

Antioch Public Library District

“Strengthening Our Foundations”

Strategic Plan for
2018, 2019 and 2020

Approved 10-24-2017



ANTIOCH PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

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Introduction

Strategic planning is the systematic process of envisioning a desired future for the library, translating that vision into broadly defined benefits for library patrons, and identifying library actions to enable the benefits to be offered.

The strategic plan is meant to be used as a roadmap for improvement and meaningful change. The ultimate goal of the plan is to help the library to be a modern, essential part of the Antioch community.

Background

We believe this is the first written plan the library has prepared in many years. It runs for three years – 2018, 2019 and 2020 – beginning on January 1 of each year. In 2021, funding may be provided that enables the library to expand or renovate the library building. None of the strategic initiatives identified in this plan is contingent on that funding.

To assist in planning, the library contracted with Donna E. Fletcher Consulting, Inc (DEFCI), a market research and strategic planning firm. Donna worked collaboratively on the Antioch project with Larry Hammond of Research in Marketing, Inc. (RIM Inc), a survey research and consulting firm. Together they have completed surveys - and in many cases, strategic plans - for 35 public libraries over a period of 13 years.

Approach to Planning

To ensure a thorough planning process, the library obtained input from the community, library staff and the library board, including:

- In-library survey with 478 patrons covering attractions to the library, overall satisfaction with the library, frequency of visiting the library building, specific ways the library is used, ratings of library services, and 21 new and enhanced space and service concepts
- In-library survey with 98 teens and preteens covering many of the same areas as the adult survey, plus their reactions to having a teen area in the library
- A survey outside the library with 169 residents to determine library usage and reasons for non-use and infrequent use, plus new services that might attract them to the library
- A group discussion with eight staff members about issues of importance for the library
- A group discussion with library board members about issues of importance for the library
- Several meetings with the library director and staff to discuss the strategic plan

Community Assessment of Library

Satisfaction with the Antioch Library among adult patrons is outstanding. Among 17 public Illinois libraries previously surveyed by DEFCI/RIM, Antioch ranks second in overall patron satisfaction.

Important components of the library's positive image are its staff and its identity as a good place to read, study or work.

While both men and women have high regard for the library, the library is especially well regarded by men, which is a gender difference never found before in a DEFCI/RIM survey.

Teens are even more satisfied with the library than adults are, and they show no indication of being unhappy about not having a space for themselves in the library. While the library remains interested in developing a teen area in the library, the decision on this probably won't be made until the funding decision for building expansion or renovation is made in 2021.

The Community Survey reveals that a surprisingly high number of area residents are users of the Antioch Library; 83% have visited the library at least once in the past year. The expectation was 50% to 60%, which is generally found for libraries in areas of mixed household incomes. This limits the upside of trying to attract nonusers to the Antioch Library, especially since many of the 17% probably will resist going to the library. However, 20% of residents are occasional users of the library – visit the building once or twice a year. Many of these people might be attracted to visit the building more often if the library made them aware of services that are new to them or new to everyone.

There is clear indication in the survey data that a coffee shop would attract occasional users – once or twice a year – as well as light users who visit the building up to 19 times a year. The coffee shop awaits possible funding in 2021.

The surveys and staff discussion identify the need for improvement in four areas:

- Publicity of services the library offers. This receives a relatively low rating among patrons. Antioch has no newspaper, and this makes publicity challenging.
- The digital collection, which includes Hoopla for eBooks, digital audiobooks, music, movies and television; Freegal for downloading music; Zinio for digital magazines; MyMediaMall for eBooks and eAudiobooks; and Tumblebooks for children.
- The library's website. Relatively low ratings are obtained for ease of use and usefulness. The library already is underway with plans for improvement.
- Bestsellers and newly published adult books. These receive relatively low ratings for timely availability, which tends to be a problem for libraries in general.

There also are needs related to the interior space of the library, but these cannot be addressed in a comprehensive way until funding for library expansion is obtained in 2021.

The Library's Mission Statement

The Antioch Public Library District is a gathering place for information, collaboration, creativity and entertainment, which strengthens the community by providing high demand materials in a variety of formats for all ages, and by stimulating young children's interests and appreciation for reading and learning.

The Planning Process: Strategic Initiatives, Community Benefits, Library Actions and Evaluation

This is the general process many libraries have adopted for planning. First, a broad area for change is identified - the initiative. Next, desired community benefits to be obtained from the initiative are identified - sometimes termed "goals." Then, library actions to attain the goals are spelled out. Finally, success in attaining the benefits or goals - an evaluation - is made.

Strategic initiatives require commitment of staff time and, in some cases, allocation of financial resources. It does not eliminate efforts in other areas, but it receives more focused attention than other areas. The four initiative areas in this plan are:

- Marketing and communications about library services
- Digital collection
- The library website
- Printed bestsellers and newly published books for adults

Not all four initiatives need to be pursued at one time. For example, two initiatives could be introduced in one year, and the two others the next year.

Community benefits or goals include the identity of recipients and specifically how they will benefit. In all four initiatives, recipients will be adult and teen patrons of the library, and children who visit the library with their caregivers.

Library actions to achieve the goals are identified before the process begins. These may change, however, as the process is followed, depending on what works and doesn't work, and as the library environment may change over the three-year period.

