Strategic Direction Setting

Gail Borden Public Library District
Elgin, Illinois
August 2009

Gail Borden Public Library…*where imagination & transformation flourish, fueled by the power of community*

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Gail Borden Public Library District

Mission

We work together to ensure all district residents are proud members of the Gail Borden Public Library.

The Library strives to be…
- Relevant, responsive and highly visible to our community.
- A great equalizer transforming the lives of people in our diverse community by creating opportunity and hope.
- A creative yet pragmatic innovator as it enhances services to our community.
- A highly desirable and effective partner that joins with other organizations to enrich the lives of the people in our community.
- An exemplary library to watch in the national arena, drawing attention to our community and our profession.
- A supportive work environment where innovative, progressive ideas and talents are encouraged to better serve our community.

Vision

The library where imagination & transformation flourish, fueled by the power of community

Values

The Gail Borden Public Library strives to deliver extraordinary service with a friendly, dedicated, innovative and professional staff in a welcoming environment that celebrates our public spaces as well as our engagement with the community.

- All library staff members are expected to treat all people with courtesy, patience, kindness and fairness. The delivery of services, both internally and externally, are to be handled in a respectful, effective, expedient manner.

- Through collaborative, creative and proactive team efforts, the library staff serves community needs and interests by being approachable and visible while actively listening to new ideas.

- The library places a high priority on maintaining clean, safe and secure facilities where people can enjoy the library's many services.

Key Priorities

- **Responsiveness & Relevance to the Community**
  Library staff will be alert to current community needs and will determine effective, responses based on our mission and values. By creating a positive working relationship with its constituents, the library will be woven into the fabric of the community.

- **Visionary Leadership & Management with Creative, Knowledgeable Staff**
  The library strives to be a leader in the library field and an "Employer of Choice", aiming to hire the best individuals and to retain them. The library works to maintain a creative and stimulating environment in which teamwork and productivity are high.

- **Partnerships That Build Community**
  Library staff members will strengthen and energize our diverse community by working creatively and cooperatively with community partnerships, sponsorships and outreach activities.

- **Smart Use of Technology**
  Technology, an integral part of library services, will be used to its best effect. Gail Borden Library will continue to invest in and anticipate advancements in technology to meet the needs of the community and staff.

- **Library as Destination**
  Library facilities and their maintenance are key to the public's positive perception of the library. The library has become a "destination" for customers, their families and friends. With special events, educational exhibits, films, concerts, and a café, the library can be considered the "Center of the Community."

Initial Projects:

1. Create Teen Center Vision
2. Enhance Greeting Process
3. Build Awareness and increase usage of library technology.
4. Explore Staffing Needs
5. Improve Internal Communication

Strategic Direction Setting Process

The Leadership of the Gail Borden Public Library decided 2008/2009 was the time to work on a strategic direction setting process that would allow the library to chart a course for the future. Focus groups were conducted with staff members, the library board and residents. The library's department directors and assistant directors have been heavily involved in the entire process including revising vision, mission and values statements. The ongoing work will include creating and setting more detailed goals and objectives. This document gives the overall strategic pathway for the next 3-5 years.

Strategic Direction Setting
Internal and External Data Gathering

The process began with 13 employee focus groups (101 employees) conducted during the months of August and September, 2008. Individual interviews were conducted with the Presidents of Elgin Community College and Judson University. Two Town Hall Meetings were held in October attended by 30 people. Focus Groups were also conducted with Enhancing Elgin a subcommittee of the Chamber of Commerce (18 people); U-46 School District (5 people); and South Elgin City Government (3 people). We have sought ideas and perspectives from approximately 150 people, in total a sample that contained both random and targeted elements.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you goes to the board, staff and community for their assistance in creating this strategic pathway. And a special thank you goes to Dan Wiseman of Wiseman Consulting & Training for volunteering his time and energy to assist the Gail Borden Public Library District in its development of the strategic direction-setting process for the future.

Key Priorities- Detailed

Responsiveness & Relevance to the Community

Benefits
- Creates a positive working relationship between the library and the community
- Raises awareness of library's value to the community
- Library acts as agent of positive change, a leader or key influencer among other organizations
- Library's priorities align with community's desire, such as providing a safe and clean environment.
- Outreach provides services to populations who would not otherwise utilize library services (*e.g.* reading at low-income housing and nursing homes, book talks at middle & high schools)
- Library is woven into the fabric of the community.

