Strategic Plan

2015

Table of Contents

Deep Historical Roots

The Columbus community formed a library association on January 20, 1877, with the donation of 54 books from former Governor and Columbus City resident James Lewis. It was located in two rooms located over a store 1 block down at 100 S. Ludington Street the former Griswold building and current Sharrow Drug Store.

The library moved to the front two corner rooms of City Hall in 1867, at which time the library was a subscription library.

Columbus Library Association was formed in 1910.

The Columbus Women's Civic Club solicited the Carnegie Foundation for a $10,000 grant for a library. So they could get the deed to the two lots the club loaned the city $3. On October 14, 1910 the city purchased them from Mrs. Mary Griswold. It was a beautiful lot with oak trees.

The Women's Club raised additional money to furnish the library.

In November 1912, the beautiful Prairie Design Claude and Stark building at the corner of West James Street and Dickason Boulevard was erected to be Columbus' brand new Public Library. It was a gem then, as it is now, more than 100 years later.

The library was renovated in 1990 to include a new children's area, improved lighting, the circulation desk was relocated, meeting room with kitchen was added along with a handicapped accessible entrance, and elevator. The Women's Club furnished the basement to use as a dining room and kitchen. They continued to hold their meetings at the library until they disbanded in September 2002.

The library board purchased the Swarthout property, 239 W. James Street, in 1999 for future expansion. The house on the property was sold and moved February 2002 to a new location on Hwy. 16. The lot was made into a parking lot in 2014 with a personal donation from Lorna and Jim Will.

To commemorate the Centennial of the building, we have added a Columbus Local History Collection to the library's holdings in 2012. This historical collection is a permanent collection that will be available for generations to come, with materials dating from the Civil War to current time. It is easy to access and showcases unique items of interest. Stop by and take a look at our history.

In May 2013 library was renovated with new carpet and paint throughout, some new mechanicals and a new design for the Children's Library. The Wi-fi Garden was added in 2014-15.

Columbus Public Library Planning Results

<u>MISSION STATEMENT</u>

The Columbus Public Library promotes a vibrant and welcoming community by connecting people, information and ideas to enhance the regional quality of life.

We accomplish our mission by holding onto these values:

Library Values

1.	We strive to be a civic and cultural center at the heart of our community, responsive to ongoing and immediate needs. We are a safe, non-judgmental, friendly destination for individual pursuits and an active gathering place for all.

2.	We support traditional readers and information-seekers of all kinds. We are the go-to place for free access to resources that support collaboration, knowledge, exploration, and fun.

<u>GOALS</u>

Communication - Develop Marketing Strategy

1. What to market
   a. Programs
   b. Social service offerings
   c. Homebound services
   d. Nursing home collections
   e. databases
2. How to market it
   a. Non-internet
      i. Radio
      ii. Local paper
   b. Internet
      i. Web
      ii. Social media
      iii. Community calendar
3. To whom do we market
   a. Existing patrons
   b. non-users
   c. Elected officials
   d. Lower socio-economic levels
4. When appropriate, hire a Marketing Library Assistant

Programming - AKA Engagement, civic participation, stuff to do, community collaboration

1. Create "Root for Columbus Idea"
2. Collaborate on programming
   a. Attract experts to put on programs

b. Continue working with schools, parents, social service agencies
    c. Expert staff provide tech help with
        i.   School devices
        ii. Wireless printing
        iii. PC and software help, including databases, employment and lifelong learning
    d. Ask patrons what they want to do
        i.   Survey
        ii. Suggestion box
3. When appropriate, hire an Adult Services Library Assistant

Welcoming environment (staff and physical space)
1. Staff trainings/refreshers/cross-training
    a. Readers advisory
    b. Tech devices
    c. Customer service (greeting people)
    d. Privacy & intellectual freedom
2. Explore revising our hours
3. Varied seating: hard, soft, welcoming
4. Handicapped accessible seats, aisles and entries

