2014

CHESTER COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Strategic Plan Discovery Phase Key Findings Report

Consulting & Design by Capacity for Change, LLC
The Chester County Library System Today...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>3,956,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardholders</td>
<td>213,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>1,149,615 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>$14,644,400</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: CCLS System Data as of March 2014
...And In The Future

How will we best inform & educate?

How will we best collect & preserve?

How will we best innovate & inspire?
**Capacity for Change Strategy By Design Process**

Strategy lies at the intersection of desirability, feasibility and sustainability.

Our Three-Phase Strategy By Design Process:

1. **Discover** stakeholder perceptions of our identity, value, future potential and changing world.
2. **Design** a shared vision and strategic direction for the future.
3. **Act** on a set of strategic priorities that are relevant, measurable and achievable.
CCLS Strategic Planning Process 2013-14

Environmental Scan
- Trends & Promising Practices

Focus Groups
- Trustees
- Directors
- Staff
- Community Leaders

Online Survey
- Cardholders
- Trustees
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Funders
- Partners

Strategic Plan Design/Build
- Visioning
- Goal Setting
- Document
- Dashboard
- Toolkit for Member Libraries
CCLS Environmental Scan: 7 Key Findings

1. The American Library Association is promoting library transformation and community engagement.

2. Chester County has a new strategic plan to manage for results that is aligned with the changing needs of residents and communities.

3. National best practice research has identified a new typology of public library engagement.

4. Public libraries are introducing innovative library solutions in response to this new typology and to the changing attitudes of younger generations.

5. The definition and forms of literacy are evolving.

6. Public libraries are mobilizing support for funding through innovative outreach strategies.

7. Public libraries are exploring new business strategies to create a more sustainable impact.
“The ALA has made transformation a top priority. As libraries continue to transform in 2014, they deepen engagement with their communities in many ways, addressing current social, economic, and environmental issues, often through partnerships with governments and other organizations. Moving forward from being providers of books and information, public libraries now respond to a wide range of ongoing and emerging needs.

This can include helping communities cope with the unexpected. The rollout of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act had many public libraries struggling to keep up with the demand for public computer terminals and with requests for help in using the Healthcare.gov website. And people left homeless by Hurricane Sandy filled libraries in New York and New Jersey, using library computers to complete federal forms and communicating with loved ones using the library’s internet connections.”

Chester County Government's Strategic Priorities and Goals: Managing for Results

1. **Health, Human Services & Environment:** Protect vulnerable people and valuable resources in the community while promoting healthy, environmentally sound, choices.

2. **Public Safety:** Ensure safe and secure communities.

3. **Economy:** Support the growth and development of a strong and vibrant economy for all residents.

4. **Transportation:** Enhance access to, and use of transportation systems to reduce traffic congestion.

5. **Growth:** Manage growth and land use to preserve and optimize the quality of life in the community.

6. **Smart Financial Management:** Continue to exercise smart financial management and maintain the County’s financial strength while minimizing the property tax burden.

A New Typology of Public Library Engagement

- Americans’ library habits do not exist in a vacuum: Americans’ connection—or lack of connection—with public libraries is part of their broader information and social landscape.

- Deeper connections with public libraries are often associated with key life moments such as having a child, seeking a job, being a student, and going through a situation in which research and data can help inform a decision. Similarly, quieter times of life, such as retirement, or less momentous periods, such as when people’s jobs are stable, might prompt less frequent information searches and library visits.

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**Public library engagement typology: Group overviews**

- **High engagement, ~60% used a public library in the past year**
  - Library Lovers: 50%
    - Members of this group report frequent personal use of public library, along with high levels of household library use. This group includes many parents, students, and job seekers, members tend to be younger and single.
  - Information Enthusiasts: 20%
    - This group has the highest rate of technology use as well as the highest levels of education, employment, and household income. They have high levels of personal and household library use, but their visits to library are less frequent than Library Lovers.

- **Medium engagement, ~30% used a public library in the past year**
  - Solid Center: 30%
    - Centrally in small towns, this group is similar to the general U.S. population in most measures. About half have used a public library in the past year, most feel libraries positively.
  - Most Traditionalists: 9%
    - This group contains the highest proportion of rural, Southern, or white respondents. It is slightly older in solid center in many measures, except that its members tend to live farther away from libraries. They also have positive views about libraries' role in communities.

- **Low engagement, ~30% used a public library in the past year**
  - Not For Me: 4%
    - This group is distanced from other low engagement groups as members' view libraries negatively and few visit.
  - Young & Restless: 7%
    - This is a relatively young group and few of its members have lived in their neighborhoods for very long. Their most striking feature is that only 19% know where the nearest public library is located.
  - Rooted & Roadblocked: 7%
    - This group generally views public libraries positively, but many face hurdles in their lives that may prevent them from engaging with libraries. They tend to be older and are often living in lower income households.

