

IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

2016-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN



connect engage
enrich



Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Since our beginning in 1897, the Iowa City Public Library has striven to meet the needs and desires of our community. As times have changed, so have the priorities of our patrons. We are proud to serve as the heart of our community offering a vast array of reading and listening materials; services to meet diverse needs from early literacy programs for children to classes addressing technology needs for our seniors; computer and internet access for teens doing homework as well as job seekers needing connectivity to apply for their next position; and much used public meeting space for the growing number of groups hosting meetings and events to connect, engage, and enrich our community. The Iowa City Public Library is a dynamic and energetic place to visit—never boring, never stagnant, and never empty!

With this in mind, we are proud to share with you our Strategic Plan for the Iowa City Public Library for FY2016-2021. This map for our future demonstrates our ongoing commitment to honing our services to best meet current needs as well as anticipate future demands. We have gathered input from a wide range of community members and have taken into consideration some of the challenges in optimizing use of our library, including the changing need for outreach and electronic access. We look forward to strengthening our services with this innovative plan!

Look through the plan and you will soon appreciate how we will continue to serve as our community's home for reading material, a place for people to meet and explore new ideas, and as a site for free access to information so that all members can become fully engaged in our community.

Join us in strengthening our services over these next five years as we strive to Connect, Engage, and Enrich!

Robin Paetzold, President Board of Trustees



Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

It's the 21st century and the world is changing, so libraries are changing too. I have been fortunate to have served as the director at the Iowa City Public Library for 20 years (on the staff for almost another 20) and the changes that public libraries have undergone during that time have been incredible. About every five years we take time to pause and consider where we've been, what our community looks like now, and where we need to be in the future. That process is called strategic planning.

The process is revealing, humbling and energizing. If you ask Iowa Citizens for their opinion, they will share. When you compare yourself to the best in the country and see where you fall short, it is humbling. Still, the energy that comes from searching for solutions, whether to old or new problems and circumstances, brings optimism and focus to turning something great into spectacular.

I believe the saying, "If you don't know where you're going, any path will take

you there." A planning process creates a road map to greater success. For the next few years the Iowa City Public Library will focus on ways to:

- **connect** people with information and offer opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth;
- **engage** people in discovery, learning and the community;
- **enrich** the quality of life in Iowa City through diversity, imagination and creativity.

I look forward to making the journey with you.

Many thanks to the thousands of people who responded to our community surveys and participated in focus groups and interviews. Special thanks to the dedicated planning committee and Library Board of Trustees, and our consultants, Ethel Himmel and Bill Wilson.