Physical space
1. More space for us
    a. How would we use more space if we get it? Dedicated space for social services, Friends book sale, staff work space, local history, genealogy, individual/small study spaces, designated quiet space, additional meeting/program rooms, teen area, computer lab?, collections, crafts/maker space, socializing, Literacy Council
    b. Note how library use has changed/is changing over the years
    c. If we don't strive for more space, how do we prioritize what we have?
    d. Get creative
        i.   Annex
        ii. Unused store front
2. Multi-use space—this is the option for more space that is most favored by the Library Board and will be explored in greatest depth
    a. Partner with local agencies:
        i.   Senior center, sports/recreation, meal site, commercial kitchen, green space
    b. Must be architecturally appropriate for all
3. Keep James Street construction in mind
4. Create timeline to referendum if necessary

Columbus Public Library Planning Data and Information

Information and Data Gathering

Various information and data was gathered from December 2014 through March 2015 to develop a strategic plan for the Columbus Public Library. A number of tools and methods were employed to gather this information and data. The following are summaries of the tools used and significant findings.

Community Perspectives

In order to gather information directly from library patrons and non-library users throughout the Columbus Public Library service area, a number of community conversations were held with different groups of community members and two surveys were administered to gather both general perceptions of the library and detailed input and feedback about services, programs and resources offered by the library.

<u>Community Survey – Survey of Library Perceptions (Columbus Water and Light Mailer)</u>
A two-page survey was sent to area residents with the Columbus Water and Light utility bill on January 30, 2015. During the month of February 194 surveys were submitted either via paper version sent with the utility bill or an online version of the survey. The survey asked respondents about their awareness of library offerings, what aspects of the library influences their use of the library and their overall perception of the library. The importance of the library to the community proves to be very high among respondents with all the questions regarding perception of the library being more than 80% favorable (strongly agree plus somewhat agree), including 81.3% strongly or somewhat agreeing they support increasing library funding. Of those that responded to the question about supporting increased library funding, forty-two of the respondents do not have a library card. Twenty-six of these respondents (62%) indicate they strongly agree or somewhat agree to increasing funding for the library.

Overall perception of Columbus P.L.
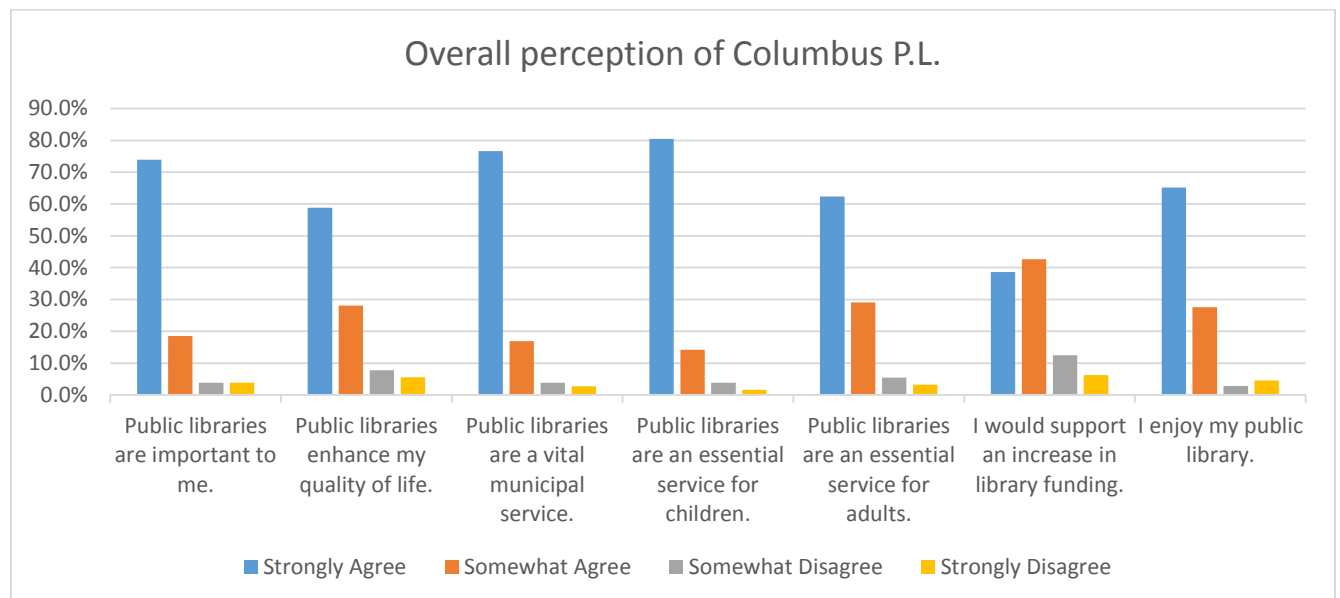
<u>Community Survey – Detailed Survey of Resources and Programs</u>
Also, during the month of February 2015, 123 people responded to a twenty-five question survey that asked for input regarding specific resources, programs and services offered by the library. In addition, the survey asked information about staff service, facilities and space, frequency of use, and library hours. The results indicate the respondents generally, to varying degrees, make use of all the resources and programming offered by the library. This is especially true for physical resources such as books and DVDs. However, a significant percentage of respondents indicated they are not aware of the different electronic resources (eBooks, etc.) and programs offered by the library, though the majority of respondents indicate these are important to them.