Strategies
1. Identify target markets that define the community (*e.g.* teachers, parents, teens, children, adults, seniors, Hispanics, etc.).
2. Examine and select for effective communications' strategies to specific markets (*e.g.* annual rotation of school visits, e-blasts to principals and teachers, etc.).
3. Consider options for members of the public to meet with staff, library administrators and/or Board members face-to-face, in writing and virtually, (such as town hall meetings, focus groups, surveys, online chats, community advisory groups) to provide input and express opinions.
4. Examine policies and procedures for user-friendliness to library customers by gathering user input.
5. Actively pursue community partnerships as appropriate, such as for exhibits and special events.
6. Gather statistical information on usage of physical and virtual materials, services and programs for analysis of patterns and trends.
7. Determine outreach opportunities.
8. Provide outreach services, including those that complement other organizations' endeavors by providing an outreach presence (*e.g.* staffed table at U-46 new teachers' orientation).
9. Match or hire staff for the most positive impact and library representation by analyzing staff strengths and aptitudes for outreach and other interactive special projects.
10. Fully utilize community members by involving them in a wide-range of volunteer activities and when needed use their expertise on advisory committees.
11. Listening and being aware of current community needs and determine appropriate library response.

Visionary Leadership and Management with Creative, Knowledgeable Staff

Benefits:
In order to be successful in the next 3-5 years the library will need our leaders and managers to come together and move forward on a vision. And we will need to employ staff members who are creative, knowledgeable, hardworking, efficient and friendly.

The Library strives not only to be a leader in the library field, but also to be an "Employer of Choice" for the Elgin area. The Library works toward a creative environment in which morale and productivity are high. Library leaders are happy to be here and they model positive energy.

Strategies
1. **Continuing education:**
- Create a robust curriculum of on-the-job, online, class room, self study and targeted (outside the library) opportunities that supports the staff at all levels, to be of optimal service to the library, and to be engaged in meaningful careers that fully utilize their skills.
- Work with staff at all levels to create ongoing professional development plans that align with the library's strategic direction and mission
- Create an internal advisory body (reporting to the Director of Staff Development & Training) to provide collaborative solutions to the library's professional development needs.
- Create a professional development collection to support the training and development of staff.
- Identify staff with subject matter expertise and provide support to them as they share this expertise with others.
- Improve the coaching, mentoring and training skills of leaders and individual contributors.

2. **Benefits**
   - Offer competitive salaries for all grade levels
   - Provide quality benefits (i.e., health, dental, vision, retirement, life insurance)
   - Be open to an ongoing consideration of other benefits (i.e., health club membership, flextime, compressed work week)
3. **Environment**
   - Provide ergonomic work stations
   - Maintain equipment necessary for job functions
   - Redeploy staff as needed during cyclical waves

4. **Leadership**
   - Create a leadership development curriculum that provides targeted opportunities for skill enhancement based on the professional development goals of the participants and the library's strategic direction.
   - Define the GBLD leadership expectations and roles especially for senior staff levels (asst. department leaders and above)
   - Create opportunities to develop new and emerging leaders with both formal training and informal coaching/mentoring programs

   - Create a culture of empowerment, service, involvement, and fairness modeled by the leaders at all levels.

- Continually review opportunities to provide rewards and recognition for employees.
- Create a performance and career development process that align with the long term interests of the staff and the library.
- Create/encourage Supervisor and Management Training & Development.

5. **Staffing and Organization Design**
   - Review current model and design of organization reporting relationships, functions, roles, etc.
   - Determine staffing needs of functional groups/departments
   - Create flex team-cross training opportunities to meet the needs of the organization.
   - Review staffing and competency models to ensure that customer needs are met. Hire people who are positive, flexible and good team players.
   - Determine appropriate staffing models to support our goals.

Relevant Partnerships Build Community

Partnerships present tremendous positives for the library.

