
DWIGHT FOSTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Strategic Plan 2016-2020

FEBRUARY 20, 2017

209 Merchants Avenue, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

Introduction

The Dwight Foster Public Library Strategic Plan was developed out of the core belief that the library must continue to be a relevant resource, providing value and opportunity for all community members. The plan was developed this past year with careful consideration of the community's needs, aspirations, and resources.

The library board formed a Strategic Planning Committee and hired consultants from Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS) to facilitate plan development.

Four goals emerged from the process as being especially worthy of pursuit:

Goal: Establish and Strengthen Key Partnerships

Goal: Provide Access for all

Goal: Communicate our Mission and Values

Goal: Align Resources to Add Value

The plan will guide the staff and trustees to prioritize their work. It has been drafted to allow flexibility as community conditions and needs evolve. Organization values will remain constant, and all strategies will be measured against the foundation of the plan and remained focused on serving the community.

Acknowledgements

The Strategic Plan Committee thanks the community members who spent time offering commentary through survey responses and spontaneous or facilitated conversation. Their insights, expressions of concern, and gratitude made clear the important role the Library plays in their lives.

The Committee is grateful for the dedication and professionalism of the library staff, providing our patrons with expert service daily. The staff is the most important component to successful implementation of the plan going forward.

The Strategic Planning Committee's passion for the library was evident in their commitment to this process. The time, thoughtfulness and experience of the members of the Committee bode well for the library reaching the aspirations outlined in this plan. Thanks go to each member.

Strategic Planning Committee

Library Board of Trustees – Rita Gray, Pat Belt, Bonnie Hamm, Jeff Zaspel
Library Staff - Kelly TerKeurst, Amy Lutzke, Minetta Lippert, Julie Nordeen,
Sandy Wagenfeil, Kelli Rowley, Shelby Schoenherr

At their February 20, 2017 meeting, the Dwight Foster Public Library Board of Trustees adopted this strategic plan.

Library Board of Trustees (2015-2016)

Pat Belt, Libby Jones, Bonnie Hamm, Kathy Topel, Thomas Fick, Jeff Zaspel, Carol Congdon, Diana Shull, Beth Gehred, City Council Representative, Rita Gray – past board president, Leslie LaMuro – past city council representative, Jill Ottow – past board member, Matt Trebatoski, City Manager (ex officio)

Strategic Planning Process

Between April and October of 2016, the Strategic Planning Committee gathered the following information:

- Comparisons of annual report data submitted to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for years 2009-2014 from the following libraries: Dwight Foster Public Library, Baraboo Public Library, Jack Russell Memorial Library (Hartford), Jefferson Public Library, Reedsburg Public Library, Stoughton Public, Library, Watertown Public Library, and Irvin L. Young Memorial Library (Whitewater).
- Results of a survey of convenience conducted between April 15, 2016 and June 13, 2016. There were 269 total responses.
- Two community conversations held May 24, 2016. The first conversation had five teen attendees and the second had 25 invited attendees, representing a cross-section of the community. These conversations were facilitated by WiLS and elicited needs and aspirations of the community and how the Dwight Foster Public Library could help meet them.
- Issues and Needs Questionnaire, completed by members of the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Demographics from the American Community Survey.
- Community of Fort Atkinson Placemaking Initiative.

This data, along with the Library's existing mission and vision statements, are the foundation on which the Strategic Planning Committee based the plan's goals and activities.

Background

The City of Fort Atkinson is buffeted by the same unpredictable technological, economic and cultural tides as all cities in the country and therefore operates under fiscal and social restraints. The Dwight Foster Public Library is not immune to this reality, rather is tied to the City's fortunes through ordinance and custom. What becomes clear from the library's reputation in the community, and backed up by library usage data, is that the library serves as a support to citizens' development

and viability so is an active partner in shaping the City's economy and future. It is a place to learn new technologies and skills. It is a trusted source for job seekers, lifelong learners, and cultural creatives. For some, it serves as a workspace, for others a place to meet to plan community projects, share skills and stories, and network.

The 2011 renovation accentuated the collaborative aspect of the Library. The use of the six meeting spaces continues to grow year over year. Any given day or evening local groups, among them strong partners such as the Jefferson County Literacy Council, Fort HealthCare, and Head Start, make use of the meeting rooms large and small.