The survey also asked and open-ended question about how the Columbus Public library could be of a greater benefit to patrons and the community. Fifty-one of the survey respondents replied to this question. Almost all of the respondents expressed great appreciation for the library. The three most common responses, each mentioned by ten respondents, were 1) increase library space, 2) provide more programming, with opportunities for teens and technology programming being mentioned most, and 3) increase the amount of materials available at the library.

<u>Community Conversations</u>
As part of the Columbus P.L. being awarded the American Library Association Libraries Transforming Communities grant, there were a series of community conversations held throughout Columbus from July 2014 through December 2014. The intent of these conversations was to find out the aspirations and concerns area residents have for the community. In the course of the conversations similar themes arose. The main theme is the attendees believe people want to work together to build a stronger Columbus. With identifying this theme, it became apparent that the library could assist making this aspiration become a reality by doing three things. The first is connect people with others interested in working on something to better their community. The second is to be a place where community groups can convene. Lastly, the library can play a central role in communicating opportunities for residents to volunteer on civic projects and celebrating the success of those projects.

Library Services and Resources – Usage and Assessment
There a number of ways to measure the use of a library and its offerings. Some of these measurements just impact can be measured with some data which can be done by analyzing usage and blending with other data sources, such as census, etc. In addition, there is comparable information and library standards set by DPI that can inform a library how it compares to libraries of similar size and operating expenses and how it rates versus the various standards set by the state.

<u>Inventory of Library Assets and Capacities</u>
Twelve respondents from the Columbus Public Library staff and board filled out a library inventory survey. The staff and board rated the assets and capacities of the library in the following areas: staff; budget and finances; collection; facility; technology; board, friends and volunteers; community partnerships; and marketing, advocacy and communications. The rating scale included the options of excellent, good, fair, poor, and don't know/not applicable. Those

responding also had space to include additional information and comments about a particular item.

Three main assessments stood out from the responses.

The limited number of staff impacts their ability to do more professional development, cross train or have enough staff during busy times.

Regarding technology, as more patrons bring in their own devices, there is a need for more locations for people to be able to work and plug in their devices. Also, due to space constraints, there is limited number of computer work stations for the staff. This can impact the staff's efficiency and limit the potential for staff to become more familiar with the technology that patrons need help using.

While the parking and access to the library, due to the new parking lot, is considered good to excellent, the library building itself, in regards to the amount of space for library needs and use, was assessed as fair to poor. Notably, respondents shared that:

The collection size is constrained by lack of space, thus requiring more materials on loan from other libraries to fill patron requests.

The current programming/meeting room isn't large enough for current attendance of some programs, especially the summer reading programs, which often need to find off site locations to handle attendance levels.

There is no adequate quiet/private study space for patrons, whether for students working together after school, tutoring sessions or proctored tests.

