all current fundraising efforts are likely to contribute to that level in the future
	• Consider forming a Mount Laurel Library Foundation
	• Determine project costs of a renovation and consider a capital campaign by 2015
	• Develop campaign materials and make the case for an annual appeal and other gift programs to raise funds to support the Library's programs, collections, and services
	• Evaluate new or expanded revenue streams such as a repositioned Friends Book Store, cell antennae, etc.
2. Develop an effective identity campaign, expanding and enhancing communications in all forms and media	
	• Refine the communications plan as it focuses on a consistent identity campaign through social media, marketing, and community relations
	• Install new visible signage on all roads near the library
	• Develop a compelling annual report that is sent to the entire community
	• Evaluate and continually improve the Library's website

3. Build community awareness and involvement through new efforts of communication and collaboration	
	• Continue to develop and refine the email newsletter, its database, and other digital social networking tools
	• Clean and set a new base line for the card database and set new goals for registered memberships as a percent of population each year
	• Develop a presentation about the strategic plan and the Library for community and business organizations
	• Appoint specific Board and staff liaisons to various community groups each year of the plan so the liaisons can improve the Library's relationship and collaboration with the groups
	• Engage current customers, especially retirees, to become passionate supporters with new volunteer opportunities
	• Develop a Library-based Speakers Bureau on current topics of concern to the community
	• Conduct regular surveys with local customers to learn about their experiences with the Library and implement changes in service as necessary
4. Strengthen partnerships with schools, local businesses, and non-profits to meet the needs of the community	
	• Work with school administrators, teachers, and parent groups to identify new ways the Library can collaborate and share resources to help students achieve academic success
	• Work with schools and community organizations to provide support for job searching and career programs
	• Work with schools to provide new volunteer opportunities for teens
	• Consider other shared services when and where appropriate

	• Work with SCORE program for retired business people to mentor entrepreneurs and local startups
	• Cooperate with local businesses to develop complementary marketing programs that would encourage Library use
5. Strengthen our partnership with town government to meet the needs of the community	
	• Create more opportunities to communicate with the Township about the Library's mission, vision, and plan
	• Integrate the strategic plan into the Library's operating budget based on new service programs, new staffing, new collections, programs, facility upgrade, and technology
	• Work with Town officials to fulfill specific needs of those who live and work in Mount Laurel, particularly in preparation for natural disasters and periods of extraordinary need due to extreme weather and/or power outages
	• Consider other shared services when and where appropriate

Appendix II:
Success Indicators

Alongside the traditional statistics that are recorded annually by local libraries in New Jersey, such as program attendance, visits, circulation, and registrations, the following are newer or additional indicators and statistics that the Mount Laurel Library will use to gauge successful implementation of this plan:

1) The community embraces the Library's planned facility improvements and provides the political and financial support needed to achieve them.

2) The Mount Laurel Library continues to be at the top of NJ public library rankings and is a recognized leader for its commitment to delivering excellent customer service.

3) The library is considered a civic anchor in Mount Laurel and contributes to Mount Laurel's civic and social vitality.

4) The library receives positive press coverage and praise and is often cited in the local news and papers for its programs and activities.

Appendix III:
Technology Review

Mount Laurel Library Technology Review

Initial Impressions

Mount Laurel Library (MLL) is an active, forward-thinking library with a strong focus on customer service via a retail service model. Their current technology program is well established, well organized, and reasonably well documented. Becky Boydston, Head of Systems and Tech Services, maintains the current systems and also "wears many hats" as she has other duties in the library. She has established many good practices and procedures and the library is in a position to take their technology program to the next level and build on its strong retail and customer service elements.

The significant issues that arose during the technology review can be categorized into the following areas:
- Network and equipment infrastructure
- Physical building constraints
- Staffing challenges

A. Network and equipment infrastructure

Observations and Impressions

MLL currently supports approximately 70 PCs (30 for staff and 40 for public). The majority of these PCs have reached, or are about to reach, the end of their life cycle (~4 years). PCs are configured with a baseline of software packages that include Microsoft Windows operating system, Office, various web browsers, Symantec Endpoint Protection 11 (antivirus) and various other packages. PCs are current on OS and security patches, and installed software is reasonably up-to-date for their respective versions. Staff PCs are running a mix of Windows XP and seven Public PCs are running XP and both staff and public PCs have Office 2003 installed with Office 2007 compatibility pack. MLL indicated that they have an intention to roll out Office 2010 and upgrading to Windows 7. MLL has maintained and managed their PCs very well which is why they continue to run well, despite their age. For public PC reservation and print management, the library uses EnvisionWare.