Evaluation of the success of the initiative will be obtained by means of a staff survey conducted late in the year in which the initiative begins, probably December. For example, the survey might be conducted in December, 2018, nearly 12 months after the initiative begins in January, 2018. The staff discussion demonstrated that staff members have a good understanding of what is happening in the library, and they should be good evaluators of the initiatives.

The survey will be completely anonymous. Respondents will rate the success of each initiative, and will be encouraged to explain their ratings in their own words. They will be allowed to type their explanations if they wish, so as not to reveal their identities through handwriting. Explanations may lead to improvements in library actions. The survey is simple and can be conducted by the library without the help of an outside consultant.

Strategic initiative A: Marketing and Communications about library services

Goals/benefits: residents and stakeholders in the community will become more aware of library services, and will learn more about what the services entail.

Library actions:

1. Revamp the newsletter to have it shorter or more focused on particular services and not just a program guide.
2. Provide staff training on word-of-mouth marketing of services.
3. Provide more information about services on the library website, Facebook and Twitter.
4. Provide more signage at the train station, chamber office, hotel and other gathering places.
5. Use signage or banners, including digital, on the library building and/or in the library entrance area.
6. Distribute flyers to patrons as they check out.
7. Distribute flyers at events around town.

Evaluation:

In January of this year, the library began publicity efforts to make residents and stakeholders in the community more aware of library services and more knowledgeable about what the services entail. **All things considered, how would you rate the library's success in achieving these goals?** Circle one number between 1 and 10, with "1" equal to little success and "10" equal to great success. If you don't know or have no opinion, check the box.

Little Success 1 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great Success [] Don't know / no opinion

If you gave a number rating, please explain in your own words why you gave that rating. If you wish to type your answer, please staple your typed sheet to this survey.

Strategic initiative B: Digital Collection

Goals/benefits: Improve patron acceptance of the digital collection in terms of patron awareness, ratings or appeal, and usage. The digital collection includes Hoopla for eBooks, digital audiobooks, music, movies and television; Freegal for downloading music; Zinio for digital magazines; MyMediaMall for eBooks and eAudiobooks; and Tumblebooks for children.

Library actions:

1. Inform patrons about the digital collection when they get a library card.
2. Train staff on how to use the digital collection and share their knowledge with patrons.
3. Run programs and instructional videos, both in-person and online, teaching patrons about the digital collection and how to use it.
4. From time to time, have staff in the foyer who stop people as they come in and ask them if they are aware of a particular type of material, if they know how to access it, and would they like to learn? Then, if they are interested, show them how.
5. Have signage to encourage patrons to see staff for help accessing the digital collection.
6. Have in-library displays highlighting digital collection availability.
7. Offer to check digital collection availability when the physical item isn't available.
8. Add more digital collection records to the catalog.

Evaluation:

In January of this year, the library began efforts to improve patron acceptance of the digital collection in terms of patron awareness, ratings or appeal, and usage. **All things considered, how would you rate the library's success in achieving these goals?** Circle one number between 1 and 10, with "1" equal to little success and "10" equal to great success. If you don't know or have no opinion, check the box.

Little Success 1 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great Success [] Don't know / no opinion

If you gave a number rating, please explain in your own words why you gave that rating. If you wish to type your answer, please staple your typed sheet to this survey.

Strategic initiative C: Library Website

Goals/benefits: make the website more useful for library patrons and make it easier to use.

Library actions:

1. Provide an opportunity for patron feedback on the website.
2. Do beta usability testing with patrons on a library computer to see where they are struggling, and modify the site to address their problems. Create a task sheet of six to eight website activities including search of PAC, library databases, department pages, board page, calendar, registration and other activities suggested by staff and patrons.
3. Create the same type of task sheet for beta testing on mobile devices provided by the library as well as patrons' own devices in the library and off-site.
4. On a regular basis throughout the year do the same task testing and analysis as new web pages are added or pages are updated.
5. Consider freshening website graphics, and evaluate patrons understanding of terms such as "events" and "virtual services." Use new terms as appropriate.

Evaluation:

In January of this year, the library began efforts to improve the library website by making it more useful for patrons and easier for them to use. **All things considered, how would you rate the library's success in achieving these goals?** Circle one number between 1 and 10, with "1" equal to little success and "10" equal to great success. If you don't know or have no opinion, check the box.

Little Success 1 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great Success [] Don't know / no opinion

If you gave a number rating, please explain in your own words why you gave that rating. If you wish to type your answer, please staple your typed sheet to this survey.

Strategic Initiative D: Printed bestsellers and newly published books for adults

Goals/benefits: improve the timely availability of bestsellers and newly published books for adults.

Library actions:

1. Order books more frequently.
2. Buy more copies of popular books, and sell them off later through Friends.
3. Catalog and process non-priority items only when priority shelves are empty.
4. Re-assign staff to expedite processing – for example, use AV repairs employee to process priority items on days processor employee isn't working.
5. Have a facing-out shelf of popular items with a revolving number of copies.
6. Offer "If you're waiting for that, perhaps you'd like this" options.

Evaluation:

In January of this year, the library began efforts to improve the timely availability of bestsellers and newly published books for adults. **All things considered, how would you rate the library's success in achieving this goal?** Circle one number between 1 and 10, with "1" equal to little success and "10" equal to great success. If you don't know or have no opinion, check the box.

Little Success 1 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great Success [] Don't know / no opinion

If you gave a number rating, please explain in your own words why you gave that rating. If you wish to type your answer, please staple your typed sheet to this survey.