Comparison of Columbus P.L. to Other Libraries and WI Library Standards

The Division for Libraries and Technology collects annual report information from public libraries each year. This information can be used by libraries to compare various factors of service and funding with other libraries of a similar size. The following table of 2013 data shows how Columbus ranks in comparison to 16 other libraries that are funded within 10% of the municipal budget allocation for Columbus Public Library.

16 Library Comparison Based Upon Library Revenue					
	Columbus Ranking	Columbus Total	Average	Highest	Lowest
Service Area Population	9	9,176	10,020	18,032	4,102
Public Service hours	6	3,608	2,960	4,368	2,440
Facility Square Footage	14	6,200	11,034	18,032	4,102
Total Collection	16	32,296	47,152	72,099	24,910
Annual Circulation	8	113,986	111,056	164,639	16,538
Total Loaned and Borrowed	4	77,439	51,014	107,032	16,586
Collection Expenditure	2	$57,362	$43,581	$68,101	$12,723
Staff Salaries & Wages	9	$176,091	$173,826	$203,013	$126,451
Employee Benefits	16	$27,914	$64,546	$110,704	$24,322

Total Staff Expenditure	15	$204,005	$238,371	$293,175	$192,814
Total Operating Expenditure	8	$357,787	$353,508	$407,868	$291,970
Total Revenue	10	$359,559	$364,315	$393,712	$328,925

The Division for Libraries and Technology also calculates a quantitative standard for library service targets as part of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards. The above table aligns with how Columbus measures up against the standards. Generally, Columbus meets at least the moderate level of the standards. However its size of collection does not meet basic standards to serve a population of the size of Columbus. It stands to reason that with a smaller facility, almost half the size of the average of the comparable libraries, that Columbus would have a collection size that doesn't meet library standards in Wisconsin.