Key benefits:
- Potential funding source
- Creation of new or expanded program opportunities
- Enhanced credibility opportunities
- Reaches new users
- Targets new markets
- Creates opportunities to broaden staff skill sets and competencies
- Successful partnerships can attract other partners
- Key partners can advance strategic goals
- Creates opportunities to gain support for the library
- Creates new feedback channels
- Increases communication channels
- Increases publicity opportunities
- Creates a partner-rich environment which allows the library to be more closely knitted into the fabric of the community
- Maximizes use of library resources
- Attracts new volunteers

Strategies we may implement to grow partnerships:

- Inventory existing partnerships
- Determine whether there are partners or target groups that would provide worthwhile partnership potential
- Continue creating exhibits as they strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones
- Creating an atmosphere where staff can think of beneficial partnerships
- Create periodic reviews of partnerships
- Market partnership programs, publicize and recognize
- Create partnership recognition opportunities, perhaps recognize individual partnerships in different categories
- Evaluate impact of partnerships and keep data regarding impact
- Successful partnerships breed other partnerships - if we continually let people know that we are a great organization to partner with and that we are willing to listen to new ideas, we can keep the momentum building.
- Build contacts with other community groups and generate cooperative program ideas and execute the plan using assets of both organizations
- Improve connections with the South Elgin community

We can achieve many positives for the library and community through partnerships, sponsorships and outreach (we believe there is a lot of overlap in these areas). The following was developed from the workings of the outreach subcommittee, but we think it is applicable for all of these connection building efforts-

Gail Borden Library's partnership and outreach goals are to strengthen and enhance the library's connection to the community. This will be achieved by:

- Building awareness of the library throughout the community
- Creating and maintaining strong partnerships with businesses and organizations in the community
- Maximizing the library's resources to the community
- Being an active participant in guiding the community's future
- Adapting to changing needs and desires within the community (evaluate after listening before adopting)
- Listening to the community for changing needs and desires

Smart Use of Technology

Technology has become an integral part of library services and library work. It should be used to its best effect to justify the funds expended. Gail Borden Public Library must continue to invest in and anticipate advancement in technology to meet the needs of the community and of staff.

Benefits for customers
- Self-reliance afforded by self-service options
- Enhanced customer experience
- Cost effective use of tax dollars

Benefits for staff
- Efficient workflows
- Self-reliance afforded by self-service options
- New capabilities and skills
- Exposure to new technologies
- Reduced likelihood of injury from repetitive motions
- Opportunity to focus on what people do best: outreach, planning, programming, interpersonal interaction, the human element
- Experience in an organization that serves as a model for other libraries/ organizations

Strategies
- Identify and pursue self-service options for customers and staff
- Increase Internet bandwidth as needed
- Manage/shape Internet bandwidth usage, e.g. prioritizing certain services
- Provide up-to-date software, computers and peripherals for customer and staff use
- Provide state-of-the-art telecommunications technology for staff use
- Be alert to and pursue new technologies that are potentially relevant to the community and/or the library
- Vet new technology before purchase and implementation: check references, visit installations, review demos, etc.
- Implement selected new technologies in a timely manner: e.g. RFID, sorters, DVD dispenser, etc.
- Implement relevant new features and enhancements to existing software as part of the upgrade process
- Identify and discontinue technology that isn't working well
- Provide a variety of training opportunities for customers and staff: classes, tutoring, online tutorials, just-in-time assistance, etc.
- Identify incentives/motivations that lead customers and staff to adopt smart use of technology
- Establish core staff competencies
- Provide feedback mechanisms for customers and staff
- Hire staff with computer skills and the ability/interest to learn additional skills
- Publicize existing and forthcoming technological materials and services
- Assess level of staff who provide technology training
- Revisit staff structure to assess how staff assistance to patrons can be more efficient
- Weigh print vs. online versions by usage and cost

- Provide new materials or services, both physical and virtual
- Maximize access to and use of existing materials or services—24/7 whenever possible
- Assist/guide customers in optimal use of existing technologies
- Introduce customers to new technologies
- Maintain relevance of library services in the ever-changing technological universe
- Avoid spending money/time on bad technology or incorrect use of good technology
- Use technology for what it does best—repetitive tasks like sorting, scanning, etc.
- Put information where people will find it most useful: awareness
- Maximize public and staff awareness of self-service options and virtual collections by incorporating this information in library websites, information aggregators, and search engines, e.g. WorldCat, Google, etc.
- Highlight the library's best practices through appropriate channels, e.g. library blogs, conference presentations, papers, etc., GBPLD website

Library As A Destination

Benefits
The library facilities and their maintenance are keys to the public's positive perception of the library. A clean, safe environment makes the library inviting to all who enter its doors. Protecting and maintaining the community's investment in the buildings is a priority for management and staff of the library.