The library serves as a vital community center where people of all ages can:

- find all forms of informational and recreational resources and materials.
- come to learn.
- build community through events, workshops, lectures, readings and use of shared community spaces and meeting rooms in the library.
- connect to community resources and services.
- explore the world of information through the internet, online resources and other technology.

The library can rightly claim a role as an economic development partner with the City and as a community center.

Transition to Bridges Library System

In 2016, the Dwight Foster Public Library left the Mid-Wisconsin Federated Library System and joined with Waukesha County to form the Bridges Library System. This move was anticipated to bring expanded access to resources and improved services to library patrons. As the transition is being made final in the closing months of 2016, community members and staff are giving favorable endorsements. The online catalog known as CAFÉ offers a searchable database of materials from 24 libraries in Jefferson and Waukesha Counties and access to more than 2 million items. Other notable benefits that came with the move include digital magazine access, access to premium databases such as Ancestry.com and Rosetta Stone, and Gale Courses online learning.

Children and Young Adult Programming

A dominating focus of Library programming is that provided to children under 12 years of age. Statistics show a steady and substantial increase in children's programming over the past five years. In 2015, the last year that the library collected this data, 412 of the 485 programs offered were aimed at children. The programs were well attended relative to adult programming, as the number of

programs is 85% of the total and accounts for 89% of total programming participation. Clearly, the library is successful in reaching children and accompanying family members.

Providing space for young adults, ages 13– 17, and discovering a mix of programming that appeals to this age group, however, was identified as an area of importance that needs addressing. A teen area on the first floor was repurposed due to the need to integrate the teens with adults. In September of 2016, the collection was relocated to a new area on the second floor with early results suggesting increased usage. Some progress has been made as the Library had no official YA programs in 2011 and offered close to 40 YA programs in 2015. Programs average ten attendees, which is lower than other comparable libraries. There is an opportunity to grow teen interest in the library and its activities.

Findings

Suggestions for how this growth may occur were offered in the Community Conversation that featured five teens.

- After school clubs are popular but require adult supervision and space. There may be an opportunity to support clubs at the library.
- Teens asked for materials that related to their school curriculum.
- Teens suggested that the library could hold events at the schools to increase interest and attendance (i.e. speakers).
- There are few places for teens to congregate in the community. The library may be a location to develop a space for teens.
- Teens would appreciate a more teen-focused collection, suggesting video games, movies, and a broader music selection.

Findings from the second Community Conversation can be found in the Additional Notes section.

Plan Foundations

Vision

The Dwight Foster Public Library seeks to ignite the quest for knowledge and understanding and provide the necessary resources for life's journey, for each member of our community. Our facility, programs, and collections must be the anchor of our community, as we strive to preserve the record of history, inspire discovery, and make accessible the vast body of information so that all can learn, share, grow, and contribute.

Mission

The mission of the Dwight Foster Public Library is to help people achieve their full potential by being a leading resource for information, education, culture and recreation.

Organizational Values

An organization's mission is based upon and supported by the organization's core values. These are values which are inherent to the organization and transcend time.

The library board and staff:

- are accessible to all.
- are people-focused.
- are proactive in providing library services.
- provide free and equal access to information and materials.
- practice intellectual freedom and confidentiality.
- responsibly allocate and utilize resources for maximum return on the public's investment.
- value its staff as its greatest asset.
- harness the power of technology to the maximum advantage viewing it as a means to the end of better library services and not an end in itself.
- value youth as the future of our library and society.
- value the collection and preservation of important local authors.

Service Goals

Goal: Establish and Strengthen Key Partnerships

Dwight Foster Public Library will strive to create and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders in the community to collaboratively address diverse community needs.

The efforts to reach this goal will include strengthening relationships with:

- community schools, including those who homeschool
 - Complement and cooperatively develop resources of the schools and the library.
 - In conjunction with schools, provide consistent expectations for student behaviors.
 - Increase teen use of library materials and services.
- organizations serving youth in the community
 - Boys and Girls Club
 - Preschools and daycares
 - Parks and Recreation
- health organizations and care providers
 - Hospitals

- Jefferson County Human Services
- *Women Who Care* Giving Circle
- Senior Care Facilities
- Group homes
- Mental health providers
- employment service providers
 - Workforce Development
 - Businesses
 - Employment agencies
- cultural and arts organizations
 - Lorine Niedecker Committee and its Lorine Niedecker collection
 - Museums
 - English Language Learner organizations
 - Churches
- other opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships

Goal: Provide Access for All

Dwight Foster Public Library prioritizes inclusiveness in providing access to its resources.