- **None**
  - Distant Admirers: 30%
    - Though members of this group have never personally used a public library, they view libraries favorably—perhaps because many residencies. Though many view library services important to them and their families. They tend to be older and are often living in lower income households.
  - Rare users personally used a public library
  - Off the Grid: 4%
    - Members of this group tend to be disconnected from their communities and social life in many ways. Many live in rural areas, and just 35% use the internet. Many have very low household incomes, as well as low levels of education—only one in ten has graduated from college.

Innovative Library Solutions

- Makerspaces focusing on knowledge creation, not just knowledge discovery
- Mobile applications for smart devices
- Kiosks for lending both materials and smart devices
- Pop-up and mobile libraries

Sources:
- http://oedb.org/librarian/a-librarians-guide-to-makerspaces/
- http://www.bklynpubliclibrary.org/my-bpl-mobile-apps
- http://www.geekwire.com/2013/papering-over-library-tech/
- http://inhabitat.com/6-delightful-pop-up-libraries-to-encourage-reading-this-summer/
The Evolving Definition and Forms of Literacy

PAForward Five Literacies:

1. Basic Literacy – Libraries can push Pennsylvania to achieve one of the highest literacy rates in the country, a trained and skilled workforce, and a growing economy, tax base, and population.

2. Information Literacy – Libraries can help all Pennsylvanians learn how to use online resources and current technology to improve their education, to enhance their job skills, to develop their personal lives, and to fully participate in a digital society.

3. Civic and Social Literacy – Libraries can play an important role in helping citizens have the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives, to participate and contribute effectively to their community, government, and society, and to connect with one another through discourse.

4. Health Literacy – Libraries can play an important role in helping citizens manage their own and their family’s well-being, and empower them to be effective partners with their healthcare providers so they can live longer, more productive lives.

5. Financial Literacy – Libraries can help citizens become informed consumers and guide individuals, small businesses, and other organizations to contribute to the economic vitality of their community through innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development.

Sources: https://www.palibraries.org/?Toolkit
Innovative Mobilization Strategies

- Infographics
- Grassroots advocacy campaigns
- Online advocacy and public awareness campaigns
- Cause-related events and online engagement, especially for Millennials and younger generations of patrons, donors and volunteers

Sources:
- http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/nlld
- http://www.themillennialimpact.com/2013research
New Public Library Business Strategies

- Become more business-like by focusing on continual improvement, customer service, marketing strategy, efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness
- Focus on relationship building with all potential customers - and not just current library patrons
- Redefine librarians to empower library users - the “social” librarian as curator, educator, connector, facilitator, experimenter and beacon

Sources:
CCLS Focus Groups: 6 Key Findings

**Strengths**
- Our libraries are safe, diverse and inclusive gathering places & cultural destinations
- Our libraries create equity through free and equal access to knowledge, info & technology
- Our libraries transform communities, connect people, spur creativity & help our local economy grow

**Opportunities**
- Our libraries can better connect us and share their story & impact
- Our libraries can improve spaces, customer experiences and partnerships to be more “high touch & high tech”
- Our libraries should blend what works and what wows to be relevant to future generations
1. CCLS and Member Library Trustees
2. CCLS and Member Library Directors
3. CCLS and Member Library Staff
4. Chester County Community Leaders:
   - Pat Bokovitz: Chester County Department of Community Development
   - Judy DiFilippo: Chester County Planning Commission
   - Jeanne Casner: Chester County Health Department
   - Mimi Gleason: Former Chester County Township Official
   - Mike Grigalonis: Chester County Economic Development Council
   - Claudia Hellebush: United Way of Chester County
   - Mary Holleran: Brandywine Health Foundation
   - Mark Lloyd: State Representative Hennessey’s Office
   - Jeffrey Osgood, Jr.: West Chester University - Department of Political Science
   - Mark Rupsis: County of Chester
   - Michael Schnably: Citadel Federal Credit Union
   - Maria Schwab: Chester County Intermediate Unit
   - Gary Smith: Chester County Economic Development Council
   - David Ward: Chester County Planning Commission
CCLS Customer Survey: 4 Key Findings

1. Public libraries in Chester County are highly valued for promoting and providing access to information, entertainment, education, literacy and free Internet services as well as for being welcoming centers of community.

2. Library customers desire greater access and content related to:
   - Educational programs for both children and adults
   - Spaces for reading, working and relaxing
   - eMaterials
   - Online & social media experiences

3. Customers want libraries to help create community solutions to health, economic and social problems in partnership with government, businesses and nonprofits.

4. Public libraries should invest in branding, customer service, marketing and fundraising efforts to mobilize public support and increase membership.
1,583 Survey Respondents Represent Customers From Every CCLS Member Library and...

...in the past year:
- 89% Borrowed a paperback/hardcover book, CD or DVD
- 72% Received helpful assistance from a librarian
- 51% Used a member library’s website
- 47% Quietly did reading, writing, art or work
- 42% Used a computer or the Internet, including Wi-Fi

...87% are Chester County Library System Cardholders
What Do Our Customers Value Most?