The library provides not only a place where the community has the ability to check out materials and use a computer or study room; it has evolved into a "destination place" for family and friends. With the special events, educational exhibits, movies, piano concerts, and the new café, the library can be considered the "Center of the Community". If in fact that the library is viewed as the "Center of the Community", it would be a good assumption that it can also directly impact property values. With the economic "melt down" that is currently taking place in the housing market, stock market and credit markets, we must continue to move forward and protect the community's investment, their library.

Library as the third place - Third places "host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work."[1] The library serves as a neutral ground where people can gather and interact. As a center of the community, the library serves as a focal point for educational and cultural exhibits. It takes the lead as the driving force behind the organization of these events. The library provides all members of the community free access to information from a global spectrum, modern technology, a meeting place for community organizations, a venue for entertainment, and opportunities for networking and socializing all within easy distance from their residences.

Strategies
- A destination, physical and virtual, for residents
    - Play a prominent role as the center of the community, a source for information, ideas and gathering
    - Work with city and state officials to provide a bus stop and a mail drop box for the library on Grove Avenue
    - Develop and maintain the library website and associated online resources
- A safe, welcoming, clean environment for users and employees
    - Provide a safe and clean building for all ages, children through seniors
        - Continue the transition to green products: cleaning materials, lighting
        - Continue to recycle waste products in compliance with local codes
            - Continue to educate staff and customers in recycling practices
    - Provide signs that are helpful in navigating both outside the building and inside
    - Provide furnishings to meet the needs of users
        - Periodically review layout of space and furnishings for efficiency of traffic patterns and usage
        - Schedule regular evaluation of building, interior and exterior, to assess need for special cleaning and maintenance
    - Schedule regular evaluation of furnishings to assess need for cleaning and maintenance
    - Prepare a back-up plan for snow plowing for the main and branch libraries
        - Budget for necessary equipment to plow snow, if required

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[1] Oldenberg, Ray. *The great, good place,*

- Budget for necessary equipment to transport needed equipment between the main and branch libraries
  - Schedule regular staff training to promote safety, emergency procedures and communication with local public safety officials
- Emergency procedures include tornado, fire, lockdown and Code Adam
- Adequate, safe and well-lighted parking areas
  - Periodically evaluate traffic patterns with a focus on safety for pedestrians and drivers
  - Study traffic patterns in the library parking areas, working with the City of Elgin as needed
  - Periodically evaluate lighting and security camera coverage in parking areas
  - Investigate infra-red lighting to improve night-time camera visibility
- Visible, well-lighted and secure entrance
  - Periodically evaluate lighting at entrance to library
  - Position security guard at Entry Rotunda to oversee café, security gates and activity at entry to library
  - Evaluate need for security vehicle to monitor library parking lot as needed
- Staff to welcome customers
  - "Dispatcher" on each floor to guide incoming customers to their destination
- Effective use of space in support of collections and service priorities
  - Create "neighborhoods" within specific non-fiction collections at Main Library, for customer appeal and increased usage
  - Position magazine collection near the River Room, for increased visibility and usage
- Comfortable, attractive, well-lighted spaces for reading, browsing, gathering
- Meeting and gathering space for library and community programming
  - Create additional study rooms and conference/programming space
  - Maintain a café as an amenity for library customers and staff
  - Develop a space designed for teens
- Serving as a cultural and community connection point
  - Provide educational, cultural, and recreational programs that meet the needs of customers of all ages
  - Provide meeting space for local agencies, organizations and businesses

Strategic Direction Setting
Priority Projects – Charges

Overarching Priority: Library as Destination
Priority Project: Develop a Space Designed for Teens
Defined Priority Work Action: ***Create a Teen Center Vision***

Rationale: "Enhance the space and services for teens" was quite a strong recommendation by the staff and many people in the community. This desire became the "develop a space designed for Teens" by the "Library as Destination" work group (comprised of members from Admin Council.) "Create a Teen Center Vision" was also determined by this group to be one of two key Priority Work Actions. Department Directors met and chose this Priority Work Action to be one of the first the library embraces.