MLL currently receives Internet service via Verizon Ethernet Relay Service at a maximum speed of 100 Mbps. This is more than adequate for a library this size.

MLL's server room is clean, well maintained and adequately cooled and could benefit from additional wire management. The Cisco PIX firewall is 9 years old and will need to be replaced within the next two years.

MLL's current Integrated Library System (ILS) is SirsiDynix Horizon. MLL recognizes that it will need to migrate at some point from the older system, but there are no pressing issues that are interfering with the library's ability to conduct business.

MLL currently hosts their web and email with the NJ State Library. They are pleased with both services. They do not currently have a content management system, but have identified Drupal as their next website platform and are considering a redesign project.

MLL currently provides ebooks through the South Jersey Overdrive Consortium and subscribe to an Advantage account. They have hosted ebook events in the past which have been very popular and continue to calibrate that service.

Recommendations

I.   More detailed and formal network documentation of the current library network infrastructure would help ensure that the proper information is at hand when needed. Going through the exercise of creating detailed documentation also helps to reveal areas that need attention and will help establish the discipline of keeping the documentation up-to-date in the future.

II. The library would benefit from a more formal, articulated process for rolling out equipment upgrades. This would include (but not necessarily limited to) PCs, servers, network hardware and firmware, laptops, and tablets. Knowing when equipment needs to be replaced will aid in long-term budget forecasting.

III. The library should consider 24" monitors for the public rather than the current 19" units. There is a surprisingly small difference in cost and the benefit to users is immediate and visually apparent.

IV. Several servers in the server room are starting to age and are due for replacement.

    a. MLL is a prime candidate for virtualizing their server infrastructure. Currently, MLL is maintaining eight separate physical servers. About half of those will need to be replaced in the next two years. MLL could virtualize all of those servers onto one or two physical servers using software such as VMWare ESXi server.

    b. MLL may be a candidate for virtualizing PC infrastructure using PCoIP. Because the Library maintains about 70 PCs, the long-term savings could be significant and the administrative overhead reduced.

V. MLL's wireless infrastructure is starting to age and will need to be upgraded in the next two to three years. The library should consider 802.11n access points that support much higher connection speeds. The library should also provide a password-protected, encrypted staff wireless network that can access staff resources that are not accessible from the public network.

VI. MLL may want to consider a lease arrangement for printers where the support and maintenance is managed by an outside company.

VII. MLL should think about adding Macs to the pool of computing resources used by the public.

VIII. Because public PCs have the ability to play CDs and DVDs, there is no need for dedicated DVD viewing and CD listening stations. That space could be reclaimed and used for other purposes.

IX. MLL should consider investing in its mobile equipment infrastructure.

    a. Laptops: MLL currently owns only three laptops, one of which is too old to be usable.

    b. Netbooks: Netbooks are a good way to push mobile service points out from behind the desk. They are portable and inexpensive and can be configured with the Horizon staff client.

    c. iPads/Android tablets are another way to provide mobile applications that are more sophisticated than those you can get on a Kindle, Nook, or other e-reader.

    d. Kindles, Nooks, and eReaders are critical pieces of technology to have available for any library that is actively pursuing an ebook circulation strategy.

X. MLL should start some initial conversations regarding the Horizon Integrated Library System (ILS). Horizon is an older product and replacing it is inevitable. The ILS should be considered software that supports the patron experience first and staff second. MLL has a strong focus on retail and customer service, so the core consideration of an ILS should be, "How will this software help us provide better service to the public?"

XI. Because MLL does a significant amount of fundraising and is planning on expanding in the future, the library or Friends group should consider investing in fundraising software such as Raiser's Edge as well as the training for key staff and a connection to the Foundation Center.