- Emphasize proper training for new staff, so they may better help community members discover the breadth of Library services and resources available.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere for all citizens, including those from marginalized or underserved populations.
- Print appropriate materials in multiple languages as necessary.
- Make building and service modifications as able to break down physical, technological, language and other barriers preventing members of the community from accessing the Library's resources.
- Provide professional development for staff to increase their skills in adapting to needs of changing demographics of the community.

Goal: Communicate our Mission and Values

Dwight Foster Public Library will develop messages, so it is effectively sharing the essential value of the library. The Board and staff will seek opportunities to convey to the community-at-large the Library's resources, programs and amenities, and how those enhance individual lives.

- Develop and implement a strategic marketing plan that:
 - crafts messages appropriately to target audiences, including those who infrequently or never use the library.
 - disseminates these messages over a variety of channels such as social media, print, radio, local cable, and on our website.
 - Translates messages into languages beyond English as deemed appropriate.

- Promote a library brand phrase that captures the essence of the library.
 - *We Foster Growth*
- Assess marketing efforts and determine what to continue, change, or eliminate.
- Leverage marketing efforts with partners in the community.
- Provide professional development for staff, or acquire expertise as able to fulfill marketing goals.

Goal: Align Resources to Add Value

Library will continuously endeavor to strengthen its professional staff, diversify sources of revenue, evaluate its infrastructure use, and deepen community support to realize its mission and goals.

- Staff
 - Using workload and task analysis data, stakeholder/volunteer input, comparables from other libraries, and observation, determine optimal staff levels and strive to reach them.
 - Effectively communicate the value staffing changes will provide the community.
 - Foster continual professional development through education opportunities and networking.
- Funding
 - Strengthen strategic collaboration with Friends of Dwight Foster Library.
 - Actively seek out alternative sources of revenue:
 - Sponsorships
 - Naming rights
 - Bookplates
 - Wish lists
 - Grants and foundations
 - Promote opportunities for private giving such as planned giving.
 - In ways that do not negatively affect the provision of services or building maintenance, seek to lower operational costs.
- Space
 - Continuously assess space use, both indoors and outdoors.
 - Develop a plan for the use of the outdoor space that would combine an appreciation for nature and literature.

Plan Implementation, Assessment, and Communication

Implementation

The director and library staff, in concert with the library board, will annually prioritize goals and activities from the plan for the year's focus. Pressing concerns will be weighed against long-term needs and opportunities. Also factored in will be available resources and capacities.

The library will develop action plans for meeting the year's goals. Action plans may include staff responsibilities, timelines, needed resources, baseline and evaluation methodologies, and how and when progress will be communicated to stakeholders.

Assessment and Communication

The library director and board of trustees will establish dates for the annual plan review and the timing and manner of progress reports. These dates should take into account the timeline to develop the library budget and work around any conflicts this may cause.

Conclusion

The Dwight Foster Public Library is a valuable public asset, an investment in the future of Fort Atkinson and the health and well-being of its citizens. Grounded in the principles of equity, access, and opportunity, the library's role has never been more important. It is a spacious and gracious commons, providing a backdrop to explore great and small ideas, and share them with others. This plan seeks to direct the library's efforts strategically to achieve results that advance the mission of the library and move it toward the fulfillment of its vision.

Additional Notes

Valuable information from the community input surveys and conversations are captured here.

- A large majority of the survey respondents, 94%, use the library at least 1-2 times per month, with over half using it weekly.
- 85% of the survey respondents indicate they are from Fort Atkinson with the other 15% being from the surrounding area.
- In addition to the library being well used by children and families, as previously noted with programming attendance, older area residents make great use of the library, as indicated by over 53% percent of the respondents being 55 or older.
- Respondents stated a strong perception that the library is important to them by providing access to information they need to enhance their quality of life.
- One desire expressed for the building is to create an outdoor reading area.
- There is a high interest in the library offering programs to teach people, especially children and seniors, how to use digital tools such as computers, smartphones, and apps.

- Comparable to other libraries in the region the consultant has done planning for, survey respondents indicate much more interest in creating services and programs for immigrants and first-generation Americans.