Create a Teen Center Vision: Goals and Deliverables

Goal 1: Assess current GB use of space and services for teens.- including dedicated square footage, collections, services, programs, staff, outreach to this population. Determine the number of teens participating, using the services, collection, etc.

Goal 2: Identify best practices (including the usage of teen advisory groups) in comparable libraries/communities. This may include making visits, research including the web, etc.

Goal 3: Draft statement of vision for teen services, space, collection, etc. at Gail Borden and include potential next steps.

Strategic Direction Setting
Priority Projects – Charges

Overarching Priority: Visionary Leadership and Management with Creative, Knowledgeable Staff
Priority Project: *__Internal Communication__*

Rationale: Driver for Visionary Leadership and Management with Creative, Knowledgeable Staff. This was a dominant theme in staff focus groups. Staff members want to be informed about library priorities, programs and how to work well with other departments. Staff members want to be better connected with more opportunities for more involvement.

When the Administrative Council was asked "what is missing from our priority projects?" Internal Communication was cited hence this priority project came into being. This topic area was seen as very important in the staff focus groups. Admin Council agrees that internal communication is an important key to moving ahead.

Key Deliverables:
Goal 1: Identify current and future practices, channels and delivery methods for communication.

Goal 2: Identify core responsibilities and accountabilities for communication (staff, leaders, administration, Marketing and Staff Development, etc.)

Goal 3: Identify best practices in libraries and other organizations for keeping staff current.

Goal 4: Clarify what are the information priorities critical for employee success.

Goal 5: Provide recommendations and next steps.

Strategic Direction Setting
Priority Projects – Charges

Overarching Priority: Visionary Leadership & Knowledgeable Staff
Priority Project: ***Staffing Needs Discussion***

Rationale: Internal focus groups mentioned that the staffing levels at certain times and in certain functions are a bit thin. In order to maintain high levels of service, this needs to be looked at.

Deliverables: Right People, Right Things at the Right Time

Goal 1: Clarify customer service needs and expectations for front line departments (Youth; Adult; Circulation, Movies, Music and More; Facilities)

Goal 2: Indentify key staffing priorities – use Sunset Checklist – are there things we can start – stop- continue doing? Are there things machines can do?

Goal 3: Identify flexible, efficient, library staffing and training processes. How to handle peak times and staffing?

Goal 4: Stay within current personnel budget, unless cost justified.

Goal 5: Good question to ask: What is the best use of library staff – professional, paraprofessional, clerical, etc.? How do we get the right people, doing the right things, at the right time?

Strategic Direction Setting
Priority Projects – Charges

Overarching Priority: "Library as Destination"
Priority Project: *Enhance Greeting Process*

Rationale: Both community and staff groups mention the need for a welcoming greeting and navigation through the library in a safe, efficient way.

Deliverables:

Goal 1: Address the role of Volunteers in the greeting process and communication with staff members.

Goal 2: Clarify the role of Security in the greeting process.

Goal 3: Identify desired communication steps between Security, Volunteers, Circulation and other staff members.

Goal 4: Provide recommendations for use of physical space in greeting (desk, info racks, signage, etc.)

Strategic Direction Setting
Priority Projects – Charges

Overarching Priority: Smart Use of Technology
Priority Project: Library Information Awareness & Navigation

Rationale: Smart use of Technology includes the need for maximizing public and staff awareness of self-service options and virtual collections by incorporating this information in library websites, information aggregators, and search engines, e.g. WorldCat, Google, etc. Identifying and pursuing self-service options for customers and staff is a key strategy in the Smart Use of Technology group. Doing this would help us to focus on what people do best: outreach, planning, programming, interpersonal interaction, the human element.

Deliverables:

Goal 1: Discover best practices and trends in smart use of technology.

Goal 2: Identify current practices and resources by incorporating this information in the library website including information aggregators, search engines, etc.

Goal 3: Provide recommendations for enhancing uses of technology and use of navigation processes. (For example LJ Webcast: "What's the Buzz" will present library that used social networking to increase use of database, Novelist 300+%.)