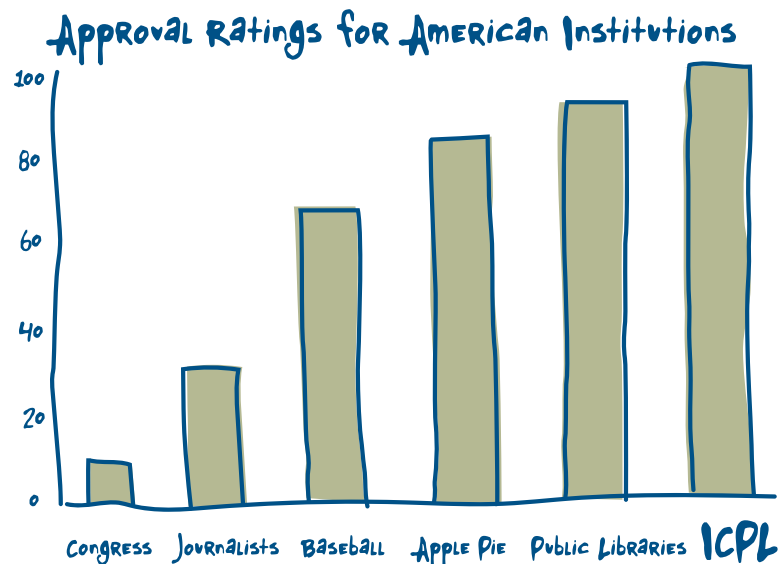
Susan Craig, Library Director

Who We Asked

Multiple surveys were conducted as part of the strategic planning process. A mail questionnaire was distributed to 2,000 randomly selected households in the Library's service area: Iowa City, rural Johnson County, Hills, University Heights, and Lone Tree. The return rate of 434 represented a 23.6% response rate, considered excellent for an unsolicited mail survey. This resulted in a confidence rate of 95% and a margin of error of plus or minus 4.7%. An online survey brought responses from 2,245 individuals and while it was not scientifically valid, hundreds of area residents offered extensive responses to open-ended questions.

In addition, planning consultants led 10 focus groups with 61 participants. Two public sessions were "general" and others were organized around groups of people such as teens, parents of young children, and current and past City Council members. Focus groups were also held for Library staff members. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and the Mayor.

An observation study was conducted in the Library. During this study, people in the building were observed at various times and what they were doing was noted – at a program, sitting at a table, browsing the collection, or using a computer.



What They Said

Survey results show that the Iowa City Public Library is a well-used and well-respected community resource. The consultants always include the following statement on community surveys, asking people to complete this sentence, "The Iowa City Public Library is: (chose one of the following options)

- Essential to the quality of life in our community
- Very important to the quality of life in our community
- Somewhat important to the quality of life in our community
- Not very important to the quality of life in our community
- Not at all important to the quality of life in our community

More than 90 percent of the mail survey respondents (94.3%) said that the Library was either essential or very important to the quality of life in the community. The consultants commented only three other libraries surveyed nationwide resulted in positive responses over 90% and Iowa City Public Library's rating was the highest they had ever experienced. The surveys also demonstrate that Iowa City truly is a City of Literature. Respondents to the mail survey reported reading an average of 24.85 books per year, more than double the national average.

The focus groups revealed some common themes. Participants noted the downtown location was both

a strength ("Library is the biggest draw downtown... bigger than all the festivals together") and a concern ("Getting downtown isn't easy for everyone"). The Library was noted for its excellent programming, extensive collections, community service orientation, online resources, and use of technology, as well as helpful, knowledgeable staff, and comfortable environment. Participants sought improvements in parking, materials drop off, communication about the many resources, technology that only works sporadically, and the website.

The observation study revealed some interesting things about how people use the Library. For instance, of those observed asking for assistance at a service desk, 52% were at the Help Desk on the first floor, 18% at the Information Desk on the second floor, 18% at the second floor Floor Page Station and 12% at the Children's Desk. Of the visitors observed browsing, reading or sitting, most were sitting (53%), while 29% were browsing the collection, and 18% were reading. Of the 29% looking at the collection, most people were observed in the print collections. Complete results of the surveys are available on the Library website: icpl.org/strategic_plan

Iowa City Public Library 
BETTER than APPLE PIE



Mission

The Iowa City Public Library is a center of community life that *connects* people of all ages with information,

engages

them with the world of ideas and with each other, and

enriches

the community by supporting learning, promoting literacy, and encouraging creativity.



Values

Access The Library believes quality library and information resources should be readily available and equally accessible to all.

Collaboration The Library strives to extend its effectiveness through strategic partnerships.

Community The Library responds to community needs and understands the free exchange of diverse ideas invigorates the community, stimulates personal growth, and fuels the economy.

Enjoyment The Library celebrates creativity and the joy of reading.

Intellectual Freedom The Library respects the right to privacy and encourages people to freely access and explore ideas.

Literacy The Library believes reading is the gateway to knowledge.





Goals

connect

The Iowa City Public Library connects people to information essential for daily living and offers them opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth.

engage

The Iowa City Public Library actively encourages discovery, learning, and greater participation in community life.

enrich

The Iowa City Public Library contributes to the quality of life in Iowa City by offering opportunities to explore diverse ideas, to exercise imagination, and to express creativity.