Percent of survey respondents who strongly agree that public libraries provide unique value to Chester County by…

1. Providing access to books, films, music and other forms of information and entertainment (86%)
2. Encouraging literacy and a love of reading (81%)
3. Providing free Internet, computer and technology access (78%)
4. Educating people across the lifespan (69%)
5. Creating a welcoming center of the community (68%)
What Do Our Customers Want Us To Prioritize?

Survey respondents ranked these strategies to increase the use of public libraries by people who live, work and go to school in Chester County in the following order of importance:

1. More adult education programs (16% ranked this first)
2. More free early literacy classes/storytimes for young children (16% ranked this first)
3. More comfortable spaces for reading, working and relaxing (16% ranked this first)
4. Closer coordination with local schools (13% ranked this first)
5. Better branding and marketing of public libraries (21% ranked this first)
What Technology Solutions Do Our Customers Want Most?

Percent of survey respondents who absolutely believe each of the following technology solutions would increase the value of public libraries to Chester County residents and communities in the following order of importance:

1. A broader selection of eMaterials (eBooks and eAudiobooks) (67%)
2. A library smartphone app for access to the catalog and library information (63%)
3. Increased use of the web and social media to engage and inform members (61%)
4. Optimizing websites for smartphone devices (53%)
5. Delivering programs online via streaming media and webinars (48%)
How Might Our Customers Support Library Funding in Response to Economic Challenges?

In response to funding for public libraries facing economic challenges which have affected services to the community, the percent of survey respondents who absolutely would give money or support to their local library by:

1. Supporting increased public funding for public libraries (75%)
2. Purchasing goods or services at a store or shop located inside a library (43%)
3. Asking friends and family to donate to a cause or attend an event that supports the library and benefits the community (35% - and 43% stated “maybe”)
4. Making a one-time or annual donation through a written appeal by mail (34% - and 44% stated “maybe”)
5. Making a one-time or annual donation online via the web or email (31% - and 46% stated “maybe”)
How Do Our Customers Want Us To Lead and Partner to Improve the Quality of Life?

Percent of survey respondents who believe that public libraries should definitely partner with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses and government agencies to improve the quality of life for Chester County residents to:

1. Provide mobile outreach and services to remote areas and people who are underserved (64%)
2. Help people become informed so they can increase their financial literacy and better manage their finances (61%)
3. Educate people about health literacy so they can actively manage their own and their family's well-being (58%)
4. Increase cultural competency to meet people's diverse social, cultural and linguistic needs (58%)
How Do Our Customers Want To Communicate and Engage With Their Libraries?

Percent of survey respondents who would prefer to communicate and engage with public libraries in the future by:

1. Email newsletter (86%)
2. Website or blog updates (61%)
3. Meetings or special events (39%)
4. Facebook and other social media (38% - yet another 24% don’t use social media)
5. Postal mail newsletter (20%)
What Difficulties Do Customers Face in Visiting Their Local Public Library?

**In person**

**Driving Distance & Parking**

“It's a 30-minute round-trip. I have to work it into a trip involving other errands. In my ideal world, the library would be located near my other stops, e.g., the grocery store, kids' schools, etc.”

“Parking is a game of chance…”

“I'm a full time working mom - that leaves me: * no time in the morning * no time at night * saturday is a very busy day *”

**Online**

**Website**

“The websites are not user friendly and need some work.”

“I rarely have any luck with the ccls search engine. I do my searches on amazon, then use ccls only when I have a specific item to search for.”

“I would love to see public libraries get their collections more visible in search engines like Google by adopting new web -based metadata standards. This is a hot topic among library techies.”

“I would much rather go to the CCLS web site and have it work, instead of downloading some special app for each of my devices.”
Customer Suggestions

Books (Appeared in 23% of 562 suggestions)

“The library needs to focus on books, modernizing with relevant technologies, providing classes for those in their twenties (including book clubs), and offering evening courses for the people in the area.”

“Consider opening a small branch of the library like they opened in San Antonio - the library that offers ereaders and computers with web access only, no books, and staffed by people who can really teach the under served how to live in today’s technology based world.”

“Again I’d say train your librarians in better customer service... As someone who can afford to purchase whatever books I want I don't 'need' library services.”

Programs and Services (Appeared in 20% of 562 suggestions)

“Be more than open-minded to all possible changes, in fact, be aggressive in embracing and leading change. Libraries have come a long way, offering a variety of programs and even access to technology but I perceive that too much of their own self identity remains tied to traditional printed media.”

“Get young people involved in the planning and execution of events, programs and activities. They are where the future is.”

“Two areas for TREMENDOUS improvement: Customer Service and Cultural Competency.”
For More Survey Data and Information

The CCLS Strategic Plan Customer Survey Data Report will be available upon request to system and member library Trustees and staff.

Custom survey data reports for each member library will be available to respective Trustees and Directors in the CCLS Strategic Plan Member Library Toolkit later this year.
Chester County Library System Strategic Planning Project 2014