Evanston Public Library
2011-2014 Strategic Plan

Introduction

“….. promote the development of independent, self-confident, and literate citizens through the provision of open access to cultural, intellectual, and informational resources.”

This is the mission of the Evanston Public Library (EPL) which was established by the citizens of Evanston, without dissent, on April 15, 1873. The 2011 Board of Trustees strives to honor the deep and textured heritage of our City and its Library. The Trustees are committed to the belief that as the community needs continually develop and change, the library’s capacity to service those needs respectfully and efficiently adapts and progresses. Serving the community as library advocates, the Trustees support the EPL Mission and the Vision Statement that envisions a future in which the Library’s collections, programs, and leadership help ensure:

- That every Evanston resident has the opportunity to enjoy an intellectually and culturally rich life
- That every child enters school with the requisite developmental skills
- That every child experiences the pleasure of reading and the joy of learning
- That our community celebrates and appreciates its diversity
- That those in need can find assistance and information with ease

While it is against our historic background that the 2011-14 Strategic Plan (“Plan”) sets its goals and objectives forward, recent events also impact the development of the Plan. The transition to a library fund which facilitates autonomous governance and changes in library administration provide our own historic context for projecting a future that best serves our community and delivers the greatest amount of library services to the greatest number of Evanston residents. As identified by Evanstonians through a deliberate planning process, this Plan provides direction to achieve goals of library services that reach out to each family, neighborhood, and constituency. As is evident in the methodical and comprehensive grassroots process, it is the clarity of the community voice and shared vision that illuminates this Plan and shines a light on our path ahead.

This process included representatives from the Library Board, staff and the community at large. The group selected the eight focus groups to be interviewed and worked together on an online survey that was answered by approximately 900 individuals. Staff and board discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that face the library. Also, our consultant had conversations with eleven community members who wished to express their views. This plan was based on the input of these various groups.

The Evanston Public Library will celebrate its 140th anniversary during the timeframe encompassed by this Plan. As a community, we will undoubtedly look back at our past, we will consider our present circumstances, and within the goals and objectives of this Plan, we will champion a future dedicated to outstanding library service for all Evanstonians.
Goal 1. EQUAL ACCESS: All Evanston residents will have equal access to the intellectual capital needed to support their educational, recreational, and cultural interests.

- Make necessary investments in diverse and balanced collections – both virtual and physical.
- Deliver innovative programs and displays that fulfill the Library’s mission.
- Evaluate community and patron desires to help ensure that collections reflect those desires.
- Conduct a space study of the Library to enhance usability, aesthetics, and functionality.
- Create more spaces for collaborative, small group interactions.
- Explore modifications of existing service desks to facilitate more personal staff/customer interaction throughout buildings.
- Collaborate with law enforcement, social service and health agencies to enhance safety and security of patrons, staff, and collections and to maintain a secure and pleasant library environment.

Goal 2. NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND OUTREACH: Expand library services and resources throughout the entire Evanston community.

- Explore and develop partnerships with schools, community organizations, businesses, and City recreation centers to deliver services throughout Evanston.
- Analyze barriers to access to library services and identify non-users of library services.
- Partner and engage citizens in specific communities in Evanston to identify demographics and service areas of specialization to focus on as centers of learning, leisure, and literacy throughout Evanston.

Goal 3. CHILDREN: Children throughout Evanston will have the opportunity to succeed in learning.

- Offer a broad spectrum of reading readiness activities, such as story times, in a wide network of locations throughout Evanston.
- Coordinate with existing community literacy and reading-readiness programs to identify new opportunities for Evanston’s children to develop language and pre-reading skills.
- Partner with school librarians and educators to help promote a love of reading and learning.
- Expand the summer reading program and expand print, in-person, and virtual readers’ advisory services to children and young adults throughout Evanston in order to develop and maintain a love of reading and learning.
Goal 4. TECHNOLOGY: The Library will track and adopt emerging current technologies to improve the experiences of library patrons and their access to information and services.

- Position the Library as a public technology learning center for all citizens of Evanston by providing hands-on sharing.
- Expand technology-based services to increase patron access to media and information throughout Evanston.
- Explore technologies for circulation, inventory control, and customer self-service.
- Create the most exciting, informative and useful library web experience imaginable.

Goal 5. MARKETING: The Library will strive to make Evanston residents aware of the exceptional patron-centered services and collections the Library has to offer.

- Continuously improve the delivery of courteous and professional library services to all patrons through staff training and performance evaluations.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive print and virtual marketing plan to raise awareness of the importance of public libraries generally and specifically, to raise awareness of the excellent and comprehensive programs and services the Library offers.
- Embed in that plan a responsiveness to changing demographics and technology that promotes open communication between the community and the library.

Goal 6. FUNDRAISING AND HUMAN CAPITAL: Acquire the human and financial resources to efficiently achieve and maintain the mission and goals of the Library.

- Recruit, train and nurture skilled staff.
- Expand the recruitment and use of skilled volunteers to assist staff in a wide spectrum of library activities.
- Continuously improve the delivery of courteous and professional library services to all patrons through staff training and performance evaluations.
- Articulate library funding requirements to the community and decision-makers so that Evanston’s library develops and maintains outstanding collections and services.
- Encourage partnerships, sponsorships and community connections to fulfill funding requirements.
- Explore all supplemental funding sources, including grants and planned giving.

Goal 7. LIBRARY BOARD AND GOVERNANCE: Develop the capacity of the Library Board to successfully fulfill its statutory role, commitments and fiduciary responsibilities.

- Bolster Board orientation, training, and continuing education relating to board governance, fiduciary responsibilities, the Open Meetings Act, the development of annual budgets, levy requests, and overall powers and duties under the Local Library Act.
- Encourage and support continuing education and involvement in the regional, state and national public library trustee community.