Gale Analytics on Demand

As part of a pilot offered through the strategic planning consultant, WiLS, Columbus library usage data was analyzed at no cost using Gale's new Analytics on Demand software. While the planning committee found some of the analysis beyond what was needed for this process, it did provide the following map which displays, as blue dots, residences in Columbia, Dane and Dodge counties where patrons have checked out at least one item from the library in 2014.
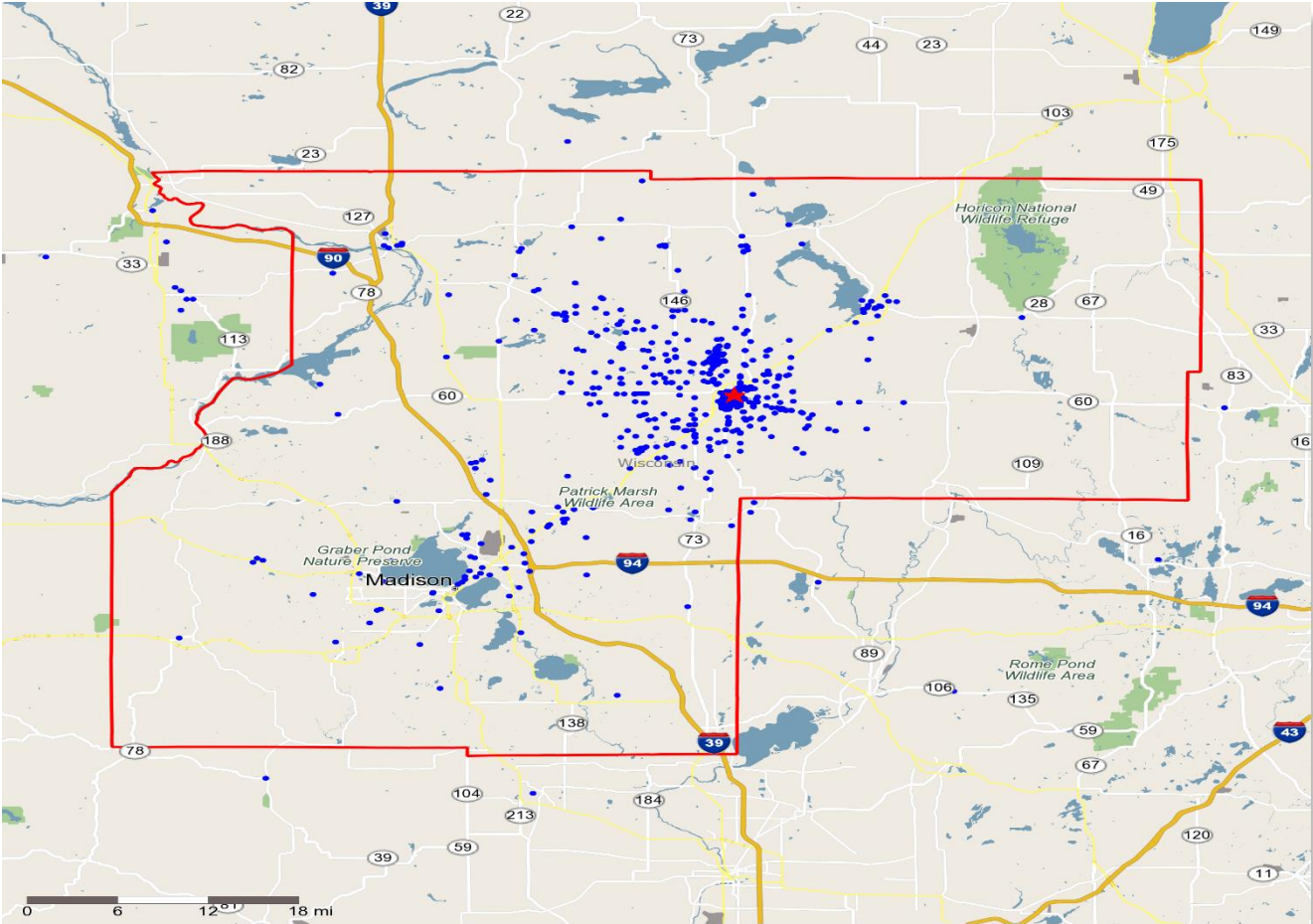
<u>Library Space Planning</u>
Another tool the Division for Libraries and Technology has available for libraries is a library space planning calculator. Libraries use this to determine how much square footage is needed to provide updated library services to meet patron needs. Using mostly conservative estimates, including maintaining a collection well below the average of comparable libraries, though increasing meeting and study room space to meet current demand and increasing computer work stations for staff, the space planning calculator indicates that more than 14,000 square feet is needed to adequately deliver services that meet patron demand and library standards.

Library Technology
A large number of library users rely on the library to access the internet and print and use various technology tools for education, employment, community engagement and social reasons. The following tools were administered to determine how the library' technology compares with industry standards and best practices.

<u>Edge Assessment</u>
Edge is a technology management and leadership tool, helping libraries create a path for the continuous growth and development of their public technology services. Through an easy-to-use suite of tools, Edge supports libraries in making strategic decisions and identifying areas for improvement. The Edge Toolkit provides libraries an overview of current public services and community engagement. From operations to partnerships and programming, the toolkit generates recommendations for implementing best practices to align with future growth and community priorities.

There are two main action items from this assessment. The first are a series of recommendations for the library to regularly engage patrons through surveys and other methods to determine whether current technology is meeting their needs and what new technology and training through the library would be helpful to them. The second area for action is to invest in training staff to meet technology competency levels and beyond to be able to help patrons with the technology assistance they require and need.

<u>Impact Survey</u>
The Impact Survey allows a library to directly ask their patrons about the technology services they use and need. Specifically, the Impact Survey asks patrons about how they use library technology services like public computers, wireless networks, online resources, and digital literacy training, and helps gather information about how to improve those services to enable better patron outcomes.

The survey was administered from November 17, 2014 to December 14, 2014. Thirty-three people completed the survey. Almost all respondents indicate they access library resources and technology through the library website from outside the library and also use computers in the library.   69% of public access technology users reported having received one-on-one technology help from library staff or volunteers in the past 12 months.   Here are results of why respondents said they used library computers.