XII. MLL may want to consider an online payroll service for managing time and attendance. Services such as Paychex and ADP can save time and money and streamline the process.

B. Physical Building Constraints

Observations and Impressions
MLL's customer-centric focus has created a warm and inviting space that has led to increased circulation and a much more browseable collection. There are a decent number of public PCs available, but their placement seems to be governed by where power and data is available, rather than where they would be most effective. For example, a bank of six PCs is located at the entrance to the children's area. A row of PCs also takes up a full wall in the teen area, and at the time, one of them was occupied by an adult, presumably because they are more "out of the way."

The enclosed computer lab is cramped, stuffy, and generally an uninviting space. It's too small to effectively have class or training.

The concept of an Internet Cafe is well-intended, but what distinguishes it as an Internet Cafe, rather than a space where people can relax and use the vending machines? The Internet Cafe was largely a phenomenon from the early 2000s and it is now assumed that anyone with a mobile device is connected to the Internet in some fashion. There is an opportunity to reconfigure this space into an active area without being proscriptive.

Recommendations

I.   There is a strong need for a technology lab that can be used for classes and formal technology training. Provide at least a 12 PC lab with an instructor PC connected to a projector or large LCD panel.

II.   MLL offers many enriching programs throughout the year. A dedicated space for programming would be a natural extension of that success. A dedicated space for showing movies or hosting speakers, in a more comfortable space than the meeting room, with integrated audiovisual resources and a platform or stage would be a valuable asset to the community. An interim solution would be to upgrade the current meeting rooms.

III.   MLL should consider providing laptops for in-house use by the public.

IV.   MLL has plenty of bandwidth available. MLL can build on that asset by making WiFi a significant part of how furnishings and space is used. MLL should market its high internet speeds as a selling point for the library.

C. Staffing Challenges

Observations and Impressions

Clearly, MLL's staff is capable, dedicated, and invested in a vision of the library as the community center. They have implemented a strong retail, customer-centric service model and have stuck with it. As elsewhere, some staff members are sometimes intimidated by new technology and do not use the tools they have to full advantage.

Becky Boydston has done a remarkable job up to this point of making sure that the systems in place run well and are organized appropriately. MLL staff is thinking about all the right things as they head into the future. However, the dimensions of an integrated MLL technology program has grown to a size that is untenable for one person to manage, especially since that one person also has other duties within the organization. If the Library wants to grow its technology program beyond what it is now, it will need to invest in additional staff time dedicated to technology.

Recommendations

I.   The library should consider hiring or contracting with an individual or company that has the expertise to manage a significant portion of the system administration duties as well as the PC management duties. That way, Becky's time could focus on managing the areas where the back-end technology interfaces with the libraries processes and procedures without worrying about what is "under the hood."

II.   The library should adopt a co-learning environment for staff in which staff members are invited to learn about new technologies on a regular basis as a peer group, perhaps over lunch. One idea would be to offer to buy lunch for staff attendees once a month and have someone present on topics and answer questions.

III.   In addition to an informal staff development initiative, by creating a technology classroom, staff would have the opportunity to be exposed to more formal training.

IV.   MLL is currently actively engaged with social networking, but the opportunity exists to invite more staff to participate.

V.   MLL should develop an articulated social networking strategy, broken down by each portal (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that defines what each will accomplish, who will be involved in maintaining and monitoring it, and how the MLL brand will be represented.

VI.   MLL should promote the borrowing of demonstration technology (such as iPads, Nooks, Kindles, etc.) by staff. For staff who express interest in integrating the technology into their work flow, consider purchasing them the equipment they are asking for.

Appendix IV:
Board of Trustees

Appendix V: Strategic Planning Committee Members

Gina Acerbo*
Bill Anthony
Becky Boydston*
Stephan Charton
Dana Dabek
Tracy Diamond
Jennifer Gaffney
Margaret Haynes**
Janet Kelleher
Dale Kramer**
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We thank Dale Kramer of Kramer Research (www.dalekramer.com) for generously donating her time to develop and analyze the community survey.

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Library Development Solutions is located in Princeton, New Jersey. The firm provides creative and practical solutions for libraries and library organizations that want to position their organizations for the future through strategic planning, organizational development, and building solutions.

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