FY 2016 Objectives

connect

The Iowa City Public Library connects people to information essential for daily living and offers them opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Public Awareness | Create "my library" campaign
Raise awareness of outreach efforts that are not widely visible (including At Home)
Offer an electronic newsletter |
| Collaboration | Strengthen relationship with schools
Continue to grow SRP partnership with United Way, ICCSD, Coralville Public Library and North Liberty Community Library
Explore possibilities to expand electronic collections partnerships and to provide a joint automated system with area libraries
Become more involved with the Iowa City Book Festival |
| Program | Grow programming for teens
Expand BYOB (Books in Bars Book Club) to Coralville and North Liberty |
| Content | Add video streaming with commercial content
Offer streaming music beyond local music
Consider adding circulating laptops
Continue local history programming such as Tell Me Your Story |
| Technology | Use custom programming to add options for the interactive table
Provide dedicated computers with specific productivity and creative software, such as Adobe Photoshop |
| Space/Facilities | Plan for bookmobile service
Re-examine outreach efforts - focus on those most needed/used, drop others |
| Staffing | Conduct a job study (look at job descriptions/duties) and staffing levels |
| Funding | Demonstrate the value of the Library |

FY 2016 Objectives

engage

The Iowa City Public Library actively encourages discovery, learning, and greater participation in community life.

- Public Awareness** Create and maintain a robust, personalized reader's advisory page
Promote content of the Digital History Project
- Collaboration** Partner to present programs outside the building (food/nutrition at a place with a kitchen, STEAM lab, crafting)
- Program** Lead community-wide music themed series beginning in 2015
Utilize Englert Theatre for family programming
- Content** Stream local programming from the website
- Technology** Develop an ICPL app
- Space/Facilities** Introduce the website as a virtual branch library
- Staffing** Encourage all staff to learn about the work of other departments
- Funding** Make sure donors know what their support makes possible
Explore opportunities to fund additional staff for the Ellen Buchanan Children's Room

enrich

The Iowa City Public Library contributes to the quality of life in Iowa City by offering opportunities to explore diverse ideas, to exercise imagination, and to express creativity.

- Public Awareness** Invite patrons to tell their library story
- Collaboration** Consider partnerships to support local authors
- Program** Offer creative workshops for adults focused on specific topics
- Content** Redo the Local Music Project website
- Technology** Improve ICPL Event calendar as part of virtual branch (more graphically attractive, easier to read, click to add to Google calendar)
Improve the ability to browse photographic content on the Digital History Project site
- Space/Facilities** Offer more options for shared working spaces (for instance, a community table)
- Staffing** Focus staff learning on how to articulate/share the value of the library
- Funding** Develop fundraising plan to sustain adult programs



"I believe libraries are an essential central city service...Library is the biggest draw downtown...bigger than all the festivals together. This is an anchor facility that keeps downtown healthy."

"The community space in the library is exceptional and is used a lot."

"Strong community partner"

"Partnerships...great outreach program..."

"Excellent programming and great hub for community groups"

"They serve the whole community...all ages, in different ways, reading, programs, study group rooms, teen sections, community events."

"Very community service oriented...lots of it need based."

"Breadth of service; access to technology; always changing, keeping up; staff is awesome. Not afraid of change."

"Visionary; cutting edge; responsive; staff is very caring."

"Extensive collection. The variety of materials is amazing."

"...access for community to online resources. They've kept up over the years as technology has changed. Online presence of library is extremely strong."

"I enjoy the technology they have in children's room"

"Children's programming is on target to what kids are interested in. Staff is very responsive to what kids like."

"Daughter (eight years old) feels she owns the library; recharges her batteries here; feels safe, knows the librarians by name."

"Really good staff; Very knowledgeable, helpful staff"

"Attractive and inviting building, inviting place to come"

**"Whenever we have guests,
we show them the library!"**

IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY 2014 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE:

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